

Tips for Success in Collaborative Planning and Teaching

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Effective collaborative teachers can achieve effective outcomes for their students, feel happier about their work, and be more likely to work together in the future (Villa, Thousand, and Nevin, 1999) when they practice the following tips:

1. Know with whom you need to collaborate. Who will be affected by the decisions you make? Who has the expertise? Who wants to participate? Include those who will help you invent new solutions.
2. Establish and clarify collaborative goals to avoid hidden agendas. Goal setting helps each member of the collaborative team achieve what each person needs for success. Creating a common goal sets up a positive interdependence with each other.
3. Agree to use a common conceptual framework, language, and interpersonal skills. Avoid using jargon terms. Participate in staff development and training to learn similar strategies. Establish ground rules to make it OK to ask questions for clarification and to learn from each other.
4. Practice communication skills to concurrently achieve the task and maintain relationships. Consciously include trust building and creative problem-solving activities in collaborative planning. Be sure that absent team members are notified of decisions. Clarify accountability for who will do what, set deadlines, and include celebrating daily successes.
5. Know how to facilitate a collaborative climate. Changing to a collaborative culture means that unconscious beliefs must be made conscious. For example, new traditions that celebrate cooperation must replace the old traditions of competition. Instead of celebrating one teacher of the year, add a co-teacher team award.
6. Recognize and respect differences in motivation of collaborators. Create flexible scheduling to encourage collaborative teachers to use their time to meet and plan as well as debrief and problem solve. Set up multiple opportunities to observe others to discover their secrets of effective collaboration.
7. Expect to be responsible and expect to be held accountable. Support and facilitate individual and team actions such as following through on agreements.
8. Agree to reflective analysis of collaborative planning and celebrate often. Create a tool to measure the changes of collaborative partners (see Thousand & Villa, 2000, for example). Periodically take time to celebrate the positive changes.