



Collaborative Practices



“The diversity that is due to a person's disability can be integrated into his respective unique individuality, and relatives, teachers, friends and the whole of society must contribute to this. Thus, for disabled people, as for any other human being, it is not important that they do what others do but that they do what is truly good for them, increasingly making the most of their talents and responding faithfully to their own human and supernatural vocation. Recognition of their rights must be followed by a sincere commitment on the part of all to create practical living conditions, structures which provide support and legal protection that can respond to the needs and dynamics of the growth of disabled persons and of those who are involved in their situation, beginning with their families. Over and above any other consideration or individual or group interest, no effort must be spared in promoting the integral good of these people. Nor can they be denied the support and protection they need, even if this entails a greater financial and social burden.” (Pope John Paul II – International Symposium on the Dignity and Rights of the Mentally Disabled Person)

“I’m the Facilitator in this school, but when I asked the kids in Andrew’s class who they thought I was they said that they thought I was Andrew’s dad. This really made me think about my role and that of the classroom teacher when it comes to students with severe disabilities.” (Jeffrey Libb)

While learning services facilitators are responsible for the legal and procedural aspects of abiding by special education law, all teachers have joint responsibility for collaborating on the design of curriculum, for teaching, for providing academic support, for grading, supporting positive students conduct, and engaging in student-specific problem solving. **The provision of a common planning time is critical for the successful collaboration among team members.**

General and special education teachers and related service providers demonstrate shared responsibility by collaborating in the design, implementation, and evaluation of students’ educational programs and their IPP’s.

Teacher-to-Teacher Collaboration

A Bold Move Forward by Joellen Killion (www.learningforward.org)

Collaboration among educators builds shared responsibility and improves student learning.

Expertise depends on skillfulness in collaboration. Collaboration leads to building collective responsibility among educators so that every student, not just some, succeeds. Collaboration is enhanced with structures, processes, and facilitation. Teacher leaders can bring those into networks of teachers in schools, districts, and beyond.

Schools will be far more likely to be able to provide great teaching for every student when collaboration among educators is routine and daily. In addition, when all educators in a school assume a collective responsibility for their own and students’ success, we fulfill our moral commitment to children.

Collaboration among educators improves learning opportunities for students. In many schools, a culture of collaboration and collective responsibility is replacing the culture of isolation. Educators are recognizing that all students benefit when they pool their expertise. They also realize that educating all students requires more knowledge and effort than any one individual educator possesses (Hirsh & Killion, p. 100).

Within collaborative teams, teacher leaders guide professional learning, facilitate problem solving, promote reflection, and challenge assumptions. Collaboration deepens understanding and builds a culture of continuous improvement driven by a healthy dissatisfaction or dissonance to stimulate intellectual dialogues, research, inquiry, and reflection.

Collaboration will not solve every problem in schools today, yet it is one way to bring to the forefront what every educator knows and to use that information to improve teaching and learning. Roland Barth challenges educators when he states, "I wonder how many children's lives might be saved if we educators disclosed what we know to each other" (Barth, 2001, p. 60). When educators commit to developing their own and their colleagues' expertise so that every student in the school achieves, students benefit.

Collaborative Planning Circles

The "Collaborative Planning Circle" (CPC) meeting, is a monthly process of dialogue between the multi-discipline partners within a school community. To date CPC partners have included administrators, student services facilitators, learning assistance teachers, division psychologist, occupational therapist, speech language pathologists, director of student services, parents, home support agencies (Next Step), mental health workers, and classroom teachers. The goal of the CPC is to strengthen school based practices and families through collaborative practice and shared expertise. At the CPC this involves a discussion of the strengths as well as the challenges facing the children and families of the school and its community. Through this dialogue the various partners use their expertise and services to "wrap around" the child or family in a manner that will promote growth, capacity and long term life success.

Core team members include: Learning Services Facilitator, Principal, Classroom Teacher Mental Health Worker, and Occupational and Speech Therapists. Parent and/or students should be included in the CPC meeting as much as possible.

Other members of the team may consist of any of the following (and more) dependent on specific student: Division Psychologist, FNMI Teacher, ELL Lead Teacher, Saamis Immigration Worker, Associate Superintendent of Learning Services, Learning Assistance Teacher, Learning Coach, Extra-curricular Teacher, Learning Assistant, Behaviour Associate, Agency Representatives (CORE, Next Step...etc.), Resource Officer, Priest, FSCD Worker, Physical Therapist, Educator for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Educator for the Visual Impaired, SLPA, medical personal, SSCD supports (OT, SLP, Behaviour Consultation)...etc.

Rather than bringing a specific student to the Collaborative Planning Circle, teachers may choose to come to the CPC around a small group or whole group challenge with the intention of collaborating related to supports and interventions at the targeted or universal levels.

The **Alberta Education Collaborative Practices Information Bank** provides tools that support processes related to collaborative planning, implementation and evaluation. The bank consists of five tools that can be found at <http://ideas.education.alberta.ca/hsc/current-projects/collaborative-practices/knowledge-mobilization>. School based teams may choose to use these to help guide processes related to circles of support at their schools.

- First Coordinated Service Planning Team Meeting [Word](#) [PDF](#)
- Coordinated Service Planning Team Evaluation [Word](#) [PDF](#)
- Coordinated Service Planning Implementation Survey [Word](#) [PDF](#)
- Factors for Successful Collaboration [Word](#) [PDF](#)
- Levels of Collaboration Rubric [Word](#) [PDF](#)