

**Book Review of *Families and Professionals: Trusting Partnerships in General and Special Education***

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Quality special education teacher preparation programs recognize the impact of the strong collaborative relationships between families and school personnel for students with and without disabilities. Educational, behavioral, and social–emotional outcomes are multiplied when trusting partnerships are built between home and school (Dunlap & Fox, 2007; Murray et al., 2018). Dedicating a course to the essential strategies required for successful family–professional relationships ensures that upon graduation, educators can begin building trust and rapport with the families of their students. Collaborative rather than contentious relationships can benefit students, families, and school professionals.

The text *Families and Professionals: Trusting Partnerships in General and Special Education* (8th edition)—edited by Ann Turnbull, H. Rutherford Turnbull III, Grace Francis, Meghan Burke, Kathleen Kyzar, Shana Haines, Tracy Gershwin, Katharine Shepherd, Natalie Holdren, and George Singer—provides comprehensive perspective and methods to build family–professional relationships that address the core values: partnership, trust, and social justice. The audiences that would primarily benefit from this book include preservice teachers, preservice early interventionists, and preservice related service providers who work with children ages birth to 22 who receive early intervention or public education services. We have only had a small number of practicing teachers exposed to this book within our courses; the few practicing teachers we interacted with indicated that the case scenario and compendium are valuable resources. The book may also serve as a useful resource for

school administrators, especially if used in a professional learning community for professional development of faculty and staff related to family–school partnerships. Individuals in other preservice programs that prepare professionals who will interact with families and school personnel (e.g., clinical psychology, social work, mental health counseling, rehabilitation, medical programs, etc.) may also find this textbook an important resource. Even though family–professional partnerships are also important when supporting adults with disabilities (older than 22), this text has the greatest application for those with career goals that involve or intersect with an educational system.

The eighth edition of this book has been reconceptualized and updated significantly from previous editions and provides updated information and additional sections (e.g., Compendium). Instructors and other readers should note that this text includes ample references to federal and case law and policies that were accurate at the time of publication in April 2021. Changes to federal law following the publication of the text should be highlighted by instructors and used to openly dialog about how court decisions have an impact on families, students, and family–professional partnerships. For instance, the text describes the impact of *Roe v. Wade* and how the principles of liberty apply to decision making and choice as related to individuals with disabilities. Since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* on June 24, 2022, instructors may need to facilitate a discussion that invites students to think deeply about the immediate impact of such policy decisions on family–professional partnerships and the role of law within those relationships.

This book is marketed as both eText and bound copy formats. We appreciate that both options are available for users with a range of preferences and learning needs. If both formats are being used by instructors or students, it will be important to become aware and alert users of any discrepancies between the two formats (e.g., different page numbers, ease of accessing supplemental material). Based on our own recent experiences as instructors assigning this book in a Family–Professional Collaboration course within a special education preparation program at a large university in the Midwest, we believe that each of these formats offer users slightly different experiences. For example, users have more immediate access to supporting or supplementary information by clicking direct links within the eText. Bound text users may experience delays in accessing some information due to typing lengthy URLs into browsers to obtain the content information. It may be useful for the publisher of this text to offer one URL that takes the user to a common website where all materials offered within the text are located or linked. The eText also offers accessibility features that provide a range of immediate access options for students with a range of learning styles or disabilities that are not available with the bound.

Alternatively, the bound text offers a non-screen option that is preferable by some individuals since it is not dependent on internet access for core content. We recommend that course instructors reflect on their own experience with the content in the different formats as well as their students' experiences when planning reading assignments, activities, and supplemental activities related to linked information included in the book.

The rich content within this book is unarguably impressive and important. Due to the amount and variety of information in each section and chapter of the book, we recommend that instructors dedicate extra time to preview content and determine when and how to incorporate key conversations, knowing that it is not possible to specifically address every important concept presented in the text. We think it would be helpful to have additional guidance or suggestions from the authors on how the content may be covered in a variety of course formats (e.g., online asynchronous, online synchronous, traditional in-person) and time spans of courses (e.g., 4-week course, 8-week course, 12-week quarter system course, 16-week semester course, etc.). We had the opportunity to utilize this book in traditional in-person format in two different time spans, that is, a traditional 16-week semester course (3 hours of class time each week) and a short 4-week summer course offering (12 hours of class time each week). In both arrangements, we agreed that there are ways we could have incorporated the book content better with additional time and planning. It would be helpful to have additional author recommendations and ideas.

One of our favorite aspects of the book was the inclusion of the Lopez family narrative that is woven through the entire book. The users in our classes were able to accompany the Lopez family on their family's journey while connecting the family's lived experiences and struggles to strategies presented within the text. The Lopez family illustrated how there is diversity and complexity within the variety of partnerships required between home, school, and community. The story also demonstrated how family members and professionals relate, navigate, negotiate, and collaborate across systems to achieve common goals. Many students of our courses remarked on the usefulness of having the Lopez family included in the book and how it gave them a new appreciation for the importance of establishing respectful and trusting relationships with the parents and families of the children they serve in educational settings. As an instructor, using the Lopez family to provide detailed examples of situations was incredibly useful, as it is sometimes difficult to provide real-time relevant scenarios from our own histories.

This book is organized into four parts: (1) the "why" of partnerships, (2) the "who" of partnerships, (3) the "how" of trusting partnerships, and (4) the compendium of information and strategies that teach and prepare professionals

to partner with families. Several detailed chapters are included per section and provide a consistent format that includes learning outcomes to assist the user in anticipating what content will be presented. In addition, the user is able to visually discriminate overarching sections from subsections due to eye catching headings of different sizes and colors. New enrichment segments or “multiple pedagogies” have been added to the chapters. The segments include: Advocacy in Action, Policy in Practice, Partnering With Students, A Cultural Lens, and Conflict Prevention and Resolution. They are contained within framed areas within each chapter and offer application ideas and reflective questions. We found that our students were excited about these segments and wanted to discuss them further because they dug deeper into the topic and provided a safe platform for difficult or uncomfortable conversations about issues and perspectives.

Part One of the book explains the importance of effective relationships in promoting positive student outcomes through the delivery of appropriate services and supports. Chapter 1 defines family–professional partnerships and identifies foundational aspects for successful partnerships. This chapter also explains the key interrelated dimensions of the Sunshine Model of Trusting Family–Professional Partnerships: trust, equity, respect, communication, advocacy, commitment, and social justice. In Chapter 2, the legal requirements to include families in decisions and processes are presented in the context of four federal laws. This chapter also informs future professionals of parents’ rights in the educational process and decision-making for their children who receive special education services or other accommodations. Readers are introduced to the Lopez family and begin to understand how their history affects their family–professional partnerships. It is this part of the book that covered case law and legal protections for families and children with disabilities.

Part Two is divided into three chapters which address the people who are involved in the family–professional relationships and partnerships. Chapter 3 introduces and defines the family system and describe the characteristics of the family regarding culture, identity, and experiences. Chapter 4 presents various family subsystems (partners, parents, siblings, extended family), family functions (affection, self-esteem, spirituality, economics, daily care, recreation, socialization, education), patterns of life activity related to the age of the child or children in the family (early childhood, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood), and various times of expected transition for the child and family (moving from one school level to the next, transitioning from school system to adulthood or post-school experiences) or unexpected transition (related to other life experiences like divorce of parents, a death in the family, or an unexpected move). Our university students seemed positively affected by these chapters and applied the content by telling us about their own lived experiences within their own family systems.

Chapter 5 examines the school system (ecology, framework), school system characteristics (population, school types, educators, culture), types of interactions within school subsystems (administrators, educators and staff, community, families), school functions (educational, civics, family support, community support), and school level (early childhood, elementary, middle school, high school). This chapter may provide some valuable information for families that are unfamiliar with how schools are structured. Additional information about structures in place related to young adult students (ages 18–22) would have been beneficial since there are often unique systems in place that may vary from one school district to another. Through a continuation of the Lopez story in this part, readers develop understanding of interpersonal relationships and how each subsystem within the family and school is connected.

Part Three is divided into five chapters which focused on how professionals and families can form and build trusting partnerships using proven strategies. Each of the five chapters dives deeply into the teaching of specific skills to future and current professionals related to building a trusting relationship with families. Each of the five dimensions of trust (respect, equity, communication, advocacy, commitment) are uniquely addressed through a chapter within this section. Each of these chapters apply the dimensions to the Lopez family experiences, provide a definition and rationale, identify barriers that interfere with establishing this type of trust, and provide details about proven strategies and activities that increase professional competencies.

Finally, Part Four of the book, the Compendium, is not divided into chapters but is an organized collection of very useful quick reference resources and strategies that succinctly complement and supplement the text. It includes example documents such as an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and a Section 504 Plan, additional information about the Sunshine Model, useful strategies for developing partnership skills, and guidelines related to facilitating effective meetings. It may be useful to begin the semester having students explore the Compendium as the wealth of resources and information are relevant across chapters. We even thought it might be helpful to have additional references to the Compendium within each chapter to remind the user that this content is included in the book. For example, in Chapter 4, the text discusses how the concept of life span impacts relationships. Drawing on the Compendium to illustrate how to use person-centered planning through the MAPS tool would be highly beneficial as an applicable strategy to collaboration. Another idea we discussed was adding a list within the summary section of each chapter of applicable Compendium resources included.

This book is well organized and provides consistency across chapters addressing a range of stakeholders and perspectives. The content and special

features allowed our students to think more deeply about their own biases and learned interaction styles while challenging them to learn more about the culture of the students and families they work with. We believe that this book provides our students with ample strategies that, if practiced, could improve, repair, maintain, and/or build partnerships when cultural biases emerge. One of our students wrote, “I really appreciate the integrated learning (the text and how it highlights the importance of family–professional partnerships and first-hand experiences and accounts of not only parents of children with disabilities, but also siblings and persons with disabilities).” The information in Chapter 4 provided students in our respective courses on family–professional collaboration to examine their own family subsystems and reflect on their own lived experience. We believe the content of this chapter provided a foundational jumping off point for the reader to examine the relationships within their lives (significant partner relationships, parental relationships, sibling relationships, extended family relationships) and reflect on how those relationships shaped their identities, ethics, decision-making, perspectives, and biases within their professional partnerships. We believe that examining family subsystems assisted the reader in reflecting on how their own personal lived experiences may be similar to or different from the families, children, and professional colleagues they would be partnering with in the future.

Overall, the use of this text for a course on the importance of successful collaboration between families and school is highly recommended. Grounded in research, this text provides a significant foundational knowledge base for preservice and returning educators. However, as a first-time user, we encourage instructors to read the preface as a guide for how to best incorporate the text into their courses as well as spend time with each chapter of the book to effectively choose which of the many resources best suits their needs.

## References

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