Stop, Collaborate, and Listen: A Faculty Learning Community Developed to Address Gaps in Pre-Service Education about Interdisciplinary Collaboration

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There is a notable lack of opportunity for students in pre-service professional training programs and faculty in higher education to collaborate and work together, across disciplines within a common area of professional expertise. In this case, a faculty learning community (FLC) was formed to create a set of video-based simulations based on relevant topics for Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings, used to inform the development of an Individualized Education Program. These materials were made available across departments and universities, establishing a common language and set of CSE practices. Additionally, a structured three-level text reading and discussion provided faculty with an opportunity for professional development, networking, and scholarship. The project was completed following Cox's 16 Recommendations for a Faculty Learning Community as a guideline for the successful implementation of the project, the creation of course materials, and analysis of faculty learning outcomes. It is important to note that the FLC process applies to a wide range of disciplines as a means of engaging faculty in responsive and reflective teaching practices as well as professional development.

FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITIES (FLCS)

Involvement in and research surrounding Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) in higher education has grown over the past several decades. An FLC is "a cross-disciplinary faculty and staff group of six to fifteen members who engage in an active, collaborative, yearlong program with a curriculum about enhancing teaching and learning" (Cox, 2004, p. 8). As previous scholars in the field have noted, FLCs provide several benefits, including improved faculty connections/relationships, enhanced pedagogy, and enhanced scholarship. Members of FLCs report developing stronger collegial and personal relationships (Glowacki-Dudka & Brown, 2007), becoming better educators (Hirst et al., 2021; Shulman, 1986), and having the opportunity to produce more as scholars (Richlin & Cox, 2004), especially with Boyer's (1990) expanded definition of scholarship to include the scholarship of teaching. In practice, FLCs vary in their organization, including their level of structure, whether they are university-affiliated or independent, and the shared focus of the FLC (Cox, 2004; Glowacki-Dudka & Brown, 2007; Onodipe et al., 2020). This article outlines an approach to professional development using an FLC framework that applies to higher education faculty. However, professionals across various positions in the field of education (including teachers or administrators in addition to higher education faculty) might consider this project as an example for organizing, facilitating, and evaluating the overall impacts of a shared and interdisciplinary learning experience.

Our FLC's Shared Focus

Pre-service professionals at the graduate level moving toward careers in the P-12 education setting receive numerous hours of training in the college classroom and in the field (P-12 classrooms). However, a lack of opportunities exists for pre-service professionals from across disciplines to develop an understanding of their interdependent roles and responsibilities to address the needs of children with disabilities. Thus, our FLC shared a focus on increasing interdisciplinary collaboration among those in preparation programs for educators and related service professionals, as well as the faculty who support them.

In the Spring 2021 semester, the FLC group brainstormed how to best address these concerns and model the interdisciplinary collaboration that pre-service professionals will be expected to use in their future careers. We collaboratively developed Committee on Special Education (CSE) training videos centered on what to expect in a CSE meeting from a variety of perspectives, including the student, the parent, the CSE chairperson, the school psychologist, the general education teacher, the special education teacher, related service providers, and the parent advocate. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (2004) describes the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team as a team that reflects the policies and procedures around the evaluation, reevaluation, annual review, functional behavior assessment, and behavioral intervention plan in support of children with disabilities and the members of their support system. For the purposes of this paper, the CSE is used to represent the IEP Team as referenced in the New York State Handbook Guide to Quality Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development and Implementation (University of the State of New York: The State Department of Education, 2010), which was also one of the selected readings used during the FLC aspect of the project. These training videos were intended for use in our respective courses.

Video Case Studies

We chose to use CSE training videos to model these skills because of the promising research surrounding video case studies. In his seminal social learning theory, Bandura (1977; 1986) argued that observational learning–in which a human observes another human perform or model a task–is an effective form of learning. Although observational learning models can be presented in a variety of modalities, a commonly-used format is through video case studies and analysis. Video case studies and subsequent analysis, where pre-service teachers view videos of authentic classroom instruction followed by discussion, individual critique, or reflection, have been used to support pre-service teachers' development of pedagogical knowledge, instructional skills, and

reflective practices (Baecher & Connor, 2010; Burden et al., 2010). Research has examined the utility of video models of evidence-based practices (i.e., expert demonstrations of the specific procedures of instructional practices; Dieker et al., 2009), self-analysis of student teaching videos (Baecher & Connor, 2010; Nagro et al., 2017), and teacher educator feedback of pre-service teaching videos (Fukkink et al., 2011). Dymond and Bentz (2006) proposed that teacher educators amass a library of video clips of authentic classroom practices to show demonstrations of a wide variety of practices. Notably, ATLAS (Accomplished Teaching, Learning, and Schools; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2021) is a subscription-based video case library curated by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards with over a thousand searchable classroom videos across grade levels and content areas.

However, there is a dearth of research and resources of video cases of IEP meetings. Burden et al. (2010) conducted the only study examining the use of simulated IEP meeting video cases to support special educators in their role and responsibilities in engaging in IEP meetings. Burden and colleagues (2010) noted the challenges in obtaining parental permission to video record IEP meetings with the legal mandates of parental rights for confidentiality. They found that the simulated IEP meeting videos enhanced the reflection and discussions of the pre-service teachers and increased their comfort level to participate in actual IEP meetings. Likewise, there is a lack of video case resources to support a range of pre-service professionals from disciplines that are represented as collaborative partners during IEP meetings. Our FLC's shared purpose was to create the video case resources needed to enhance our students' (and our own) interdisciplinary knowledge and skills for engaging in IEP Teams, known as CSEs in New York State.

Our FLC Experience and Activities

In the spring of 2021, we created a cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional FLC with a focus on video case studies to foster growth in community, pedagogy, and scholarship. Our FLC developed the following goals:

1. Compose and distribute video case studies for pre-service professionals that represent a range of expertise and model collaboration in their future careers.
2. Actively participate in a faculty learning community to include content-specific readings as well as individual and group reflection.
3. Distribute learning outcomes, our process, and next steps moving forward within our local and larger professional communities.

This FLC took place across two liberal arts institutions in the northeastern United States: a public, four-year college (approximately 5,000 undergraduate students and 400 graduate students; average class size approximately 22) and a private, Jesuit, four-year college (approximately 2,800 undergraduate students and 600 graduate students; average class size approximately 22). At the former institution, approximately one-third of the student body identifies as racially minoritized or international, and nearly half of its student population identifies as a first-generation student. At the latter institution, approximately 25 percent of the student body identifies as "multicultural," and approximately one-third identifies as a first-generation student. The growing diversity of student needs was another impetus for our FLC's focus on improving pedagogy to support a variety of student learning needs.

We designed our FLC to build a community of cross-institutional faculty to develop video-based materials for use in teacher education and related service provider education fields. Eight team members were invited based on their expertise in the development of an IEP. The members were affiliated with the following programs or fields: education/special education, education field placement, school psychology, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, adjunct positions, and administrative positions.

Pre-professional programs typically provide preparation within each specialized discipline, with little to no opportunity for pre-service professionals to develop the interdisciplinary knowledge and collaboration skills needed to effectively engage in the IEP process (Dobbs-Oates & Wachter Morris, 2016). We selected the scenarios for the videos based on the educational simulation design principles adapted from medical education and described by Mueller et al.'s (2019) research on simulated IEP meetings to include: (a) common and rare challenges special educators are likely to encounter, (b) the varied, specific skill sets needed, and (c) scenarios that will positively impact student outcomes.

Based on the simulation design principles (Mueller et al., 2019), we developed a case of a child with needs across multiple domains and disciplines based on an authentic school psychology evaluation report. Three scenarios for the initial videos were selected, including a reevaluation meeting, an IEP annual review meeting, and a meeting focused on sharing the results of a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and developing a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). The case of this particular child and these three scenarios align with the simulation design principles by including multiple objectives of IEP meetings, including two common purposes for IEP meetings (reevaluation and annual review) and a less common meeting (FBA/BIP-focused IEP). The scenarios required varied and specific skill sets via interdisciplinary collaboration and discipline-specific knowledge for video analysis. The knowledge required included the types of data collected; the documentation described; specific instructional, therapeutic, and support strategies described; the legal requirements enacted; and the interpersonal communication skills used. We also selected IEPs as the scenarios that could positively impact our pre-service professionals and their future students and clients by strengthening their skills for interdisciplinary collaboration and their self-efficacy for engaging in the IEP meetings. Similar to Mueller and colleagues' (2019) approach to creating IEP simulations, we also ensured that our videos could be utilized across our disciplines and multiple courses.

As part of our second FLC goal, we selected two foundational documents to initially discuss as an interdisciplinary team: the New York State IEP Handbook (The University of the State of New York: The State Education Department, 2010) and the New York City Department of Education Special Education Standard Operating Procedures (2020). These two documents were developed based on IDEA federal policy and regulations and our state's specific policies, regulations, and nomenclature. We utilized the School Reform Initiative (2017) book study Three Levels of Text Protocol to engage in our first FLC discussion of these documents. During the discussion, we responded to three levels of the text: literal (level 1), interpretation (level 2), and implications (level 3).

Our third goal in initiating the FLC was to distribute the learning outcomes, our process, and next steps moving forward within our local and larger professional communities. The following sections describe the framework utilized for our FLC and

our accomplishments thus far. Our next step in implementing the mock video series material is to use the FBA/BIP meeting video analysis for a special education course on positive behavior intervention and support and a school psychology course on behavioral interventions. We also plan to engage the pre-service professionals in these courses in interdisciplinary Professional Learning Community discussions using the School Reform Initiative (2017) book study Three Levels of Text Protocol. In the final section, we share our reflections and take-aways from engaging in the FLC process as an interdisciplinary team. It should be noted that this project offers a scholarly approach to FLCs with limited formal data analysis typically associated with a more traditional SoTL project.

COX'S FRAMEWORK
Cox's (n.d.) framework consists of 16 recommendations to support the process of conducting our FLC. Table 1 outlines our journey in learning regional nuances of IEP development for each of the recommendations.

Accomplishments
Adhering to item 10 of Cox's 16 recommendations, we assessed the impact of faculty professional development based on the discussion of two shared readings. In particular, following Cox's (n.d.) eighth recommendation in his framework, the two predetermined and agreed-upon readings were based on CSE procedures and content focused on the topic of developing an IEP. The participants included two Assistant Professors in Special Education, a Secondary Education Department Chair, an Assistant Professor of Psychology, and an Adjunct Faculty. All members of the FLC were active members in creating the Mock Reevaluation CSE video and have professional experience as members of a Committee on Special Education. The interdisciplinary Professional Learning Community discussions followed the School Reform Initiative (2017) book study Three Levels of Text Protocol and asked FLC members to respond to three levels of the selected texts: literal (level 1), interpretation (level 2), and implications (level 3). Figure 1 outlines the process of completing a School Reform Initiative (2017) book study Three Levels of Text Protocol text discussion.

Table 1. Cox's 16 Recommendations for Faculty Learning Community	
Cox's (n.d.) 16 Recommendations	**FLC Actions**
Limit membership	8 team members
Voluntary membership	Invited, then volunteered based on expertise
Consider associated partners: consultants	Center for Teaching Excellence: Mentorship and distribution of knowledge
Multidisciplinary team	8 areas of expertise, 4 departments, across 2 universities Institution One: 7 areas of expertise across 3 departments, including Special Education, Secondary Education, Field Placement Office, Adjunct Faculty, School Psychology, Communication, Department Chair Institution Two: Occupational Therapy
Schedule planned meetings	Mutually agreed-upon schedule with consideration for adjunct teaching schedule, childcare, and department/university needs.
Build social community	Networking, priority of teaching topic/content, scholarship
Facilitator- leader	FLC: Fostered the development of shared goals, facilitated progress, solicited comments/feedback, organized project materials, and maintained lines of communication
Members- shared governance in objectives, goals, content	Shared decision making in content reviewed: Shared professional readings
Obtain and maintain a commitment to FLC	Facilitator: Communication and maintenance of commitment from members
Assess FLC impact on PD, and FLC components	Scholarship of Teaching and FLC: Members reflected on the impact of the FLC on faculty development Five members of the team completed a shared discussion based on the selected text using a three levels text protocol
Use an approach that contributed to SoTL: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning	Contributed to SoTL by documenting our FLC process published manuscripts. Boyer's Scholarship: Practice of teaching, sharing about teaching, scholarly teaching, and scholarship of teaching and learning
Present FLC outcomes on campus/conferences	Presented at a state-level conference as well as locally through the Center for Teaching Excellence to fellow colleagues at the university. Presentations outlined our process of organizing, facilitating, and evaluating the overall impacts of a shared learning experience.
Blend modality of meetings: in-person and online	Video conferencing meetings: Whole group discussions/video recordings In-person: small group discussions and planning
Provide rewards, recognition, and celebrations	Facilitator sends a university-level recognition letter from administration at the universities
Embed FLC within the Teaching and Learning Center	Shared process and product with the Center for Teaching Excellence
Adapt FLC to fit the institution's culture and faculty needs	University emphasis on collaborative projects and faculty scholarship Flexible engagement based on personal/ professional needs and areas of expertise

Three Levels of Text Protocol

1 **Literal**
Read aloud selected passage
*1-3 rounds per person for a total of 3 rounds

2 **Interpretation**
Connection statement shared, such an interpretation or to a past experience

3 **Implication**
Implication statement to a current practice as a professional

Group Response
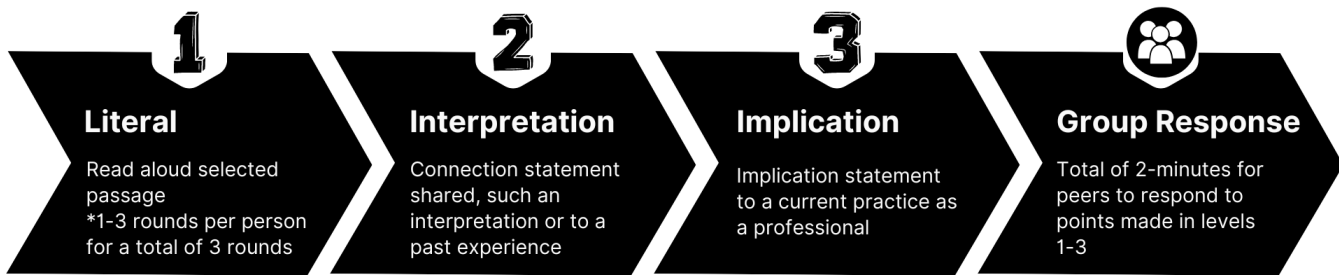Total of 2-minutes for peers to respond to points made in levels 1-3

Figure 1. Three Levels of Text Protocol
* Adapted from Camilla Greene's Rule of 3 Protocol, 11/20/2003, from the National School Reform Faculty, Harmony Education Center, and the School Reform Initiative (School Reform Initiative, 2017).

The purpose of the protocol is to create an opportunity for readers to deepen their understanding and connect with the other participants' experiences. Each reader is asked to read and initially respond to the text at all three levels: *literal, interpretation, and implications,* which indicates the faculty contribution to the discussion and level of connection to the assigned text. A secondary label, *group reflection,* represents the FLC discussion of the initial faculty statement. At the end of the three rounds of discussion and group reflection (one for each level), the FLC participants engaged in a debriefing conversation. This time was reserved for a holistic discussion of the texts, the responses in relation to each other, and the broader field of pre-service professional preparation programs. In Table 2, select comments represent example statements from our interdisciplinary Professional Learning Community discussions.

At the conclusion of the structured FLC discussion, the five participating faculty created three summary statements. Open, honest, and positive support discourse in content-specific discussions will help to create a cohesive message to students learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be effective contributing members for their future work on CSEs. There are three larger ideas summarized from the debriefing conversation,

which took place after three rounds of levels 1-3 (and group reflection) for each of the participants.

(1) The disconnect between best practices (how we train our students) and what is actually done in the schools is not [always] actually in the best interest of students. This prompted an area of inquiry around novice teachers/practitioners and how they deal with the disconnect between research based strategies and implementation of practice during a CSE meeting.

(2) Systems-level advocacy/change practices need to be taught. This will require an intentional reflection from faculty on how system-level action in relation to courses is taught and when pre-service/novice service professionals are afforded an opportunity to engage in professional advocacy and system-level action.

(3) Explicit faculty expectations for pre-service professionals should be created.

Reflections and Take-Aways
While participating in the FLC, faculty members reflected on their experience and shared lessons learned. This aligns with

Table 2. Faculty Learning Outcomes	
3 Levels of Text Protocol Discussion	
Text Level Code	**FLC Faculty Prompt and Comments**
Attendees at the CSE meeting	
Literal	IEP recommended components - members of the committee and their roles and responsibilities within the CSE
Interpretation	Is everyone's voice heard? Are we thinking about this child holistically? Are we speaking to both strengths and needs?
Group Reflection	Reiteration of the need for pre-service school psychology students to be prepared to speak up in uncomfortable situations, CSE meetings in general, etc.
Procedures of the CSE	
Literal	Question posed: What if there is no one who meets the definition of parent?
Implications	Are general education service providers contributing as intended within IDEA.
Types of documentation included in the CSE meeting	
Interpretation	High test scores are linked to student and teacher expectations.
General outcomes of the CSE meeting	
Group Reflection	Focusing on a single metric of test scores as evidence of meeting high expectations is in conflict with centering the wellbeing and development of the whole child.
Analysis	Placement should not be confused with the location of services.
Student-Directed Questions and Concerns	
Group Reflection	(1) School psychology students need to be prepared to speak up in uncomfortable situations, CSE meetings in general, etc. (2) What if a parent doesn't agree or you don't agree with something -- what will you do? (3) Asking clarifying questions can help you maneuver through hard conversations, the communication of information, and advocacy.

Cox's (n.d.) framework, specifically the 10th recommendation. Participants included faculty members from two colleges (one public, one private) and a local high school teacher (who is also an adjunct at the public college). Participants' expertise covered elementary school, secondary school, and higher education. They represented five departments (Special Education, Adolescence Education, Communication Sciences and Disorders, School Psychology, and Occupational Therapy). Each participant had approximately 20 years of experience in education-related fields.

Individual and group reflection occurred at several points in this process. Reflection on the FLC process was guided by three overarching questions: what went well, what challenges were encountered, and what changes could/should be made moving forward. Individual reflection was documented in each participants' research log; group reflection occurred in conversation and was recorded on a shared document.

Faculty members indicated that utilizing the Three Levels of Text Protocol (School Reform Initiative, 2017) was an effective way to focus one's attention when independently reading. This instrument also facilitated critical conversations among colleagues. Such conversations were grounded in the selected readings, expanded to address practical applications, and inclusive (each member had an opportunity to participate multiple times, in multiple ways). Overarching topics that frequently emerged were a student-centered focus to IEP design; holistic approaches to instruction and student growth; disability rights; and affecting change at micro- and macro- levels. Specific to degree programs, participants discussed ways to bridge the research-to-practice gap once pre-service professionals are in their future careers and the need for multi-tiered advocacy approaches.

When asked to provide feedback on participating in the FLC discussion, members described the value of both individual learning and engaging in collaborative opportunities. For instance, each member identified elements of the readings that influenced thoughts about their program, course, and assignment design. They also discussed the benefit of working with providers in numerous disciplines, across various levels, and with multiple departments/colleges. Such cross-disciplinary participation constituted a powerful component of this project, as it mirrors the ideal P-12 education experience, with multiple service providers working together to provide an appropriate education for *all* students. Participants appreciated the opportunity to collaborate on conference proposals and look forward to collaboratively presenting at education conferences in the future.

Asked to reflect on the FLC experience thus far, members endorsed the project. One member explained that the project has ripple effects: first altering faculty practice, then pre-service professionals' practice, and ultimately in-service professionals' practice. Others described the process as collaborative from inception—from selecting roles to play in the mock IEP videos, choosing FLC readings, selecting a student case, and sharing research/writing responsibilities. Such collaboration was not always easy. Working around differing schedules with the COVID-19 pandemic social distancing restrictions in place was challenging. Yet, the benefits of collaboration outweighed the challenges. These FLC members believed that discussing points from various practice models (medical, educational, ecological) made the conversation more robust and provided multiple perspectives.

Participating faculty members reiterated the benefit of engaging in this line of research (video case study enhanced instruc-tion) and shared ideas for improvement. For example, because the videos ran long (mean length of 22 minutes), an effort will be paid to writing concise scripts or chunking topics into smaller segments for future videos. To elicit in-depth pre-service professional video case analysis, reflection questions will be revised using a scaffolded approach. This concept also applied to forthcoming focus groups with pre-service professionals using the Three Levels of Text Protocol (School Reform Initiative, 2017). Additionally, the timing of video creation would be altered to enhance FLC influence, such as highlighting key concepts, discussions, or course topics.

Overall, members of this FLC expressed that this experience positively affected their professional development. The readings selected had direct application to the courses they taught. The Three Levels of Text Protocol (School Reform Initiative, 2017) structured the conversation in a way that kept the group on track, while allowing each member autonomy to discuss their own key takeaways. Cross-disciplinary dialogue naturally developed throughout this project. It is important to note that faculty members participating in this FLC self-selected to join the group because they see the value in continuous learning, the importance of the central topic (Special Education), and the benefit of collaboration.

CONCLUSION

Throughout our experience, we determined that the content, process, and product generated by the FLC has guided us to a deeper understanding of our pre-service professionals' needs in relation to the CSE composition and process regarding a reevaluation meeting. Particularly important in this undertaking was ensuring that all voices could be shared equally and valued to develop resources for our pre-service professionals. Having input from faculty in the Education, Psychology, Speech/Communication, and Occupational Therapy departments from two different colleges developed a robust understanding of our respective responsibilities in the P-12 field. This project expands on the 16 recommendations in Cox's framework (n.d.) for the FLC process by incorporating a multidisciplinary, cross-institutional faculty workgroup that included higher education faculty representing a wide range of positions (i.e., adjunct, lecture, administration, associate professor).

Though much research remains to be done, and our commitment to the FLC process continues, this experience illustrates the importance and effectiveness of collaboration in the academy focused on pre-service professional preparation and development from a variety of perspectives. This can only benefit future professionals focused on providing the best outcomes for their students. Furthermore, using the 16 recommendations in Cox's framework (n.d.), the FLC process could be replicated across a wide range of disciplines and areas of professional practice to engage faculty in responsive and reflective teaching practice.

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