

School Leadership for Students with Disabilities: Facilitating Collaboration Anchor Presentation

Overview for Facilitators

The CEEDAR Center is pleased to provide the anchor presentation on School Leadership for Students with Disabilities: Facilitating Collaboration. The materials are designed for use in a preservice course or in inservice professional development. Consistent with the Common Core Standards, this resource is designed to increase school leaders' abilities to improve student readiness for college and careers.

Speaker Notes

The Speaker Notes detail what the facilitator can say, verbatim, to explain each slide and the activities. Speaker notes are attached to this document and also included on each presentation slide. The notes are provided as a guide, and speakers should feel free to modify these as needed. Speakers may elaborate on explanations, provide examples, and/or engage participants in additional discussion. Directions and notes for the facilitator, not to be said aloud, are in italics.

Handouts

Activity B – Defining the Principal's Role

Activity E – Inventory of Available Consultants

References

For all other activities, prompts and instructions are provided on the slides.

Objectives

1. Explain the importance of a collaborative culture for student and teacher success.
2. Describe characteristics of collaborative work by school professionals.
3. Describe key leadership practices for principals to promote and sustain collaboration.

4. Identify major structures that enable teachers and specialists to collaborate in support of inclusive education.

Outline of Session with Activities and Approximate Times

The session is designed for approximately 3 hours.

Topic	Slides	Activity	Time in minutes
The case for collaboration	1-5	Introductions and presentation	10
	6	Activity A-Describing a collaborative culture	15
Concepts of collaboration	7-9	Presentation	10
	10	Activity B-Defining the principal's role (Handout)	20
Leadership overview	11	Presentation	5
	12	Activity C-Discussion of leadership practices	15
BREAK			15
Specific leadership practices	13-15	Presentation	10
	16	Activity D-Sharing collaborative experiences	20
	17-19	Presentation	10
	20	Activity E-Inventory of possible consultants (Handout)	10
	21	Presentation	5
	22	Activity F-Co-teaching video	20
	23-24	Presentation	10
Wrap-up	25	Activity G- Takeaways	5
References	26	Handout	

Suggested Follow-Up Professional Learning Opportunities

In professional learning communities, select from the following for further study on this topic:

Books & Monographs:

Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2012). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals*. (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Allyn & Bacon/Pearson.

Fullan, M. (2014). *The principal: Three keys to maximizing change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pugach, M.C., Blanton, L.P., Correa, V.I., McLeskey, J., & Langley, L.K. (2009). *The role of collaboration in supporting the induction and retention of new special education teachers* (Report No. RS-2). Retrieved from http://www.ncipp.org/reports/rs_2.pdf

Articles & Book Chapter:

Friend, M. (2014). Key concepts for understanding co-teaching. In *Co-Teach! Building and sustaining effective classroom partnerships in inclusive schools* (2nd ed.) (pp. 1-20). Greensboro, NC: Marilyn Friend.

Kohm, B., & Nance, B. (2009). Creating collaborative cultures. *Educational Leadership*, 67(2), 67-72.

Rafoth, M.A., & Foriska, T. (2006). Administrator participation in promoting effective problem-solving teams. *Remedial and Special Education*, 27(3), 130-135.

Speaker Notes

Slide 1—School Leadership for Student with Disabilities

In this fifth anchor presentation we look at principals' work in facilitating collaboration.

Slide 2—What is collaboration and why is it important for students with disabilities?

Today we examine what it means to have a school community collaborating to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Slide 3—Objectives

This session is designed to accomplish four objectives. Upon completion of this session, you should be able to: explain the importance of a collaborative culture for student and teacher success; describe characteristics of collaborative work by school professionals; describe key leadership practices for principals to promote and sustain collaboration; and identify major structures that enable teachers and specialists to collaborate in support of inclusive education.

Slide 4—A Collaborative Culture: Why Does It Matter?

So does having a collaborative school culture really matter? Why is it important? Multiple studies have found that schools with collaborative cultures produce greater student learning outcomes. Additionally, supportive collaborative cultures improve teacher retention and development. When teachers perceive strong positive administrative support for collaboration, they are more likely to work together purposefully, and they experience a greater sense of self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Increased teacher empowerment and professionalism is linked to improved student achievement.

Slide 5—Maximizing Impact

A sharp focus on student learning is what differentiates teacher collaboration that produces powerful results from other group work efforts. Fullan (2014) captures this important idea in this quote. *Allow participants to read and process, then pose this question to the group.* What strikes you about this insight into effective collaborative school culture?

Slide 6—Inclusive services for students with disabilities require collaboration

As noted in earlier sessions, a collaborative culture is especially important in inclusive schools where it is essential to create a sense of collective responsibility for *all* students. The complex learning and behavioral needs of students with disabilities and others at risk require classroom teachers and specialists to share their expertise in order to develop and implement appropriate programs. To serve students effectively, teachers need a network of collaborative support for planning and problem solving.

Slide 7—Activity A: Describing a Collaborative Culture

If we can agree that a collaborative culture is important for student and teacher success, then we need to understand in more detail the specific features involved. In this first activity, work with a partner and write your joint responses to the following questions:

- (1) What would you expect to see in a school with a collaborative culture that you may not observe elsewhere? List specific activities that would be going on.
- (2) If you spoke with teachers, what might they report about their experiences?

You have 10 minutes to discuss and write your responses. Then we'll share some ideas that you've generated. *After participants have completed the written tasks with a peer, ask for volunteers to share their thoughts on what they would see and hear in a highly collaborative school.*

Slide 8—Concepts of Collaboration (Friend & Cook, 2012)

Although the term is used freely, and there are many different conceptions of “collaboration,” the definition offered by Friend & Cook (2012) is widely accepted. They define interpersonal collaboration as a *style* for direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal. As a *style* of interaction, teachers can perform many different tasks *collaboratively*, such as curriculum design, lesson delivery, professional development, etc. Several essential features characterize true collaboration. Friend & Cook, as well as others, insist that collaboration must be voluntary, for mandated or forced interactions seldom produce desired outcomes. Additionally, they emphasize mutual goals, parity among participants, shared responsibility for participation and decision making, shared resources, and shared accountability as defining features of collaboration.

Slide 9—PSEL 2015 Standard and Collaboration

Another conceptualization of collaboration may be found in the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders approved through the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015).

<http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2015/ProfessionalStandardsforEducationalLeaders2015forNPBEAFINAL.pdf>

Although a number of the standards are relevant to collaborative activity, Standard 7 characterizes the principal’s role in fostering a positive professional community. Essentially, the standard and indicators describe what principals should do to promote and sustain collaborative cultures within their schools. In our next activity, we will review this in more detail.

Slide 10—Activity B: Defining the Principal’s Role (Handout)

Review the crosswalk document at the bottom of handout (activity B) to find examples for collaboration relating to principal leadership for students with disabilities. In a small group, consider similarities between the guidance document, and the Friend & Cook list of essential characteristics of collaboration. What common elements or themes are evident?

Now brainstorm a list of very specific **actions** a principal may take to facilitate a collaborative culture for students with disabilities.

Then, as a group, identify what you believe to be the **five** most important actions.

Upon completion of the small group activity, lead a brief discussion of common themes across the Friend & Cook definition and the PSEL Guidance Document. Save discussion of principal actions for Activity C.

Slide 11—Leadership Practices That Support Collaboration

In the prior activity, you brainstormed and discussed specific actions or behaviors of principals to facilitate a collaborative culture. During the remainder of this presentation, we'll consider leadership practices identified in the research literature to support and sustain collaboration. These include: modeling collaborative leadership, emphasizing and aligning collaborative expectations for teachers throughout career development, ensuring that the structures exist for teachers to work collaboratively, and providing resources to enable and sustain collaboration.

Slide 12—Activity C: Discussion of Key Leadership Practices

Now let's return to the list of principal actions you identified a few moments ago in your small group activity. *Lead a group discussion using the following prompts:* How well did the actions you identified in your small groups align with the four key practices emphasized in the research literature? Do any of the practices on the list surprise you? Why? Which of the practices might present the greatest challenges for principals? Why?

Slide 13—1. Modeling Collaborative Leadership

The first set of actions relate to modeling collaborative leadership. The principal is the visible leader who sets the tone for the school. The principal must convey the clear message that diverse contributions are not only welcome but also absolutely essential to continuous improvement. We're all familiar with the expression "walk the talk." Fullan (2014) takes it a step further emphasizing that principals must also "talk the walk" by being able to articulate a compelling vision of school as a professional learning community. Modeling a collaborative ethic also means actively engaging members of the community in shared governance of the school. A top-down, authoritarian administration is

hardly conducive to meaningful collaboration. Finally, numerous studies have noted the importance of **active** principal participation in professional development **alongside** the school faculty and staff. The principal who is perceived as the “leading learner” in the school sets the stage powerfully for others to commit to collaborative work.

Slide 14—2. Aligning Collaborative Expectations

The second set of actions involves emphasizing and aligning expectations for collaboration across the career continuum. As noted in the Friend & Cook (2012) conception, collaboration should be voluntary. Therefore, it’s important if at all possible to hire educators who demonstrate a clear commitment to collaboration, those who want to be part of a professional learning community. Similarly, active participation in collaborative work should be emphasized and modeled throughout induction and mentoring programs for new teachers. Most teacher performance evaluation systems are aligned with the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards (CCSSO, 2011) which include Performances, Essential Knowledge, and Critical Dispositions for collaboration in Standard 10. Collaborative contributions should be addressed in teacher evaluations, recognized as opportunities for growth, and celebrated as successes by the community. Since collaboration focused on student learning requires a complex set of communication and problem-solving skills and processes, ongoing professional development and support should be provided to enable educators to improve throughout their careers.

Slide 15—3. Ensuring Structures for Collaboration

A third set of leadership practices ensures that teachers have access to structures within the school for accomplishing collaborative work. Familiar structures like grade level or departmental teams can offer opportunities for meaningful collaboration. Remember we defined collaboration as a **style** of interaction, so it’s all about the ways in which teachers conduct their work. Professional development incorporating peer observations, lesson study, and other teacher-led activities can be highly collaborative and effective. Schools that truly commit to studying data on student learning and working together to improve instructional practice are often described as Professional Learning Communities

(PLCs). Additional structures such as support teams and consultants should also be available to help teachers plan and problem solve interventions to meet challenging student needs. To provide more extensive instructional and behavioral support for teachers, principals can mobilize specialists for co-teaching in inclusive classrooms. We'll now consider each of these support structures in more detail.

Slide 16—Activity D: Sharing Collaborative Experiences

In this next activity, you will reflect on experiences you've had like those we've just discussed. First, pick a familiar structure, such as grade level/departmental team, Lesson Study, PLC, or professional development that has been an especially positive experience for you. Then describe to a partner a time when teachers were working together especially collaboratively. Who was involved? What work were they doing? How were they interacting? What made this such a positive experience? After sharing your descriptions with one another, discuss the similarities and differences you note across your two examples. You'll have 10 minutes for this discussion with your partner and then we will regroup for a whole class discussion. *After partner work, ask volunteers to share their positive experiences. As facilitator, note common themes and relate their experiences to earlier definitions of collaboration.*

Slide 17—Additional Support Structures for Teachers to Meet Student Needs

Beyond the familiar structures we've just discussed that should be available to teachers for collaborative work, additional structures are needed to provide support when teachers encounter more complex or serious challenges with student learning and behavior. We'll consider four of the major structures for special needs support: assistance or support teams, multi-tiered systems of support (aka Response to Intervention or RTI), collaborative consultation, and co-teaching.

Slide 18—Support Teams

The Teacher Assistance Team model originated in the late-1970s, and many variations have evolved. These teams are known by different names, including Schoolwide Assistance Teams (SWAT), Instructional

Support Teams, Intervention Teams, etc. For our purposes, we will refer to these simply as Support Teams. These school-based, problem-solving teams help teachers identify and plan interventions for academic or behavioral problems interfering with student success. The Support Team is generally comprised of classroom teachers; relevant specialists, such as reading, ELL, or special education teachers; and often the Principal or Assistant Principal. The process begins with a teacher making a request for support that describes the behavior of concern, exactly what the student needs to do to be successful, student strengths and interests, interventions that have been attempted thus far, and any other relevant background and assessment information. The Team assists the teacher in defining the problem, setting the intervention goal, planning an intervention, and monitoring student performance. Although Assistance Teams predated the formal Response to Intervention (RTI) model, these types of support teams are now often incorporated into the RTI/Multi-tiered Systems of Support being implemented by states and school districts.

Slide 19—Response to Intervention (RTI) as a Multi-Tiered System of Support

Data-based problem-solving is the heart of Response to Intervention (RTI), what is often called a Multi-tiered System of Support. This definition captures the four critical elements of RTI: (1) universal screening to identify students at risk of poor outcomes; (2) continuous progress monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions provided; (3) multi-level or multi-tier prevention system providing access to increasingly intense levels of instruction and intervention; and (4) data-based decision making throughout the system. Although states and school districts have their own models of RTI, all should include school-based teams to help teachers adapt the core curriculum and apply behavioral interventions in the classroom to meet specific student needs. The school team also decides whether to move to the next level of assessment and intervention if students are not making sufficient progress (i.e., responding to intervention). Although the RTI system is more formalized than other structures we've considered, the system is most effective in schools that take a collaborative approach to problem solving and support for educators at all tiers of the system.

Slide 20—Activity E: Who’s Available as Consultants?

We have been discussing team approaches to planning and problem solving as they are typically conducted in small groups. The processes for planning and problem solving are also applicable in a dyad, and we refer to this as collaborative consultation. Although few, if any, specialists in your school may hold the title of “consultant,” there are many individuals who have special expertise and can contribute helpfully to addressing student concerns if we call on them. In Activity E, you are asked to complete a quick inventory of colleagues in your school who have unique expertise to share. The left column of the matrix lists eight general concerns frequently expressed by teachers. Feel free to add other concerns if you’d like. Try to identify multiple individuals in your building who might serve as collaborative consultants on each of these issues. Take about five minutes to complete the inventory on your own, and then we’ll share some ideas with the larger group.

Slide 21—Co-Teaching (Friend, 2014)

Whereas the collaborative structures described thus far have provided *indirect* support to students through assisting their teachers, co-teaching is a service delivery option that provides *direct* engagement with students in general education classrooms. As noted, the focus of co-teaching is providing all student access to the core curriculum. Having two teachers jointly responsible for planning, delivering and evaluating instruction requires a high level of collaboration. Friend emphasizes that co-teachers are co-equal partners, so both must be professionally credentialed teachers. (Indeed, teachers may work very collaboratively with their paraprofessionals, but by definition, that is not co-teaching.) Sharing is the operative word here. Teachers share the classroom, share instructional and related responsibilities, and share accountability for all students in the class. Although teaching roles change, often within a single lesson, both teachers are **actively** involved, contributing their complimentary expertise.

Slide 22—Activity F: Co-Teaching in Action

Co-teaching offers great potential for serving students in inclusive settings, yet it generally requires more commitment, preparation, and support than other structures for effective implementation. In their metasynthesis of research on co-teaching, Scruggs and his colleagues (2007) found that the “one teach-one assist” version was most often practiced in school settings—a version of co-teaching not recommended in the literature. Having the right partner, investing in co-planning, and sharing teaching roles are some of the factors critical to success. Let’s watch this short video of co-teachers in action and then we’ll discuss your reactions. *Play the video. Lead a whole group discussion by posing the following questions.* In what specific ways did these teachers try to maximize the advantage of having two credentialed professionals in the classroom? How does this example compare/contrast with your own observations of co-teaching?

Slide 23—4. Providing Resources

Now let’s consider our fourth set of leadership actions to facilitate collaboration. By far, the most documented recommendations for administrative support involve the provision of resources. Teachers know that meaningful collaboration cannot be accomplished out-of-sight as just one more performance expectation. Their number one need is adequate time for collaboration. Supportive principals build time for collaboration into the schedule, including common planning periods for teachers who are working together. The provision of clerical support for scheduling and record keeping can also make a difference. Principals should ensure manageable caseloads for co-teachers and consultants by limiting both the numbers of students and partners they are expected to serve. Earlier we discussed the importance of ongoing professional development on collaborative skills and processes, and effective leaders commit the necessary resources for quality experiences. As regulations permit, principals allocate resources flexibly to serve all student needs. When budgets are threatened, they protect resources for collaborative work because they understand the impact on student learning and teacher development. Finally, strong principals support effective collaborators for taking on these leadership roles, and they find ways to compensate them with salary increases and/or reduced loads.

Slide 24—Summary

Throughout this session, we have focused on the importance of a collaborative culture and specific ways that principals can support collaborative work of teachers. With a sharp focus on student learning, collaboration intensifies teachers' instructional efforts and positively impacts student achievement. A collaborative culture also develops teachers' skills, enhances their sense of efficacy, and increases their commitment to the profession. Principals play a major role in creating and sustaining a collaborative culture by modeling collaborative leadership practices, aligning expectations for collaboration throughout the career continuum, ensuring teachers have access to structures that enable collaborative work, and providing resources, especially time for collaboration.

Slide 25—Activity G: Personal Takeaways from This Session

In this wrap up activity, I'd like you to think about what have been the most important takeaways from this session for **you** personally. Take a few minutes to reflect on what we've discussed, and then write your responses to the following questions in your notes.

What's the most important thing you've learned about the principal's role in facilitating collaboration?

What will you **do** as principal to promote a more collaborative culture in your school? Identify 1-3 specific actions you plan to take as a result of what you've learned today.

Slide 26—References Provided in a Handout

The Handout provided includes the list of all references cited in this presentation.

References

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