# Topic 2 – Resource Consultation – Transcripts

## Video 1: Resource Consultant Introductions

- So, my name is Angela Lenis. I've worked in a couple of different places. So, most recently, I worked as a resource teacher with a school board. Before that, I worked at a child and family center. With different resource consultants in different capacities who work with, some work children with autism, some work children directly in childcares, so I worked with a large team, in that center.

- So, hi, I'm Andrea Ferguson. I am a resource teacher and a graduate of Ryerson master's program. Proud person who enjoys very much working with children of pre-K to twelve.

- My name is Christa Leeder. And I've been a resource consultant for 15 years as well as an early interventionist. I'm currently the manager of an early learning center.

## Video 2: Role of a Resource Consultant

- [Narrator] Describe the role of a resource consultant in early childhood education and care, and/or in schools.

- [Angela] So there definitely are models in schools that are more focused on inclusion and more aligned with the ECE framework that I sort of grew to know and that I believe in. So it really is based on what the administration team wants or what their vision is. So some schools really do push for inclusive models. And I found more recently there has been a greater awareness in principals and vice principals as to the benefit of that. And there are definitely some challenges around that. And that comes from staff perspectives, family perspectives, school needs. So there's a lot to think about when trying to push a more inclusive model I find. So I find in the more early childhood setting both the consultant and the consultee if you think about them as the resource consultant and the early childhood educator, they always think about parents or families as partners. So anytime there is a service plan that's being created there's collaboration with the parents as to what the goals are and what the strategies could be to make sure they're implemented at home and at school. So they definitely when I think about like a triangle and like every corner of the triangle I think about the parent, the educator, and the consultant. At school though my personal experiences have shown me that the educators both the teacher and the consultant they tend to work together and sometimes there's a disconnect between the communication the consultant does with the parent versus the educators.

- [Christa] My role specifically has been insuring that time is made to build those relationships with the staff. Keeping in mind that I'm a guest when I come into that program. So my role is to find out what's working well for them. So to chat with the staff about what has worked well up to this point because my role is to help them move forward to the next step. Normally when they've called me in, it's because they've exhausted all services and all means and they're just wanting some additional resources. So when I meet with staff the first thing is to build that relationship, find out what's going well. So some things are always going well and then how do we branch on from there, and what do they need.

- [Andrea] Honest in saying the overview as a resource teacher first of all, is just to do the detective work and the real work to find out what the story is. Then it becomes a little more specific as you look into where it is. So it's a specific quote unquote research and look into or digging when you are looking in the community at what it is that they're needing. So what life supports do they need? What things do they need to make their daily lives, including their whole family because they're part of a family unit. And so what friends? What kind of advocation do you need? what do I need to do as a resource teacher to help you advocate to get you into your local schools? And do you want to fight for that so the sisters and brothers can go to school at their local school down the street? Then I think the school is a whole different animal if I can just use that word in that they work very differently, and they're a little more insular in a sense that it's a one-stop-shop attitude.

- [Angela] So the role of a resource consultant based on my own learning and my experiences, would be about supporting other educators and supporting all children. So it's about collaborating and bringing together your different expertise and your different skills to best support a child and their family. So I think in the settings I worked in, that looks like consultants going in meeting with different educators discussing the strategies but even before that, about educators going in or the consultants going in to meet with other educators. Thinking about trying to figure out together what are the needs and what do they think the collaboration could look like? And trying to implement strategies with the child and the family that they think will best set them up for success and best meet their needs. In a school setting the resource consultant more so works directly with the children, as opposed to working directly with the other educators. And when I think about the consultation framework I always think about a consultant supporting inclusion and that means supporting the teacher and implementing a program that is inclusive for all children. My experiences in the board are different in the sense that when I go in the goal of the consultee if you think of the consultee as the teacher, their goal is usually I'm there to directly support the child to remediate usually academic difficulties and to potentially provide strategies that could support them. So it is more of a focus on the consultant directly supporting the child as opposed to the consultant supporting the teacher and implementing an inclusive program. So oftentimes I find it ends up being less inclusive because the child is sometimes being withdrawn or somehow not completely immersed in their classroom program.

## Video 3: The 8 Stages of Resource Consultation

- [Narrator] What can you tell us about implementing the eight stages of resource consultation in your work?

- [Christa] So I think the key thing to remember is collaboration. When we're looking at the eight stages, we want to take the time to build the rapport with the team, find out what's working well, ensuring that family are part of that process. Families know their child best. And when we're establishing goals for the day-to-day routines and interactions in the classroom, the families share a wealth of knowledge that can be embedded into the program somehow. Look at best practice and, when you have that vision of collaborative consultation, these eight stages work really well because, when you're establishing goals, it's not this model of you coming in as the expert and telling people what to do. You're working together as a team and you're establishing goals. The top down approach doesn't work because what tends to happen is goals or strategies aren't implemented. And then, as the consultant, you question why. Sometimes you need to step back and you need to say, "Were these my goals or were they the classroom goals?" So ensuring that the goals are agreed upon by all parties, family, staff, so whether it's the school team or the early childhood team, yourself, and it fits the philosophy of the program. Having relationships with families is that our role is often in childcare or in the school. So there can be a gap between information that's shared with home and school sometimes. And when we come on board, it's another professional that's in there working with the child. And if the family doesn't have that ongoing communication, if the family's not part of those discussions, setting the goals, then there's a gap there and families don't feel included and then barriers can be put in place because our role, as consultants, are to bridge the gap between home and their early learning program. So offering consistency in both environments includes supporting the family at home with the same goals as we're supporting the childcare.

- [Angela] When I think about that, I'm going to reflect a little bit more on my experiences in schools just because I find the stages really helpful in theory and I could see, through my own experiences, when there are gaps in the stages or if something is somehow skipped, it really does have an impact on what your actual practice will look like and the consultation situation. In practice I find, specifically thinking about my school experiences, one of the first steps where you think about gaining entry or forming the relationship with a consultee, because of mindset of some teachers is the special education resource person is really there to support the child and help them fill in gaps, so to speak, that kind of relationship building piece sometimes is missing. So depending on your personality as a consultant, it might be a priority for you to build relationships with the teachers, and it definitely is for me. I'd go in hoping to have conversations and talk about what our roles will be as a team. But sometimes, because the view of the consultant is either set already by the administration or the other teachers that are typically the consultee sort of view you in your role in a particular way, those kind of notions that are already there sometimes impact your ability to build a relationship that really is true to the consultant/consultee partnership as ascribed in the model. For example, when I've worked in schools, most of my experiences have shown that they see me as just supporting the child, so it's seen as a distinction between their work in the classroom. However, when I went into those situations, my hope was to really build a partnership and think about ways to best support the child in the classroom. But oftentimes, the teachers might say, "Oh, just take the child out so that they can work on this." Or they're maybe disruptive, so it's seen more as, it's not a collaboration, so that those first two stages, where you describe the role as a consultant and then you build an open and trusting relationship, I find that to be really challenging sometimes because of either the administration or the teachers and what they want you to be doing. So with those first two foundational stages sort of sometimes thrown off, it really does impact everything else in terms of how you're gonna gather the information, how you're gonna share strategies, how you're gonna re-evaluate a plan together when, in a way, their plan is very different than your plan, so that there is that disconnect. And it really, so it shows me that the gaining entry, forming relationships piece are probably one of the most important parts because those are the pieces that will help you unite as a team to support a child. With that not happening, it sort of throws off the entire process.

- [Andrea] So there's a beginning, a middle, and an end. The very beginning, gaining entry, would be part of maybe the referral process or how you even come to know a name. So my name shows up on a piece of paper and it shows up at their house, or I'm a voice at the end of the phone. That's the very, very, very tip of the iceberg, and that's the critical stage because the first impression that you make for that family and what they're going through is important that you understand, then, that there's a very large stage coming next, which is stage two, which is gaining trust. And I call it building relationship. Or you've called it, I beg your pardon, building a relationship, but I call it gaining their trust and working through what their precious person is going to go through in the next little bit. But you move with the momentum of the family, for sure, and the support systems the family have. "I'm sorry, nobody in my family can support me on this," it's not a plan because the family shouldn't be having to push up against those. The key support person hadn't push up against such huge, other stressors. It's not your job to create more stress. It's your job to alleviate that stress. Critical word in that stage that you invite all peoples that are interested and all peoples that are important to the progress of that plan.