COLLABORATIVE TEACHING IN AN INCLUSIVE MODEL

1. OVERVIEW

Collaboration is a style of interaction professionals use to undertake shared responsibilities. Collaboration refers to HOW professionals interact. One of the earliest definitions for collaboration is as follows, "Collaboration is a style for direct interaction between at least two parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal." (Friend & Cook, 1989) The term inclusion is often associated with collaboration. Inclusion is a philosophy or set of beliefs based on the idea that "everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having their educational needs met." (Stainback & Stainback, 1990). Both NCLB and IDEA make it imperative that students with disabilities, no matter what their level of functioning, access the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible. Inclusion is driven by the needs of the **student.** Collaboration is driven by the needs of the **teachers.**

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLABORATIVE INTERACTIONS

- Parity-In collaboration, each participant's contribution is equally valued and participants have equal power in decision making.
- Voluntary-Collaborative relationships are most successful when they are entered into freely and exist by choice.
- Mutual Goals-Collaboration occurs in response to a goal, problem, or need that is jointly shared by the participants. These goals must be agreed upon by all participants.
- Shared Responsibility-Participants share responsibilities and in the decision making it entails.
- Shared Accountability-Participants have equal accountability for the outcome of their endeavors.
- Shared Resources-Participants in a collaborative endeavor share materials and human resources.

3. STYLES OF COLLABORATIVE INTERACTIONS IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS (Often referred to in as Cooperative Teaching or Co-teaching))

Co-Teaching can be approached in numerous ways. In each approach listed below, both teachers take on teaching and supportive roles. Determining the best approach depends on student needs, the subject being taught, the teachers' experience, and practical considerations such as space and time for planning.

- Team Teaching
- Station Teaching
- Parallel Teaching
- Re-Teaching
- Supplemental Learning Activities
- One Teach, One Observe
- One Teach, One Monitor

4. **BENEFITS OF COLLABORATIVE INTERACTIONS**

Educators and researchers have often described inclusion as "a great idea done badly". This thought has sparked volumes of conflicting research and case studies on inclusive programs. What is evident is that inclusive programs that utilize effective collaborative practices do produce positive results. Some of the benefits of these practices are:

- All students benefit from the expertise of numerous individuals.
- Collaborative teams share leadership and responsibilities.
- Students and teachers learn from each other and problem solve together
- Instruction is geared to match students at all levels of achievement.
- Instruction is active, creative, and collaborative among members in the classroom.
- Activities are designed to facilitate participation by all students in the classroom.
- The classroom teacher, special education teacher, related services staff, and families assume shared ownership for educating all students.
- Students are evaluated by individually appropriate standards.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

A collaborative teaching style does not necessarily come naturally. Visible leadership at the top levels is vital to the success of an inclusive/collaborative initiative. An atmosphere of trust is essential if teams are to work effectively. It is the responsibility of administrators to accurately identify a climate open for collaboration before the process begins. Effective positive communication is important in establishing and maintaining relationships. The literature describes seven features that are fundamental to appropriate and effective inclusion programs (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, Williams, 2000). They are the following:

- Collaborative culture
- Shared leadership
- Coherent vision
- Comprehensive planning
- Adequate resources
- Sustained implementation
- Continuous evaluation and improvement

6. GETTING STARTED

The steps for implementing an inclusive model utilizing a collaborative approach are outlined below (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, Williams, 2000).Each step will take foresight and planning on the administrations part. A good understanding of where your staff falls with regards to the philosophies of both inclusive practices and collaborative interactions is critical.

1. Begin identifying and building school teams.
2. Start planning early for the next school year.
3. Recruit and support capable participants.
4. Provide ongoing professional development and resources.
5. Create balanced, well planned classroom rosters.

6. Provide scheduled collaborative planning time in participants schedules.
7. Provide a climate for sustained implementation.
8. Build a plan that includes opportunities for continuous evaluation, reflection, and improvement.

7. SUSTAINED IMPLEMENTATION, EVALUATION, AND IMPROVEMENT
Inclusive practices have been part of the York County School Division's polices for over a decade. "Time and sustained effort allow good ideas to become accepted practice" (Walther-Thomas, et.al., 2000, p 285). In order for inclusion and collaboration to continue to flourish there is a need to collect outcome data to provide information on achieved results. The process of continuous evaluation helps to ensure that the school division is results-oriented. Educators need to be able to communicate to multiple audiences what results they are aiming for, how these results will be accomplished, and what outcomes are expected.

7. RESOURCES
Walther-Thomas, C. S., Korinek, L., McLaughlin, V.L., & Williams, B.T. (2000).
Collaboration for inclusive education: Developing successful programs. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/info_briefs/share/collaboration.pdf

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www.powerof2.org