

Collaboration and Teaming

Module I: An Introduction to Collaboration and Its Essential Characteristics

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Objectives

As a result of successful completion of this module, participants will:

- Demonstrate the ability to define collaboration as it relates to collaboration and teaming in school settings
- Demonstrate knowledge of the defining characteristics and principles of collaboration
- Demonstrate knowledge of the elements of an effective collaborative teaming process
- Apply knowledge of collaborative practices to an analysis of an existing team

Essential Questions

- *What are the origins of collaboration and collaborative teaming practices in educational settings?*
- *How is collaboration defined in the literature and in practice?*
- *What principles form the foundations of collaboration, and in what ways do these principles contribute to effective collaboration?*
- *What structures, processes, and practices contribute to effective collaboration in a team context?*
- *What additional considerations need to be made when collaborative teaming involves professionals and parents?*
- *In what ways are collaborative practices a necessary component of the goal to support students with disabilities and students placed-at risk? How is social justice promoted through collaborative practice?*

Rationale for Module Development

In spite of its importance and complexity (see the literature review below), collaborative principles and practices are often assumed rather than explicitly taught in pre-service programs for teachers and administrators. The purpose of this module in collaboration is to introduce school principals and other administrators to critical elements of collaboration as identified in the literature. Specifically, the module introduces participants to the origins of collaboration, its underlying principles, and specific structures, processes, and practices that promote effective collaboration in team settings. Its goals are to establish a rationale for engaging in collaborative practice and to help participants understand some of the basic principles and processes associated with effective collaboration as it occurs in team processes. While collaboration occurs in many forms and scenarios, it is an underlying assumption of this module that a key application of collaboration for school administrators is collaboration involving school professionals and the parents of children placed at risk and those with disabilities. The module includes a number of activities to help participants explore various aspects of collaboration;

however, there is also an assumption that because many students of educational administration have not been exposed to the fundamental elements of collaboration and collaborative teaming processes, there is a need for some “teacher-directed” activities as well. Future modules will include a focus on the stages of group development, and further exploration of collaboration with families, especially families from diverse backgrounds. It is suggested that these modules be implemented in courses focused on topics such as educational leadership, organizational theory and structures, and organizational change.

Pre-Reading

It is recommended that participants read the following two chapters prior to presentation of the module, as a way of familiarizing themselves with the origins of collaboration, and the essential principles, characteristics and processes associated with effective collaborative teams:

- Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2003). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals (4th edition)*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Chapter 1
- Villa, R., Thousand, J., Stainback, W., & Stainback, S. (1992). *Restructuring for caring and effective education: An administrative guide to creating heterogeneous schools*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, pp. 73 - 108.

Brief Summary of the Literature

Over the past 25 years or more, the practice of collaboration has emerged as a primary mode for accomplishing the work of schools and communities, with several forces converging to bring collaboration to the forefront of educational practice. Some of the roots of collaboration trace back to passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) in 1975, now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA. IDEA mandated collaborative practices through the formation of multidisciplinary evaluation teams and IEP teams, and through the requirement for parent involvement in educational decision-making for students with disabilities (Turnbull et al., 2003). Following the law's passage, an early form of collaboration was practiced through a model in which special educators provided consultation to classroom teachers regarding the needs of students with disabilities. Its intent was to provide teachers with the skills necessary to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom rather than in more separate settings. Over time, this approach was criticized for its reliance on an "expert model of consultation" (Pugach & Johnson, 2002, p. 29) in which special educators were viewed as using overly directive styles of communication and promoting a sense of expertise that made it difficult for classroom teachers to feel invested in the education of students with disabilities. Newer conceptions of special and general education partnerships emphasized a model of collaborative consultation (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986; Johnson, Pugach, & Hammittee, 1988), characterized by parity in relationships, a sense of shared responsibility for students and the use of collaborative processes, including shared decision-making and problem-solving.

Collaboration has also emerged as an important concept and practice in school leadership and school reform. Hierarchical and authoritarian views of leadership have been challenged by practices such as site-based leadership and shared approaches to leadership that favor collaborative decision-making practices as the preferred route to school change and improved student performance (Lambert, 1998; Pugach & Johnson, 2002; Rubin, 2002; Smith & Scott, 1990). Collaborative leadership approaches are central to the development of models for promoting the tenets of social justice and school success for children from low income and diverse cultural backgrounds (Riester, Pursch, & Skria, 2002), and school and community collaborations that result in improved outcomes for all children (Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Smith & Scott, 1990). Teachers have been encouraged to participate on collaborative teams to develop and coordinate curriculum, engage in co-teaching, and address the needs of students placed at-risk through various forms of teacher assistance or prereferral intervention teams (Bahr, Whitten, Dieker, Kocarek, & Manson, 1999; Chalfant & Pysh, 1989; Dieker, 1998; Dieker, 2002; Pysh & Chalfant, 1997; Pugach & Johnson, 2002). Collaboration with related service providers and human services professionals has been identified as the optimal way to create coordinated partnerships that provide support to children and families with multiple educational and family support needs (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2000; Friend & Cook, 2003; Pugach & Johnson, 2002). Each of these applications of collaboration emphasizes the importance of collaborative practice as a vehicle for bringing together the people and services that are needed to promote positive school outcomes for students with disabilities and those placed at-risk of school failure. Collaborative practices have the potential to result in a greater sense of empowerment among teachers

and service providers who can, over time, gain an increased sense of responsibility and feeling of competence in their ability to support children with disabilities and those placed at-risk of school failure in meeting standards within the general classroom setting. Additionally, collaborative practices have the potential to empower students and families by increasing their participation in educational planning, enhancing their sense of belonging in schools and communities, and improving academic outcomes for all students.

Yet in spite of the fact that collaboration has been described as a “best practice” in schools, it has not been uniformly defined or understood in the literature (Friend & Cook, 2003). Those who have taken on the task of defining it have focused on its underlying nature and principles as well as related team processes and skills. Friend and Cook, for example, define collaboration as a *style* that defines the types of interactions, problem-solving and decision-making processes that occur when two or more people are engaged in specific tasks and activities:

Interpersonal collaboration is a style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal (p. 5).

Villa, Thousand, Stainback, and Stainback (1992) echo the concepts of parity and shared responsibility in their characterization of collaboration as an organizing principle and style of working together that is defined by the presence of a specific collaborative teaming process. Most agree that effective collaboration is contingent upon the presence of specific skills and styles of communication that need to be developed and practiced by individuals as well as groups of individuals coming together as collaborative teams (Friend & Cook; Pugach & Johnson; Villa et al.). Teams do not typically master collaborative practices all at once; rather, at least four stages of team development have been identified in the literature to describe progression towards increasingly effective forms of collaboration and problem-solving (Friend & Cook; Villa et al.; Wheelan, 1999). Collaborative teams involving professionals and families of diverse backgrounds need to pay particular attention to the ways in which different values and communication styles interact with the collaborative process and may serve as a barrier to those who are not of the dominant culture (Harry, 1992; Lake & Billingsley, 2000; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2002; Rao, 2000; Zhang & Bennett, 2003). In addition, collaborative teams are most successful in schools that embrace collaboration as part of their overall mission and belief system and provide the time, resources, and structures necessary to develop and maintain a true collaborative culture, as opposed to a more contrived form of collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994).

Alignment with the Four Tenets of Social Justice Articulated by the Institute

- *Developing school cultures that include all students.* The module emphasizes team structures and approaches that use collaborative processes to identify and address the needs of students with disabilities and those placed at-risk of school failure and their families. Collaborative approaches are viewed as being a powerful tool in bringing together people with diverse perspectives to engage in creative problem-solving and the building of relationships that result in more inclusive school cultures. A separate module with a singular focus on collaboration with students and families will be developed as a follow-up to this introductory module.
- *Ensuring literacy for all learners.* Although the module does not directly address literacy, it addresses processes and characteristics of teams that are essential to collaborative data-based decision-making, including that which occurs when student performance data related to literacy is analyzed and used for school improvement efforts.
- *Creating cultures of empowerment.* Collaboration is essential to creating cultures of empowerment. Leaders need to be skilled facilitators who can develop and use shared leadership models that promote the empowerment of teachers and community members. The module emphasizes the ways in which collaboration is not only a style and a practice, but a basic tenet of a culture that promotes the empowerment of others, including students and families.
- *Ensuring that family and community perspectives are at the heart of the culture of the school.* Effective collaboration serves as one of the primary processes for ensuring that families and community members experience meaningful participation and a sense of belonging to the school community.

Description of Activities

The agenda and suggested learning activities for this module are as follows:

1. *Defining Collaboration* (30 minutes)
 - Individual and small group activity: *Metaphors for collaboration*
 - Identification of situations in which participants need to be able to collaborate
 - Presentation: Historical origins of collaboration
 - Activity: *Comparison of Friend and Cook definition of collaboration with definitions generated during the metaphor activity*
2. *Elements of an Effective Collaborative Teaming Process* (50 minutes)
 - Optional Activity: *What Makes an Effective Team?*
 - Power point presentation: *Characteristics of Effective Collaboration*
 - Case Study Activity: *What Went Wrong?: Searching for More Effective Ways to Promote Collaboration in an IEP Meeting*
4. *Wrap-up and Assignment* (10 minutes)

Descriptions of related activities follow:

1. *Defining Collaboration* (30 minutes)

The module begins with an introduction to collaboration and its definitions and historical context in education. In the *metaphors for collaboration* activity, participants are asked to begin thinking about the concept of collaboration by recalling two situations with which they have been involved where collaboration was supposed to be occurring. One of these is to be a positive example of collaboration, where the other is to be a situation in which collaboration was desired but not achieved. Participants are asked to think of and write down a metaphor for each situation. Metaphors can be open-ended, or participants can be asked to think of metaphors related to “something in a kitchen” or “something having to do with meal preparation.” Typically, participants enjoy this activity, identifying positive metaphors such as baking the perfect cake, creating a delicious meal with friends, or making a great salad. Negative images have included using a blender without the top, failing to have all ingredients for a meal, or trying to bake cookies without a recipe. Following the creation of metaphors, participants spend about 10 minutes sharing theirs in groups of three or four students. Their task is to identify two metaphors that they agree are most illustrative of positive and negative examples of collaboration. From these, they also generate a brief definition of collaboration. Each group then shares their favorite metaphors and definitions with the group as a whole. Following this, the instructor asks participants to think back to the origins of their metaphors to identify and share specific situations in which collaboration was thought to be the appropriate means through which to accomplish a specific set of tasks (e.g., school-based pre-referral teams, curriculum task forces, co-teaching partnerships, etc.).

In the *presentation of the context of collaboration*, the instructor uses the preceding literature review and the accompanying handout to give a brief overview of the evolution

of the practice of collaboration in schools. Alternatively, participants may be asked to draw upon their background knowledge and experience to identify what they see as the major precursors to the relatively recent focus on collaboration in the schools. Responses can be recorded publicly, with the instructor adding information as appropriate. Finally, participants are presented with the Friend and Cook conceptual framework for collaboration (see Handout 2). Their task is to return to the groups they worked in previously to discuss the framework and to compare it to the definitions of collaboration they identified earlier. As part of their discussion of the definition of collaboration, participants are also asked to consider the following questions:

- *Why collaborate?*
- *When do you need to collaborate and what are the purported benefits of collaboration?*

See Handout #1, *Emerging Conceptions of Collaboration*, which lists key points from the overview of collaboration, and Handout #2, *A Conceptual Framework for Collaboration*.

2. *Elements of an Effective Collaborative Teaming Process (50 minutes)*

Activities related to identifying the characteristics of effective collaboration may begin with a short *small group activity* outlined on Handout #3, “*What Makes an Effective Team?*.” This is considered an optional activity, which may be deleted if participants are more versed in collaboration and/or if the instructor wishes to devote more time to the case study activity. The instructions on this sheet ask participants to begin by taking three minutes to individually circle 5 words that best describe what they consider to be the 5 most essential elements of an effective team. Next, participants come together in groups of 4 or 5 to spend 10 minutes coming to consensus on eight words that their group believes best represents the essential elements of collaboration. Groups are also directed to answer three questions on the bottom of the handout regarding the process they used to obtain agreement on 8 terms, the level of difficulty they had in reaching consensus, and observations about any emerging patterns in their choice of terms. Following group work, each group is asked to report its results to the larger group. The task of the instructor is to identify and record decision-making processes used in small groups. Specific group responses are recorded under the broad headings of “Task” and “Relationship,” to highlight the idea that collaboration is generally thought of as a process which balances the accomplishment of tasks with the building of relationships. In viewing the recorded responses, participants may discuss which of these two aspects of collaboration their groups seemed to identify as most important.

This introductory activity is followed by a presentation and discussion of the elements of an effective teaming process. The process is outlined in the Thousand and Villa chapter, as well as on Handout #4: *Elements of an Effective Collaborative Teaming Process*, and Power Point #1. While Friend and Cook’s conceptual framework for collaboration identifies some similar characteristics, this part of the module is focused on the more concrete and observable aspects of collaborative teaming processes that have been identified in the literature on effective student cooperative group learning (see Johnson &

Johnson, 1987) and adapted for consideration by adult collaborative teams (see Thousand and Villa, 1992). In presenting these characteristics it is important to convey to participants that while not all teams exhibit the full range of characteristics or the level of group structure suggested by Thousand and Villa, effective teams tend to possess some “critical mass” of the effective elements being discussed. It is important for collaborative teams to consider their structure and operating procedures in light of their purpose and membership. It is suggested that the instructor use the Power Point materials as the basis for a review and discussion of the five characteristics, drawing on students’ experiences as appropriate to identify more specific examples of the use (or lack thereof) of suggested processes and structures.

Finally, this discussion serves as the beginning of a larger conversation about collaborative teams involving families and in particular, families of diverse backgrounds, that is expanded upon in a future module. Following the presentation of the five characteristics, participants break into groups of 4 – 5 to discuss a case study scenario involving a less than perfect collaborative team that includes parents and school professionals. The scenario is taken from the *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership* and is available on-line at www.ucea.org/cases/. See JCEL Volume 4, Number 2, Spring 2001: *Making an Appropriate Special Education Placement: Conflict Abounds!* by George P. White and Thomas A. Mayes. Groups are asked to read the case study and then to individually rate this team’s performance with respect to collaboration using Handout #5, *Checklist for Collaborative Teams*. Following this, group members hold a discussion in which they discuss and record responses to the following questions:

- *What is working/not working in this scenario with respect to the collaborative teaming process?* Use Handout #5 as a guide for discussing the degree to which the collaborative process is present in this scenario.
- *What aspects of the 5 elements of effective collaborative teaming might the principal have applied to this situation to promote a more collaborative process?*
- *There are a number of indications that Carey and her family come from a privileged background (i.e., her parents are both professionals, they have a lawyer, etc). In what ways does this affect the degree to which collaboration is/is not occurring? How might this situation have been different if Carey’s family was not a family with resources?*

Group responses should be shared with the large group, with the instructor noting the ways in which collaboration involving families and professionals requires additional considerations in relation to each of the five elements, and the ways in which a variety of family circumstances may require still further attention. For example, the establishment of *face to face interaction* should take into account family preferences and necessary accommodations regarding meeting times; the establishment of *positive interdependence* requires professionals to pay particular attention to the need to value the expertise of family members and to encourage their participation; the *development of interpersonal skills* and establishment of *group processing* techniques need to take into consideration various cultural norms related to communication and collaboration; and attention to *individual accountability* needs to ensure that parents are involved in communication

processes (e.g., they receive agendas and minutes) and that the group establishes a sense of shared responsibility among all team members.

5. *Wrap-up and Assignment (10 minutes)*

The session closes by having participants identify 1) what was most important to them in the preceding discussion and activities, 2) what they believe to be the primary reasons for promoting collaboration, and 3) what they believe to be the link between collaboration and the creation of services and school cultures that promote social justice. The last question should focus in particular on the ways in which collaborative processes may be a benefit for students with disabilities, students placed at-risk, and their families. As a way of assessing the degree to which participants can apply their knowledge of the principles of collaboration and characteristics of effective teams, an assignment is given in which students are asked to identify a team with which they work and to assess it using a checklist outlining the underlying principles of collaboration and elements of effective collaborative teaming. The *Checklist for Collaborative Teams* to be used as the basis for this assignment is found in Handout #5.

Annotated Reference List

Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2003). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals* (4th edition). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Interactions is a “must read” for anyone interested in the topic of collaboration. Friend and Cook provide an excellent overview of the historical and theoretical roots of collaboration, as well as practical, skill-based chapters covering topics such as interpersonal communication, team dynamics, interpersonal problem solving, and difficult interactions. In addition, chapters on co-teaching, working with families, and working with paraeducators provide teachers and administrators with strategies for practicing collaboration in a variety of contexts. While the book refers often to adult-adult interactions related to collaborating on behalf of students with disabilities, school practitioners of all types will find its contents relevant and useful.

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers’ work and culture in the postmodern age*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

While somewhat dated in terms of its year of publication, Hargreaves’ vision of a truly collaborative school embracing postmodern perspectives always sparks excellent discussions and a refreshing opportunity to re-frame how we think about collaboration and the structure of schools. Part three, *Culture*, provides some thought-provoking reading on the potential pitfalls of collaboration and the need to avoid substituting true collaboration for “contrived collegiality.”

Idol, L., Paolucci-Whitcomb, P., & Nevin, A. (1986). *Collaborative consultation*. Rockville, MD: Aspen Publishers.

This book is considered to be a classic in the field of collaboration, in that it outlines a specific approach to collaboration among special and general educators for the purpose of serving students with disabilities in general education settings. Its focus leans more heavily on the side of special education than will be appreciated by some; still its approach to collaboration and problem-solving underlies much of how we practice collaboration in a wider variety of contemporary settings.

Johnson, L.J., Pugach, M.C., & Hammittee, D. (1988). Barriers to effective special education consultation. *Remedial and Special Education*, 9 (6), 41 – 47.

This article will be of interest to those wishing to further explore the roots of collaborative practice in schools and the shift that was made in special education from a behaviorally-based consultation model to the more collaborative model embraced today in partnerships between general and special educators.

Lambert, L. (1998). *Building leadership capacity in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Lambert's book addresses the need to build leadership capacity in our schools in order to build a sense of shared responsibility and purpose of community. In her view, "leadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively" (p. 5). While this book is less concerned with specific processes and skills related to collaboration than others, it provides excellent examples of schools that have been successful in broadening their base of leadership by promoting dialogue, shared learning, and a collaborative approach to improving schools.

Pugach, M.C., & Johnson, L. (2002). *Collaborative practitioners, collaborative schools* (2nd edition). Denver: Love Publishing.

Collaborative practitioners, collaborative schools is an aptly titled book, in that it combines a focus on the development of individual and team skills in collaboration with a more systemic view of the ways in which schools can develop and support a variety of collaborative structures. Written in a highly readable style, the book includes short case studies that allow readers to quickly apply concepts being discussed, as well as applied activities following each chapter. The book contains three excellent chapters on communication skills and barriers to effective communication, as well as chapters highlighting collaborative teaching models and school, family and community partnerships. Its practical and applied approach has broad appeal for both teachers and administrators who are interested in using collaborative practices to address the needs of students with disabilities and those placed at-risk.

Rubin, H. (2002). *Collaborative leadership.: Developing effective partnerships in communities and schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rubin writes that "this is a simple book intended to help leaders lead, teachers teach, and intellectuals to think more effectively with and about collaboration" (p. xii). His intent is to create a dialogue with readers aimed at understanding a relational and collaborative approach to leadership that promotes "meaningful public engagement and broadly inclusive participation in public education" (p. xii). The book's focus on understanding collaboration and collaborative leadership through theory, practice, and reflection makes it important and relevant reading for leaders wishing to promote social justice by working with others to support the needs of children, families, and communities.

Turnbull, R., Turnbull, A., Shank, M., & Smith, S.J. (2004). *Exceptional lives: Special education in today's schools* (4th edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

This expansive and detailed text on special education serves as an excellent resource for teachers and administrators who need to know about special education. While its focus is much broader than the topic of collaboration, it embraces collaboration as a guiding principle and a necessary condition for promoting inclusive approaches to educating students with disabilities and those placed at-risk. It contains hundreds of additional resources, including websites, that may be useful to administrators who would like to broaden their general knowledge of special education, school reform, and collaboration.

Villa, R., Thousand, J., Stainback, W., & Stainback, S. (1992). *Restructuring for caring and effective education: An administrative guide to creating heterogeneous schools*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

This book is another of the “classics” on collaboration, containing detailed information on the principles and processes associated with collaborative teaming for the purpose of promoting the success of *all* learners. Its chapter on collaborative teams is included in the module as a pre-reading activity, as it provides a series of excellent descriptions and examples of structures and collaborative processes needed for effective teaming. Like Hargreaves’ book, it is dated in terms of its year of publication, yet relevant for administrators concerned with promoting successful outcomes among students with disabilities and those placed at-risk of school failure.

Wheelan, S. A. (1999). *Creating effective teams: A guide for members and leaders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wheelan’s book provides yet another practical approach to promoting effective teaming in organizations. Her perspective comes from the private sector, which makes it interesting reading for educational administrators. In addition, she explores concepts such as the stages of team development (see also Friend and Cook, and Villa et al.) in relation to specific leadership styles. The book provides multiple checklists that allow administrators to assess their effectiveness in relation to various stages of team development, as well as specific strategies for encouraging optimal development among teams. As such, the book is highly recommended for leaders interested in exploring practical approaches to creating effective collaborative teams throughout an organization.

Additional Citations and Resources

Families, Diversity and Collaboration

- Callicott, K.J. Culturally sensitive collaboration within person-centered planning. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 18 (1), 60 – 68.
- Harry, B. (1992). Restructuring the participation of African-American parents in special education. *Exceptional Children*, 59 (2), 123- 131.
- Furney, K.S., & Salembier, G. (2000). Rhetoric and reality: A review of the literature on parent and student participation in the IEP and transition planning process. *Issues influencing the future of transition programs and services in the United States*. Minneapolis, MN: National Transition Network at the Institute on Community Integration.
- Kalyanapur, M., & Harry, B. (1997). A posture of reciprocity: A practical approach to collaboration between parents and professionals of culturally diverse backgrounds. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 6, 487- 509.
- Lake, J.F., & Billingsley, B.S. (2000). An analysis of factors that contribute to parent-school conflict in special education. *Remedial and Special Education*, 21 (4), 240 – 251.
- Lopez, G.R., Scribner, J.D., & Mahitivanichcha, K. (2002). Redefining parent involvement: Lessons from high-performing migrant-impacted schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38 (2), 253-288.
- Lovitt, T.C., & Cushing, S. (1999). Parents of youth with disabilities: Their perceptions of school programs. *Remedial and Special Education*, 20 (3), 134 – 142.
- Muscott, H.S. (2002). Exceptional partnerships: Listening to the voices of families. *Preventing School Failure*, 46 (2), 66 – 69.
- Rao, S.S. (2000). Perspectives of an African-American mother on parent-professional relationships in special education. *Mental Retardation*, 38 (6), 475-488.
- Shapiro, J., Monzo, L.D., Rueda, R., Gomez, J.A., & Blacher, J. (2004). Alienated advocacy: Perspectives of Latina mothers of young adults with developmental disabilities on service systems. *Mental Retardation*, 42 (1), 37 – 54.
- Zhang, C., & Bennett, T. (2003). Facilitating the meaningful participation of culturally and linguistically diverse families in the IFSP and IEP process. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 18 (1), 51- 59.

Collaboration, Leadership, and Community Schools

- Dryfoos, J., & Maguire, S. (2000). *Inside full service community schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Lipman-Blumen, J. (2000). *Connective leadership: Managing in a changing world*. Oxford University Press.
- Riester, A.F., Pursch, V., & Skria, L. (2002). Principals for social justice: Leaders of school success for children from low-income homes. *Journal of School Leadership*, 12 (3), 281 – 304.
- Sanders, M.G., & Harvey, A. (2002). Beyond the school walls: A case study of principal leadership for school-community collaboration. *Teachers College Record*, 104 (7), 1345-1368.
- Smith, S.C., & Scott, J.L. (1990). *The collaborative school*. Eugene: University of Oregon, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.

Collaborative Teaching

- Dieker, L.A. (1998). Rationale for co-teaching. *Social Studies Review*, 37(2), 62-65.
- Dieker, L.A. (2002). What are the characteristics of “effective” middle and high school co-taught teams for students with disabilities? *Preventing School Failure*, 46 (1), 14 – 23.

Pre-referral Intervention Teams

- Bahr, M.W., Whitten, E., Diekre, L., Kocarek, C.E., & Manson, D. (1999). A comparison of school-based intervention teams: Implications for educational and legal reform. *Exceptional Children*, 66 (1), 67- 83.
- Chalfant, J.C., & Pysh, M.V. (1989). Teacher assistance teams: Five descriptive studies on 96 teams. *Remedial and Special Education*, 10 (6), 49 – 58.

Emerging Conceptions of Collaboration

According to Friend and Cook (2003), collaboration has become an “educational buzzword.” But this hasn’t always been the case. The following are examples of trends occurring over the past 25 years that have contributed to our current conceptions of collaboration:

1. Origins in special education

- Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) and re-authorization as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990)
 - Both laws affirmed the practice of collaboration by:
 - Requiring the participation of people from diverse backgrounds in the process of evaluating students to determine eligibility and to plan IEPs
 - Identifying parent participation in educational decision-making as a key principle of the EHA/IDEA
- 1970s: Growth of the “consultation model,” also described by some as the “expert consultation model,” in which special educators consulted with classroom teachers regarding strategies for serving students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Some considered the style of special educators to be overly directive and rooted in an “expert model” that prevented special and general educators from working as partners in the process of educating students with disabilities (Pugach & Johnson, 2002).
- 1980s: Growth of the idea of collaborative consultation, in which special and general educators were viewed as partners in serving students with disabilities. This period was also characterized by an increased focus on the principles and processes associated with collaboration (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986; Johnson, Pugach, & Hammitte, 1988).

2. Origins in school leadership

- Increased emphasis over time on the idea of replacing hierarchical and authoritarian forms of leadership with a more shared approach to leadership (Lambert, 1998; Rubin, 2002; Smith & Scott, 1990)
- 1980s and 90s: Concept of “site based leadership” emphasized shared leadership roles and the emergence of teacher leaders (Lambert, 1998; Rubin, 2002)

- Literature on school reform emphasized the importance of collaboration as a means to and an outcome of change, including the potential for increased student performance as a result of creating “collaborative schools” (Smith & Scott, 1990)

3. Impact on teachers, administrators and school structures

- 1980s: Emergence of the concept of prereferral teams (a.k.a. teacher assistance teams, building based support teams, early intervention teams) designed to support students placed at risk of school failure by implementing interventions and accommodations prior to special education referrals and/or in place of special education (Bahr, Whitten, & Dieker, 1999; Pugach & Johnson, 2002; Whitten & Dieker, 1999).
- Growth of the team model in which various aspects of school reform are carried out through collaborative teaming (e.g., curriculum development, co-teaching, differentiation of instruction for students with varying needs, grade level teams at the middle and secondary levels)
- Increased collaboration among school personnel, related services personnel (e.g., occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language services), and human services personnel (e.g., representatives of local agencies serving the mental health, physical health, and other needs of children and families (Friend & Cook, 2003; Pugach & Johnson, 2002).

4. Need to continue to study collaboration

- Very few graduate level training programs include specific course work and/or formal experiences related to the acquisition and development of collaborative skills for individuals and teams.
- Definitions of collaboration are varied and not entirely clear to all who claim to practice collaboration; therefore, there is a need to be more intentional regarding the study of collaborative practice.

5. Current definitions

- Most definitions focus on both the underlying principles of collaboration as well as related processes, practices, and structures.
- The current literature emphasizes the importance of developing collaborative skills at both the individual and team levels.
- The literature also recognizes the need to develop system wide structures and cultures that nurture collaborative principles and practices. Time and commitment of resources are essential, as is the need to ensure that decisions made by collaborative groups are valued.

Definitions of Collaboration

Interpersonal collaboration is a style for direct interaction between at least two equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they work together toward a common goal.

Friend & Cook (2003, p. 5)

(Collaboration is) a style of professional interaction between and among professionals, parents and families, and, where appropriate, students themselves, to share information, to engage in collective decision-making, and to develop effective intervention for a commonly agreed upon goal that is in the best interests of the student.

Mostert (1998, p. 16)

A Conceptual Framework for Collaboration

Collaboration is a style for interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal (Friend & Cook).

Defining Characteristics

Style/Approach

As a style or an approach to interaction, collaboration can only exist when attached to a process or activity such as teaching, problem solving, or planning.

Voluntary

Collaborative relationships are entered into freely and exist by choice.

Parity

Collaboration is predicated on the existence of parity, a condition in which each participant's contribution is equally valued and participants have equal power in decision making.

Mutual problem/goal

Collaboration occurs in response to a goal, problem, or need that is jointly shared by the participants. They must share at least one goal although they may individually hold several different goals.

Shared responsibility

Participants in a collaborative activity share responsibility for participating in the activity and in the decision making that it entails.

Shared accountability

Participants in a collaborative activity have equal accountability for the outcome of that activity.

Shared resources

Participants in a collaborative activity share material and human resources.

Emergent characteristics

Certain characteristics both contribute to and emerge from effective collaborative relationships. These include beliefs and values that support collaboration, mutual trust, mutual respect, and a sense of community.

Source: Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2003). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals* (4th ed). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

What Makes an Effective Team?

Below is a list of phrases that are thought to pertain to effective collaborative teams.

1. Individually, circle 5 phrases that *you* believe describe the most essential elements of an effective team (3 minutes).
2. In a small group, come to consensus on 8 phrases that your group feels represents the most essential elements, and answer the questions at the bottom of the page. In addition, hold a discussion in which you identify the process you used to obtain consensus on the 8 phrases (10 minutes)
3. Report your group's choices and decision-making process to the whole group (10 minutes).

Meetings begin on time	Members have shared goals	Information is summarized
Agendas are used	Group norms are established	
Team is flexible	Members participate in an equitable way	
Respect for team members	Roles are used	Tasks are completed
Problem-solving process is used	Team is responsive	
Communication is excellent	Meeting procedures are established	
Conflict resolution process is identified	Team has follow-through	
Each team member's expertise is recognized	Meetings occur on a regular basis	
Trust is evident	Team members feel shared responsibility	
Decision-making process is clear	Scope of work is realistic	
Team is helpful	Members are competent	Relationships are valued
Celebrations occur regularly	Teams conduct assessments of processing	
Meetings end on time	Time limits are observed	
Members come together voluntarily	Diverse perspectives are valued	

Questions:

1. What process was used to obtain consensus on the 8 phrases your group selected? How difficult was it to reach agreement?
2. Do you notice any patterns or trends in the phrases that you identified?

Elements of an Effective Collaborative Teaming Process

Thousand and Villa (1992) note that effective collaborative teaming processes are adapted from the literature on effective student cooperative learning groups, such as those described by Johnson and Johnson (1987). Groups made up of both adults and children perform best when the following five elements that define collaborative teaming processes are in place:

1. **Face-to-face interaction** among team members on a frequent basis
2. A mutual “we are all in this together” feeling of **positive interdependence**
3. A focus on the development of **small group interpersonal skills** in trust building, communication, leadership, creative problem-solving, decision making, and conflict management
4. **Group processing** (i.e., regular assessment and discussion) related to the team’s functioning and the setting of goals for improving relationships and more effectively accomplishing tasks
5. **Individual accountability**, including methods for holding one another accountable for agreed-upon responsibilities and commitments

Source: Thousand, J.S. & Villa, R.A. (1992). Collaborative teams: A powerful tool in school restructuring. In R. Villa, J. Thousand, W. Stainback & S. Stainback (Eds). *Restructuring for caring and effective education: An administrative guide to creating heterogeneous schools*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Handout #5

Checklist for Effective Teams

Part One: Description of Team

On a separate sheet, provide a brief description of the team you are assessing. The description should include the team's title and general purpose, its membership (e.g., number and roles of persons involved), and its typical format for meetings (e.g., meeting schedule and duration).

Part Two: Assessment of Team

Please rate your team on the following collaborative principles and processes, providing evidence as appropriate.

I. Presence of Underlying Principles of Collaboration

- a. **Collaboration is voluntary** in the sense that team members want to collaborate

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Agree somewhat	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree
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Evidence:

- b. Interactions among team members demonstrate **parity**, in terms of the value placed on the input of all team members;

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Agree somewhat	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree
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Evidence:

- c. The team's **belief system embraces the unique expertise of all members**

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Agree somewhat	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree
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Evidence:

- d. The team's work is centered on at least **one commonly agreed upon goal**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

- e. The team demonstrates **trust and a sense of shared responsibility in decision-making**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

II. Evidence of Use of the Collaborative Teaming Process

- a. The team demonstrates **face-to-face interaction, characterized by:**

- **Regular opportunities to meet**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

- **Appropriate group size**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

- **Effective communication systems**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

b. The team demonstrates **positive interdependence, characterized by:**

- **Clearly stated team goals**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

- **The use of distributed leadership functions: resource, role, and task**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

- **Articulation of common rewards and responsibilities**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

c. Team members use effective **interpersonal skills, characterized by:**

- **The use of clearly identified group norms**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

- **The use of effective social skills among team members** (e.g., listening, clarifying, summarizing, conflict resolution, problem-solving)

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

d. **Team members** monitor and process group functioning, as evidenced by:

- **The establishment and use of regular time to process**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

- **The use of a variety of methods for processing** (e.g., round robin, appointed observer, written observations/evaluation)

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

e. Team members demonstrate **individual accountability, promoted by:**

- **The use of agendas to promote completion of tasks**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

- **The use of minutes specifying action items and “to do” lists**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence:

Your team’s average score:

Comments regarding identified areas of strength and weakness:

