

Professional Learning Gallery: Collaboration

Clara Hauth
Rebekka Jez
Anna Hart
Shannon Melideo



Objectives

Support youth, families/caregivers, educators, leaders, support providers, and communities in:

1. Building relationships to improve communication, meetings, and planning
2. Developing strategies to engage and empower
3. Learning and implementing best practices for working in transdisciplinary, collaborative teams

Building Relationships

- Establish regular, two-way communication
- Use multiple modes of communication (email, phone, apps, in-person)
- Create a welcoming and inclusive environment
- Listen actively and validate concerns
- Set shared goals for student success
- Schedule consistent check-ins or team meetings
- Share strengths and progress, not just challenges
- Involve families and providers in decision-making
- Be culturally responsive and respectful
- Celebrate milestones and successes together



Strategies to Engage and Empower

1. Multilingual Communication
2. Culturally Responsive Engagement
3. Flexible Meeting Formats and Times
4. Family/Caregiver Education Workshops
5. Create Family/Caregiver Liaisons or Cultural Ambassadors
6. Home Visits and Informal Check-ins
7. Empower Family/Caregivers in Decision-Making



Transdisciplinary, Collaborative Teams

Individualized Learning Plans

Co planning

Co teaching

Establish Clear Roles & Responsibilities

Schedule Consistent Co-Planning Time

Use Co-Teaching Models Effectively

Develop a Shared Teaching Philosophy

Reflect & Adjust Together

Advocate as a team



Definitions

Collaboration: “a style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal” (Friend & Cook, 2013, p.6).

Co-teaching: Co-teaching is defined as the co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing of students by two professionals in a single classroom (Murawski, 2003). This requires that teachers collaborate to create a structure that effectively utilizes each teacher's expertise to educate a diverse population of students (Bauler & Kang, 2020). A co-teaching framework aims to increase inclusionary practices to accommodate a range of student skill levels in general education classrooms.

Definitions

Culturally Responsive Engagement: Culturally responsive engagement refers to the intentional practice of creating inclusive, respectful, and equitable environments where the cultural identities, communication styles, and lived experiences of all participants—students, families/caregivers, and professionals—are acknowledged, valued, and actively integrated into the decision-making process.

Conflict resolution/effective communication: Conflict resolution and effective communication are the processes of addressing and resolving disagreements in a constructive manner, often through negotiation, mediation, or dialogue.



Definitions

Individual Learning Plans: Individual learning plans are a personalized educational plan tailored to a student's unique strengths, needs, goals, and learning preferences. It is designed to support self-directed learning, goal setting, and continuous progress monitoring.

Transdisciplinary teams: teams that work and learn in conjunction with families/caregivers and across disciplines to work, support, learn, and teach from each of the members on the team (Friend & Cook, 2013) using assessment, planning, and implementation collaboratively across the disciplines.

Definitions

Partners: Partners in education or community engagement are individuals, organizations, or institutions that collaborate with schools to support student learning and well-being. These partnerships are built on mutual respect, shared goals, and reciprocal benefits. Partners may include: learners, family/caregiver, educators, administrators, school support personnel, community members, community organizations, medical support personnel, etc.

Reasons why collaboration is important:

- Relationships are key to success
- Increases inclusive practices
- Trans-disciplinary approach to learning and instruction
- More holistic view of the learner
- Values multiple perspectives, cultures, and goals
- Increases effective communication
- Increases advocacy and access to resources and services



Contextualizing Collaboration

- Advocate for individual voices
- Learn about resources, legal mandates, non-government organizations, services available
- Be aware of cultural norms related to roles and responsibilities of different members of the team
- Support differences in language barriers, technology, access, time, travel



Improving Communication & Collaboration Activity

- Creating a team/partnership
 - Learning about others
 - Learning from others
- Collaborating & Co-teaching /UDL Lesson Planning & Meeting Template
 - Co assessing
 - Co planning
 - Co instructing
- Collaborative Reflection



Multimedia examples

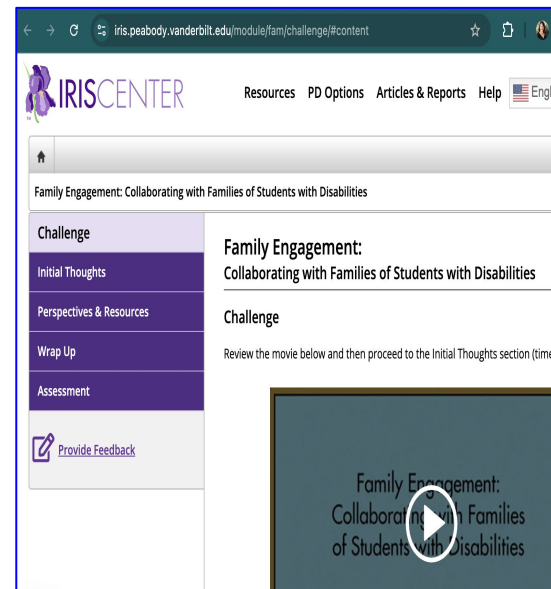
[IRIS Module on Collaborating with Families](#)

[CEEDAR High Leverage Practices \(Collaboration\)](#)

Real Co-Teachers of Virginia – [Elementary](#)

Real Co-Teachers of Virginia - [Middle & High](#)

TED Talk - [Teacher Parent relationships](#) and [another](#)
(listen to one or both)



Resources

National

- [Collaboration \(USDOE\)](#)
- [Understanding Collaboration in Special Education \(NASET\)](#)
- [2Teach Global Resources](#)
- [Inclusive School Network](#)

International:

- [Learners collaborate across the globe](#)
- [European Schoolnet recommendations for collaboration teaching](#)
- [Ways to Transform Education \(UNESCO\)](#)
- [Teachers Guide to Global Collaboration \(Globalguide.org\)](#)

References

Bauler, C. V., & Kang, E. J. (2020). Elementary ESOL and content teachers' resilient co-teaching practices: A long-term analysis. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 14(4), 338-354.

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Martin, C. & Hauth, C., (2025). *The survival guide for NEW special education teachers, 3rd edition*. Washington D.C., Council for Exceptional Children. ISBN-13 : 978-0865865693

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