

Special Education and General Education Collaboration

Both general and special education teachers are responsible for teaching students with disabilities. Collaboration is a style of interaction between teachers voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal. When teachers work together, they share their expertise, their resources, and their support for the students. Collaboration requires that special educators become more adept in content knowledge and curriculum development, and that general educators understand their specific responsibilities related to implementing the IEP of a child with a disability, that is, how to accommodate all students, including students with disabilities who spend the vast majority of their days in the general education classroom. (CEEDAR Center, Teacher Education Reform Initiatives and Special Education, 2014.)

Promising Practices:
Inclusion
Equity
Opportunity

WHO NEEDS IT?

All educators, including administrators in the preK-12 education system, related services personnel, and faculty members at Institutions of Higher Education.

WHAT IS IT?

- Collaboration requires the active involvement of general and special educators and the support of school administrators. Collaboration occurs in response to a goal, problem, or need that is jointly shared by the participants.
- Each participant's contribution is equally valued and participants have equality in decision making.
- Participants in a collaborative activity share responsibility for participating in the activity and in the decision making it entails.
- Participants in a collaborative activity have equal accountability for the outcome of that activity.
- Participants in a collaborative activity share material and human resources.

WHO SUPPORTS THIS WORK?

- SWIFT Schools
www.swiftschools.org
- IRIS Center
<http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>
- CEEDAR Center
www.ceedar.org

HOW DO WE KNOW IT WORKS?

According to researchers, the use of collaboration in education:

- Raises the expectations and increases the performance of all students (Hardman, McDonald, & Welch, 1998).
- Optimizes services for students with disabilities in inclusive settings (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014).
- Benefits students with disabilities who spend a great percentage of time in general education classrooms when their teachers are prepared to work with all students and collaborate effectively with special or general education teacher counterparts (Blanton & Pugach, 2007).
- Relies on the support of administrators to ensure that time is built into educators' respective schedules throughout the school year to co-plan and team teach (Nguyen, 2012).

HOW DO WE IMPLEMENT IT?

See the links below for high-quality resources that may assist with Collaboration:

- ◆ [Teacher Education Reform Initiatives and Special Education](#)
- ◆ [Preparing Special Educators for Collaboration in the Classroom](#)
- ◆ [Breaking the Language Barrier: Promoting Collaboration between General and Special Educators](#)
- ◆ [Team Teaching in Teacher Education: General and Special Education Faculty Experiences and Perspectives](#)

The U.S. Department of Education issues this *Promising Practices* series as part of the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative to provide educators, administrators, and pre-service teachers with practical information about approaches shown to improve early literacy and behavior outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities, English learners, and young men and boys of color. This series addresses MBK Taskforce Recommendation 6.2: Enhance and expand efforts to develop and promote best practices for teachers to address instructional and classroom issues such as early literacy screening.

LINKS TO RESOURCES AND TOOLS

SWIFT Schools — www.swiftschools.org

IRIS Center — <http://Iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>

CEEDAR Center — www.ceedar.org

Teacher Education Reform Initiatives and Special Education — http://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/LS-3_FINAL_09-20-14.pdf

Preparing Special Educators for Collaboration in the Classroom — <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1034079.pdf>

Collaborative Programs in General and Special Teacher Education: An Action Guide for Higher Education and State Policy Makers — <http://programs.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/CPGSTE%20Action%20Guide%20PDF%20Final.pdf>

Voices From the Field: Skill Sets Needed for Effective Collaboration and Co-Teaching — <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ997467.pdf>

General Education and Special Education Teachers Collaborate to Support English Language Learners with Learning Disabilities — <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ986820.pdf>

Breaking the Language Barrier: Promoting Collaboration between General and Special Educators — <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ795175.pdf>

Team Teaching in Teacher Education: General and Special Education Faculty Experiences and Perspectives — <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ796434.pdf>

First-Year Special Educators' Relationships with Their General Education Colleagues — http://www.teqjournal.org/Back%20Issues/Volume%2035/VOL35%20PDFS/35_1/17griffin-35_1.pdf