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**Collaboration in Early Childhood Special Education:
School, Staff, and Parents Becoming One Team**

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Abstract

Our youngest learners in school settings are typically thought of as Kindergarteners. However, many students enter the school system as preschoolers through the process of Early Childhood screening where they are identified as having delays in two or more areas of development (communication, cognition, motor, adaptive, or social-emotional) and become preschoolers qualifying for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). In this setting, the parents are still with their child the majority of the day but the child also goes to school for one to ten hours a week, depending on the school district and the needs of the child. During this time Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) educators and parents work together to support the child.

Collaboration can be difficult in the education setting. Many people are all working towards what they see best for the child, but these opinions can be different and cause tension. In the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) preschool setting, now more than ever, parents and school staff need to work collaboratively because an ECSE classroom may be the first exposure to school and the goal is to make a positive impact on/with the student and family. Staff need to be mindful of parents' strengths and weaknesses, as well as the means of the family, to appropriately direct and guide at-home learning for these young children. When families and educators are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, greater effort into collaboration will need to be taken as these early years make an immense difference in a child's education.

This paper explored the benefits of and possibilities for collaboration between an ECSE setting and families. Based on current best practices in ECSE the author created, collected, and described artifacts to be used by staff and parents.

Keywords: educators, Educators, Special Education, Collaboration, Families, ECSE