

Facilitating Collaborative Consultation: Goals and Roles for Special Educators and General Educators

Once team members have been identified, it is helpful to delineate the basic contributions or expectations of each individual. Because members' roles can be expected to change as the student's needs change, role definition should be an ongoing process. Team membership also may change as the student progresses and no longer needs the support of certain members or moves from one grade or level to the next.

The special educator should strive to

- Recognize that the techniques of instructional and behavioral management used by regular educators can be effective means of working with students with special needs.
- Understand that teachers in regular classrooms must respond to the needs of many students rapidly.
- Acknowledge that placing a student with special needs in a general classroom does not relieve that teacher of any responsibilities to the other students.
- Realize that no classroom teacher can devote the majority of time to any one student for any length of time.
- Recognize that teaching techniques or programs that may be a success in a separate special education class may not be appropriate for the general classroom environment.
- Be accountable for caseload (direct/indirect services).
- Provide consultation and collaboration.
- Suggest or make adaptations in curriculum, materials, or equipment.

The general educator should strive to

- Understand that the special education teachers may be responsible for a large number of students in a variety of settings and therefore have a limited amount of time to devote to each student.
- Realize that it is unlikely that a new intervention strategy or instructional approach will have an immediate effect and that a fair trial must be given before a technique is judged ineffective.
- Acknowledge that all students differ in the extent of instructional adaptations they need; many mainstreamed adaptations recommended by the consultant will therefore be extensions of techniques from regular education.
- Maintain a familiarity with each student's IEP, sharing responsibility with the consultant for determining how goals and objects can be reinforced during the course of general classroom activities.
- Provide space within your room for your colleague.
- View the student as a regular member of the class, not a visitor.
- Teach to the student not to the label.
- Modify teaching techniques, course content, evaluation, and grading procedures to accommodate the student's special learning needs.
- See and use the expertise of others in making necessary adaptations.

Both special and regular educators should strive to

- Recognize your personal strengths and the strengths of your colleague
- Acknowledge that both teachers have specialized skills but that their experience, values, and knowledge bases may differ.
- Acknowledge that both special and general educators are stakeholders in a child's educational process.
- Incorporate IEP goals into typical activities and interactions.
- Share responsibility for all students.
- Make time for the collaborative process a priority.
- Be flexible regarding collaboration time.
- Plan and prepare together.
- Share classroom responsibilities (e.g., record keeping, grading, behavior management)
- Communicate with parents.
- Participate in the development of evaluation procedures.
- Participate in the evaluation of the service delivery model.