COLLABORATION THAT WORKS:
HOW TO WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH
CO-TEACHERS AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL

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INTRODUCTION

Finding ways to help general education teachers work successfully with other support personnel can maximize student achievement and success. I have explored various delivery systems in which support people, such as special education teachers, Title one, or reading specialists, therapists, tutors, aides and volunteers, can best be utilized. Current practices for co-teaching, the uses of volunteers and tutors, as well as collaboration and professional development have been included in my research. The specific parts of my study include:

1. special education and inclusion
2. title reading teachers and NCLB history
3. teacher aides, therapists, tutors, and volunteers
4. collaboration ideas and practices
5. current trends and suggestions with staff development

I have been on both sides of the issue of how to best work with support teachers and personnel. As a special education teacher, I worked with general education teachers in varying degrees of inclusion, as well as various support personnel, such as therapists and aides. As a general education teacher, I had to coordinate many support people into a very busy schedule. I will soon have a new role as a Title one teacher. I want to make sure that I am helping my co-teachers and the students that I will be working with to the best of my ability.

Coordinating schedules and working together can be a big challenge. I have found several suggestions to help scheduling and coordinating planning time flow more
smoothly. Through this research, I have gained a deeper understanding of current practices and suggestions for implementing them. I hope to now make useful suggestions to others that may be interested in using support people more effectively.

A review of the literature in the areas of collaboration, professional development, title reading programs and special education has helped me to focus on how general education teachers and the various support people that are available at schools can work together more successfully.

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND INCLUSION

Inclusion is the practice of including all students in classroom activities for all or part of the school day. Inclusion is interpreted and implemented in various ways depending on the ability of students included, as well as, the comfort level of teachers involved with these students. The decision to include is often decided based on the child’s cognitive ability level as well as their ability to remain in the regular classroom successfully. There are times when students spend only a part of the day within the general education classroom.

Educators often question where students with special needs should be educated. In 1975, the passage of Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, later known as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), has shown balanced support for both a continuum of services and placement of the least restrictive environment. According to Whose Idea Is This? (ODE, 2000) A handbook for parents, students, teachers and administrators involved with special education, the least restrictive environment is key in making decisions. According to Whose Idea is This? (ODE, 2000)
the least restrictive environment means that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are non-disabled. Removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with use of supplementary aids cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (Whose idea is this? ODE, 2000)

In 1997, amendments were again added to IDEA. Earlier definitions of restrictiveness focused on access of students with disabilities to non-disabled peers. The new focus defined this in terms of their access to the general education curriculum. With the additional requirement that students with disabilities participate in (and perform respectably on) statewide assessments and accountability procedures, pressures to favor one kind of placement (e.g. inclusion in the general education classroom) over any other (e.g. providing pull-out services in some other place) mounted (Zigmond, 2003).

Inclusion prior to this, had for the most part, been perceived by professionals who were concerned with the education of special needs students as something important to try where appropriate and with teachers with whom it could be carried out successfully. However, with new expectations for special education students to take and perform on assessments, it now is much more relevant to make sure that they have access to the same curriculum and education as their peers. Zigmond (2003) states that the bedrock of special education is instruction focused on individual needs. She goes on to say that the very concept of “one best place “contradicts this commitment to individualization. She suggests that a better question than “What is the best place?” might be, “best for whom?”
In looking at the problem this way, we would need to abandon the idea in which we look at all students to do this, or learn that, or be educated in a certain place.

Zigmond (2003) reminds us that special educators understand that no matter how hard they try or how well they are taught, there are some students who will never be able to learn on the same schedule as most others. These students will take so long to learn some things that they will have to forgo learning other things, or will need to be taught curricular content that is not ordinarily taught. She reiterates by stating that “If we continue to ask, ‘What is the best place?’ we are ignoring what we know” (Zigmond, 2003, p.196).

For nearly 20 years, the same model of service delivery in which the student is included for some subjects, and pulled out for others is still preferred (Zigmond & Baker 1996). Zigmond suggests that pull out instruction should be temporary and provide students the opportunity to become more organized and develop increased independence so that they may be able to return to the general education class.

Students with special needs are by law, to be treated individually. Full inclusion may not be appropriate for every student. However, students are being fully included to a much greater degree. Now special educators are often being pulled in, rather than pulling students out. If students with special needs are going to be fully included, their curriculum is usually modified, or changed to fit their needs individually. General education teachers, special education teachers, or intervention specialists can do the modification. Modifications or accommodations can be provided in many ways. Zigmond and Baker (1996) list several ways that accommodations could take place.
These accommodations include accommodations for the whole class, reducing the workload, accommodations for specific students, focused instruction on skills or strategies, peer-partners, small group instruction, and individual instruction. All of these can be appropriate at times. The task for educators is in knowing when and how to implement such modifications. To include students without proper assistance and support could mean that students are spending a considerable portion of each day in failure experiences (Zigmond & Baker 1996). Along with this, they add that students might not be learning the fundamental skills and strategies they might receive in a pull out program that could focus more appropriately on their specific needs.

Often, when teachers have students with special needs in their classrooms, they make accommodations for the whole class. For example, they repeat the instructions for all students, going over content again with everyone in the class. By doing this, teachers may avoid stigmatizing the specific target children and in turn, help others in the classroom. The modification of reducing or changing the workload or expectations involves expecting a smaller portion of the assignment being completed, or assigning an entirely different activity altogether. An alternate assignment may be more appropriate to the level of ability of the student. Students may be asked to focus on strategic skills rather than asking the student to complete an entire practice assignment. Instead, these students may be allowed to focus on just the strategic skills that are necessary to complete the task (Kemp and Fister, 1995).

Utilizing special education teachers and teacher aides can provide support services within the general education classroom. Often, a special education teacher
serves students in more than one grade level. Getting to each classroom, and meeting every student’s educational needs while they are out in their general classrooms can be an impossible task. As Friend (2000) points out, special education teachers who try to collaborate with their colleagues to provide services in four, five, or even more classrooms find that they can barely keep straight where they are headed next, much less the strategies for fostering collaborative approaches for implementing instructional interventions, and individual student needs. As a result, a flexible schedule along with a continuum of support personnel is necessary to allow the teacher to work in each classroom. The use of varied teaching models, small groups, work-stations, peer tutors, volunteers and therapists with in the classroom can help in providing assistance in the classroom as well as daily practice in reading.

The process of writing an individualized education plan, or IEP, helps teachers to look at students as individuals. Team mapping involves the collaboration of many people who are experts about a particular student to establish goals as a group. The purpose of establishing a team map is to help the IEP team work together more effectively (Campbell, Campbell & Brady, 1998). IEP teams can work together and help students much more effectively through team mapping. Collaboration among general and special education teachers, parents, therapists, administrators and aides can help all involved with a particular child to plan goals that take into consideration the whole child. Team Environmental Assessment Mapping System or TEAMS is one approach to planning realistic and meaningful goals (Campbell, Campbell, & Brady, 1998). Mapping involves a group of people who come into contact with a particular student in each environment
that he or she interacts. Campbell, Campbell, and Brady suggest that TEAMS provides parents and teachers with an overall snapshot of the student that can guide the group in making educational decisions useful for selection of curriculum and vocational goals.

The process involves collecting information about the environments in which a student lives, then developing questions about each environment to develop a plan for a child. Each member of the team shares their own input by answering questions about the student. The questions are often answered or prepared prior to the meeting. A physical map is then recorded and drawn for the student to reflect each environment and the social interactions that take place there. Decisions about the student are based on the information that was collected (Campbell, Campbell, & Brady 1998).

This process allows team members to develop a much more meaningful IEP. While it may seem time consuming and cumbersome, assessing a student using the TEAMS approach allows for the collaboration of all of the people and groups that come into contact with a student. While no tool can provide all of the information needed to plan every student’s future, when used with creative and concerned people, TEAMS can provide sound information that can make a difference in a student’s education (Campbell, Campbell, & Brady 1998).

The regular education initiative, or REI, called for a greater sharing of responsibility for students with learning problems between general education and special education, as well as Chapter 1 (Title one) programs. (Zigmond & Baker, cite Will, 1986; Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Snell, 1991; Stainback & Stainback, 1989) This movement called for less pull out instruction and more inclusion. Given the
REI movement, practices such as TEAMS, co-teaching, and collaboration can help educators in their planning and service of students with learning problems.

To plan effective instructional strategies for students with special needs individual teachers, collaborating teachers, or teacher assistance teams can use components of any instructional technique (Kemp and Fister 1995). Various co-teaching models in which two adults are working collaboratively together, in combination with the use of small groups and peer partners can help in assuring that meaningful learning is taking place. The efforts to collaborate can be interpreted differently. Friend (2000) cites many myths and misconceptions about collaboration. She states that merely saying the word is not necessarily the same a carrying out the action. Collaboration requires commitment on the part of each individual to a shared goal demands careful attention to communication skills and obliges participants to maintain parity throughout their interactions. Collaboration can lead to positive feelings within a staff or among co-teachers. As Gable, Mostert, and Tonelson (2003) note, collaboration affords general educators, special educators, and support personnel opportunity to establish rewarding and long lasting social and professional relationships. Contrary to this view, Friend (2000) states that, “Although participant feelings are a frequent and pleasant by-product of collaboration, they are not its primary goal. Instead, collaboration is the conduit through which professionals can ensure that students receive the most effective educational services to which they are entitled.” (p.131) Successful collaboration is about respect.
As Zigmond notes, full inclusion can be a very positive experience if carried out carefully and thoughtfully. Co-teaching can bring new educational opportunities to all students. Adaptations made for students with special needs can be assessable to a wider range of students. Students with special needs can benefit from being with the same aged peers, possibly eliminating, or at least lessening the stigma that can result from being in “special education” Zigmond (2003).

When co-teaching can occur with joint planning between special educators and general educators, teachers can learn new ways to teach. All students can benefit from having an extra teacher in the classroom. “Inclusion is good, full inclusion may be too much of a good thing” (Zigmond and Baker, 1996, p. 10). As the literature reflects, continuum of services should not be eliminated. Students can benefit from a range of learning situations be it full inclusion, resource room, pull out speech sessions, reading with volunteers, or student peers. Each can be utilized effectively with careful coordination and planning.

Special education is a very diverse set of services, fluid and changing as the needs of students change (Zigmond, 1999). Students are most often included, based on decisions made by team members. If all members, including teachers and parents agree, a student will be included to the extent that is deemed appropriate by the team. Special and general education teachers can consult frequently with one another. When progress in general education classroom activities requires more support than inclusion with consultation and co-teaching can provide, there are several options that can be put into place.
1. Pull asides within the general education classroom for more intensive small group instruction
2. Pull out sessions in small groups or one on one instruction for intensive pre-teaching or re-teaching
3. Self-contained classrooms in which students can work on learning specific skills as needed.

The various adult personnel within a school building can be utilized in providing these options to students. Often aides, speech therapists, intervention specialists, or volunteer tutors can be instructed and guided in coordinating these small group sessions. If a school is close to a university, often these students will come and work within the schools as well. Many teachers in training are required to spend time tutoring in school buildings as part of their own professional development.

In 1990, the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, revised its special education standards to require Intervention Support Teams (IST’s) for elementary age (K-6) public school students who were experiencing difficulty in academics or behavior (Rock and Zigmond, 2001). This reform was designed to be proactive and focused on providing more effective instruction to meet student needs in general classrooms. Rock and Zigmond cite Conway & Kovaleski 1998, and Kovaleski, Tucker & Stevens 1996, who suggested that the Instructional Support Teams were to operate under four guiding principals:

a. to ensure effective use of general education services before referral to special education services
b. to establish building based teacher problem solving teams to assist teachers

c. to systematically screen students prior to referral for special education services using assessment and instructional techniques

d. to provide support and assistance to general education teachers serving students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms

The IST’s provided support and assistance to the students experiencing failure in the mainstream of education. Rock and Zigmond cite Carter & Sugai; Pugach & Jonhson, 1989; Safran & Safran, 1996; and Whitten & Dieker, by saying that teachers and other support personnel collaborate not only to assess and develop interventions to address and improve upon the academic and behavioral challenges that students experience, but also to reduce teacher and student frustrations and difficulties.

After this particular study was completed, students receiving IST often were still retained or referred for special education services. Perhaps more training or collaboration was needed. Perhaps a certified special education teacher would have been more effective than an intervention assistant. Often the referrals were for students with behavior problems. Those students who were initially referred for academic reasons seemed to fair better (Rock and Zigmond, 2001).

When an IST receives a behavioral referral, they may decide to use an elaborate version of behavioral consultation because research has shown that more thorough behavioral consultation affects student behavior more successfully than abbreviated versions. (Rock and Zigmond cite Fuchs, Fuchs, Bhar, Ferstrom. & Stecker, 1990) Despite the noted difficulties with behavioral issues, these assistants can become yet
another valuable resource to students and general education teachers, if positive collaboration is utilized. Strategies for improving the substance of intervention assistance have been gathered by Rock and Zigmond (2001), who cite several sources.

1. Evaluate effectiveness on student by student basis (Bahr et. al. 1999)

2. Ensure stringent implementation of quality academic and behavioral interventions based on validated principles of teaching and learning (Whitten & Dieker, 1995)

3. Develop a file of current literature pertaining to best educational practices

4. Be creative and brainstorm alternatives to traditional outcomes (Shriner & Spicuzza, 1995)

5. Include school psychologists as members of IATs. (intervention assistance teams) (Bahr, 1994)

6. Conduct team building exercises (Korinek & McLaughlin, 1996)

7. Secure ongoing training (Safran & Safran, 1996)

8. Be aware of and encourage the adoption of state policies and legal mandates (Bahr et. al. 1999)

Given the difficulties and extra efforts of inclusion and collaboration, one might ask, “Why include?” Goodman (1994) says that it is important for students, teachers, and society to learn to work together and socialize regardless of disability. Working together develops acceptance of others. If we don’t practice including all students, we may be doing them a disservice. Added to that sentiment, Peetsma, (2001) concludes that special needs students educated in regular classes do better academically and socially than
students in non-inclusive settings. Whatever the reason, accountability, social, or academic gains, including children to the maximum extent possible is the current trend.

Inclusion involves much thought and preparation. As Beninghof, (1996) suggests, there is no “one size fits all” formula for inclusion. It must be driven by the needs of the individual child. Similarly, she notes that staff members who come into contact with students who have special needs will vary widely in their readiness and skill for inclusion. In working with students who have special needs, co-teaching and collaboration can be very effective. Collaborative teaching is a service delivery structure in which teachers with different knowledge, skills, and talents have joint responsibility for designing, delivering, monitoring, and evaluating instruction for a diverse group of learners in general education classrooms (DeBoer & Fister, 1995).

Therefore, positive and meaningful staff development should be offered. This development would be best when conducted in on-going sessions that address the teacher and staff level of readiness. Benninghof, (1996) suggests there are various stages of readiness and that we move through these stages from awareness to re-focusing. She suggests that there are stages from 0-6 detailing various levels of readiness and ability. As teachers and support staff move through these stages, they become more willing and adept at including students and working with co-teachers. When they get to the re-focusing level of development, teachers are interested in refinement, improvement and innovation to make the situation even better (Beninghof, 1996).

One district in Connecticut found success by providing a variety of staff development experiences, some mandatory, others voluntary. The list of activities included
opportunities such as, out of district conferences, keynote speakers, district wide workshops, school-based workshops concerning inclusion models, strategies for curriculum modification, and behavior management, and after school voluntary sessions.

**TITLE READING TEACHERS AND NCLB HISTORY**

Reading specialists work to address the needs of struggling readers. Another name for reading specialist is Title I teacher. The role of the Title I teacher has changed over the years, and continues to change amid the current accountability reform movement. Often in the past, Title I teachers conducted remedial reading sessions for struggling readers in pull out programs. Now a combination of both pull out and inclusive instruction seems to be the norm. Dole, (2004) describes, the Title I teacher as someone who works directly with teachers as a coach and mentor. In this new role, the reading specialist supports teachers in their daily work-planning, modeling, team-teaching, and providing feedback on completed lessons in collaboration with classroom teachers in a school. According to International Reading Association guidelines (1998) a reading specialist is someone who, in addition to providing assessment and instruction, conducts professional development, helps to set reading program goals, helps other staff members achieve those goals, interprets the reading program to parents and community, demonstrates appropriate reading practices, and keeps staff members aware of current research (Quatrouche, Bean, & Hamilton, 2001, p.283).

In 1965, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or ESEA was passed. The ESEA was the first federal initiative designed to establish funding for compensatory reading education (Dole, 2004). In the beginning, there was very little interaction with
teachers in the classroom and the program saw very limited success. However, Dole does point out that not all Title I programs have been ineffective or that reading specialists have made no differences in the lives of students. She goes on to say that certainly, lives have been positively changed and affected.

In the year 2000, Congress authorized a revision of the original ESEA. The revision helped develop a process of ensuring that students would continue to improve reading and academic achievement. According to Dole (2004), three critical features of this new process are as follows:

1. All teachers need to be highly qualified
2. The reading instructional strategies and programs used to teach reading should be scientifically based
3. Effective and efficient informal assessment techniques should inform instruction and assist teachers in monitoring the progress of each child.

(p. 463)

By following this new process, title-reading teachers would assume the role of reading coach and mentor. Dole suggests that title-reading teachers be involved in frequently checking the progress of each child, identifying when a child needs extra help and specifying what kind of extra help is needed.

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education or NCEE released a report called; *A Nation at Risk*, or NAR. The report was one of many during the 80’s that offered a framework for reassessing the role of the federal government in
implementing recommendations in the areas of content, standards and expectations, time, and teaching to impact education policy (Wong & Nicotera, 2004).

According to Wong and Nicotera, NCEE stated that the federal government had the primary responsibility to fund and support efforts to implement recommendations of the NAR report. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or ESEA of 1965 was enacted to provide federal aid to schools with high concentrations of children of low income. The establishment of the ESEA initially helped to shape the program dimensions of title one. The NAR recommendations were further implemented in the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988. The amendments included the recommendation for coordination between Title I and the regular school curriculum and called for school wide programs.

If the Hawkins-Stafford Amendments of 1988 began to reflect the vision of NAR, another act, titled the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 (IASA), intensified the push for quality education standards even more.

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act, or NCLB, was put into effect as a further reflection of the NAR report and recommendations. The primary focus of NCLB was to improve the academic achievement of all students. The act requires statewide standards for academic proficiency, mandates teacher and paraprofessional quality standards, and requires annual testing in the third through eighth grade (Wong and Nicotera, 2004).

The enactment of NCLB has forced schools to think more seriously about professional development. Prior to NCLB, school personnel involved in organizing and deciding which courses to offer in a particular district often chose haphazardly, without a
lot of rhyme or reason. Now the government’s emphasis on well-trained, certified teachers, as Minkle (2003) quotes Vanderville, the director of online professional development at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, in saying that educators are paying a lot more attention to creating individual professional development plans. Minkle suggests a fairly new practice of utilizing on-line professional development as a possible option for districts. Many teachers are now participating in longer sessions that focus on collaboration and improving student achievement.

A wealth of materials and programs are available online that are geared toward state standards (Minkle, 2003). In addition, federal grants are available for professional development programs. Information about the grants and web sites are in the handbook that accompanies this paper.

Elmore, (2003) defines the NCLB as the single largest nationalization of education policy in the history of the United States. He states that it was paradoxically promoted by a conservative administration with the docile cooperation of congressional liberals. He adds that the law was created without taking into account most of the expert advice on issues of testing, assessment, school improvement, and accountability that would usually have been considered. While suggesting that testing is relatively cheap and easy to implement, Elmore says that capacity building is expensive and complex. Unfortunately, policy makers usually prefer cheap and easy solutions to those that are complex and expensive.

NCLB stipulates that students make adequate yearly progress or AYP as reflected on statewide tests and assessments. Elmore states that the AYP is a completely arbitrary
mathematical function grounded in no defensible knowledge of theory of school improvement. In fact, it is possible that there are some schools that may be closed down that are actually experts in school improvement (Elmore, 2003).

He goes on to say that “Most high performing schools in our highly segregated society have gotten there not by knowing a great deal about instructional practice or improvement, but by getting and holding onto students in high socioeconomic groups”

The plan put into place by President Bush (NCLB) is now requiring schools that receive title one money to employ only “Highly Qualified” teachers or forfeit their federal funding (Minkle, 2003).

According to Minkle, to make sure that educators get the training that they need, NCLB has set aside almost $80 million from Title I funds to be used for professional development programs. While $80 million is a lot of money, Minkle writes that it is actually only five percent of the title one budget.

NCLB has received much criticism from educators, policymakers, and educational associations. Nevertheless, as Dole, (2004) states, the bar has been raised on student achievement in the United States and on teaching quality as well. The mandate has school districts searching for literacy strategies; learning tools and literacy teachers that will help all students read on grade level (Taylor & Peterson, 2003). Given the vast differences in ability and readiness for school among children today, this may be impossible for every single child. Yet, it is an intriguing challenge that can inspire educators to collaborate more effectively and creatively.
With new demands, expectations and calls for teacher quality, just what does it take to become more effective? Effective teachers manage to produce better achievers regardless of which curriculum materials, teaching methods, or reading program they use (Allington, 2002). After observing what he calls exemplary elementary classroom teachers, Allington suggests that there are six T’s of effective elementary literacy instruction. The suggestions are:

1. **Time**—spend much more time actually reading, in guided reading, independent reading and reading in social studies and science content

2. **Texts**—provide a rich supply of texts at appropriate reading levels, providing multilevel texts for social studies, science, and reading. Make these texts available to students throughout the day

3. **Teaching**—practice direct and explicit demonstrations versus assign and assess model for students, demonstrate skills and strategies and use think aloud process to demonstrate

4. **Talk**—conduct active discussions about concepts and strategies with students

5. **Tasks**—provide longer, more challenging and self-regulating tasks which engage students

6. **Testing**—assess and evaluate students, assessment should be ongoing to track growth, evaluate student work and award grades based more on effort and improvement than simply in achievement.

By responding to the needs of students, providing rich opportunities to read, conducting class discussions, conducting frequent and ongoing assessments, and
providing challenging tasks, teachers can become more effective. Title reading teachers can collaborate with general education teachers to achieve this effectiveness.

To improve achievement, as the revised ESEA recommends, further suggestions for making the most of title reading programs and close the gap that some say exists between students who are more affluent and those attending high poverty schools, Boorman, (2003) gives several suggestions for improving our schools. Boorman proposes several strategies for closing this gap. The first suggestion is to start early with quality preschool programs. Boorman says that preschool interventions can help close the gap and make a long-term impact in students through middle school. The second suggestion is to extend learning into the summer. Because of the combination of a natural slip in knowledge over the summer and the fact that often these students have fewer experiences out of school, a summer program may help to stop the summer learning slide and prevent the widening achievement gap. Boorman cites Cooper, Charlton, Valentine, & Muhlenbruck (2000), in saying that poor and minority students need more opportunities to extend their learning through the summer months. More assessment is needed to see how summer programs can help keep the gap from widening (Boorman, 2003).

Additionally, Boorman suggests that schools accelerate school year learning by reducing class sizes to 15 to 23 students per teacher and adapt reform models that focus on changing, reorganizing and revitalizing entire schools rather than implementing a number of specialized and potentially uncoordinated efforts.
While Boorman’s suggestions and solid research evidence have shown positive effects on narrowing the gap, the cost of establishing smaller class sizes and summer school programs may make it difficult to implement in the future. As our own local schools are now making cuts and increasing class sizes due to lack of funding, teachers will have to come up with creative ways to meet the needs of students.

Because the bar has been raised on student achievement in the United States and on teaching quality, high quality instruction is a first requirement for schools. This instruction can come as a result of intensive professional development along with efforts to work collaboratively.

Bean, Grumet, and Bulazo, (1999) suggest that there should be more collaboration between reading specialists and classroom teachers. They note that the distinction between the roles of classroom teachers and reading specialists is now less clear. There is an overlap between those roles and the need for more collaboration.

They add that there are many obstacles to successful collaboration. These factors include:

a. Lack of planning time
b. Compatibility of teacher beliefs and practices
c. space
d. Lack of experience and understanding of how to implement.

Despite the possible difficulties, Friend, (2000) states that ongoing school reform efforts suggest that for professionals to manage their jobs, collaboration will continue to
be a necessity. Therefore, professional development is needed. Friend suggests observing professionals who are collaborating and compare them with those who are not.

Bean, Grumet and Bulazo, (1999) reported on a school program in which staff development included orientations meetings and workshops. They were introduced to several models for collaborative teaching. The time was allocated for staff development at the schools because of a grant that was received from the state to help pay for substitutes. At the training sessions, the participants were given opportunities to plan lessons that required collaboration.

Planning is a very important aspect of implementing co-teaching models. The addition of a substitute frees teachers and specialists, giving them time to jointly plan. In the study conducted by Bean, Grumet and Bulazo (1999), many of the lessons were planned jointly, but at times planned only by one teacher or specialist. Daily contacts with each other also helped to enable teachers to do both short and long term planning.

Various models for co-teaching were described in this article. They are as follows:

1. **Major assisting** - one teacher assumes responsibility for directing instruction while the other teacher monitors or assists students (generally whole class)

2. **Supportive teaching** - one teacher assumes responsibility for directing instruction to majority of students in class. The other teacher works with a small group or individual generally focusing on student needs. Instruction of second teacher is generally pre-teaching, re-teaching, or a focus on reading strategies (small group or individual: and be in class or pullout)
3. **Station teaching**- two teachers divide instructional tasks or objectives and prepare activities for stations. Students participate in all stations per agreed upon schedule (small group; in class)

3. **Parallel instruction**- each teacher prepares and teaches the same content to a different group of students, perhaps at a different pace with different approaches (small group, in class or pullout)

4. **Team teaching**- two teachers share the teaching of the lesson to the students. Teachers may co-direct the discussion or explanation of a concept (whole class). (pp.10-11)

Evaluating the worth of collaboration efforts can be a crucial part of the process. If educators continue to do what they’ve always done, to paraphrase a popular quote, how can they determine if their efforts are making an impact on the students involved?

As Elmore (2002), asserts, people who work in schools do not pay attention to that connection between how they organize themselves and how they take care of their own student’s learning. Often the work of people is organized around their own bit. He suggests that teachers and schools organize learning situations into “chopped bits of work” – classrooms, grade levels, pullout programs and subjects, without paying attention to what is going on in other areas. As a result, these bits don’t connect to each other meaningfully. Indeed, it is easy to be caught up in your own classroom and responsibilities as a teacher. But, it is necessary to frequently look at the big picture and assess how things are progressing.
Effective leadership and a more keen awareness can result in more collaborative efforts. Creative scheduling and more effective practices can lead to more student success. Educators do need to question why and how things work or don’t work. When these questions are examined, more powerful and successful learning can take place.

Gable, Mostert, and Tonelson, (2004) suggest developing a survey or model for assessing professional collaborations with in schools. He recommends assessing collaboration over a three phase time period including: the primary phase, the secondary phase, and the tertiary phase. Each phase can be used to provide ongoing feedback about how collaboration is progressing.

*The primary phase.* The primary phase is where collaboration begins. It is oftentimes informal. Teachers in this phase try to generate solutions to a student’s academic problems. Often a support team is brought together to develop a plan for remediation.

*The secondary phase.* The secondary phase involves the team in establishing academic problems and then generating a plan for differentiated instruction. Next, roles for instruction and implementation can be assigned along with further assessments of progress.

*The tertiary phase.* In the tertiary phase, collaborative efforts on behalf of the students have taken place and will soon be concluded. Again, school professionals should reflect on the process and identify areas of strength and weakness in their collaborative behavior (Gable, Mostert, & Tonelson, 2004, p. 6).
Each school may interpret their efforts differently and may choose to assess them formally as Gable suggests. They may adapt their own means, as may be more appropriate. The key is that assessment or evaluation of the collaborative efforts does take place. In this way, the students can reap the benefits from the experience of collaboration among their teachers.

Similarly, Guskey (1998) challenges educators to systematically evaluate professional development. He suggests evaluating programs in three broad categories. The three major types of evaluation are planning, formative, and summative.

1. Planning—occurs before a program or activity begins. In this stage, Guskey suggests understanding what is to be accomplished, procedures to be used, and how success will be determined.

2. Formative evaluation—occurs during the program or activity and is to provide ongoing information about whether things are proceeding as planned, as well as whether expected progress is being made. Formative evaluation takes place many times throughout the duration of the program or activity. At this stage, flaws can be identified and weaknesses located in time to make necessary changes.

3. Summative evaluation is conducted at the completion of the program or activity. In this stage, developers can receive feedback about the program’s overall merit or worth. Decisions can then be made such as, should this be continued? Should it be continued with modifications? Expanded? Or discontinued?
TUTORS, IDEAS, AND PRACTICES

Often, the use of tutors and volunteers can be an invaluable resource. Taylor and Peterson, (2003) suggest that “to improve reading for young children, you need only to commit to maximizing human resource, not expending unnecessary dollars.” Tutors may not always be highly trained professional educators. In fact, in many districts these positions are being eliminated because of recent budget cuts. Tutors can be volunteers such as retired teachers, and community members or even high school students.

Taylor and Peterson, (2003) researched a program entitled RISE- Reading Intervention Sans Expense, in which students requiring extra support in developing reading strategies receive tutoring from high school students enrolled in a course called Community Service/Learning. The tutors for this program were expected to demonstrate responsibility, participate in training and maintain a journal about their experiences. A culminating paper describing their experience was also required.

The program yielded impressive results. The data from the schools involved, showed that 93 percent of the students participating made gains in reading. Not only did the tutors follow a well-organized lesson framework, after school homework requirements were also assigned to the tutee.

At the completion of the program, a celebration of success took place to honor the student tutees with medals, certificates, and books for further independent reading. The RISE program showed that using tutors even those who are students themselves is one way to raise student achievement with minimal expense.
Another program that produced positive results in students with reading difficulties was called RSVP, which stands for Reading Support Volunteer Program. Zeigler, (2001) writes that “students who are at risk and who are working towards independence in reading need daily opportunities to be engaged in reading on a one on one basis at their instructional level.” (p. 56) The RSVP program found volunteers who included retired teachers, as well as members from a local retirement village and a senior center. The volunteers were offered training sessions listed by Zeigler as the following:

1. An introduction and overview of the program
2. A demonstration modeling and explanation of the reading strategies to be used by the volunteers to provide support for students
3. An explanation of each part of the strategy form
4. Materials and books for each work station.

An important component of this program was a strategy form to be completed by the volunteer, which included valuable information about the student. This provided an ongoing record of what was completed each day including the student’s name, date, titles of books read, book levels, and strategies used (Zeigler, 2001). This record helped tutors continue effectively in the next session.

As with the RISE program, the volunteers were invited to a volunteer appreciation dinner in December and then a breakfast in May. At both of these sessions, discussions were conducted to make revisions to the program and to discuss positive aspects of the program. Pre-performance and post-performance assessments were conducted which
showed that 85 percent of the participants had advanced in their reading levels. The title reading staff, parents, tutors and teachers were delighted with the results (Zeigler, 2001).

After school tutorial programs have recently been suggested in response to the current assessment trends in education. One district designed an after school tutorial program called T.O.A.S.T. *Title One After School Program*, to give students needed experiences in high quality literacy experiences in a supportive and caring environment (Sanderson, 2003).

Ideally, the tutorial program should be set up to keep the student teacher ratio low. Sanderson says that in this way, students can reap the greatest possible benefits. Sanderson suggests a small group of no more than three students at a time for a period of 13 consecutive weeks that employs a certified teacher.

The position was posted across the district to qualified teachers holding teaching certificates or reading specialist certificates. They were able to find eight certified participants. Staff development and planning occurred three times after school to develop rationale, objectives, and the tutoring framework of the program. Students met on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the fall and then again in the spring.

Many strategies were used consistently, for example, book introductions, predictions, word rings, silent and oral reading, language experience activities, comprehension and practice in writing skills. Students were evaluated weekly with the use of running records. Teachers modeled good reading behaviors, incorporated new vocabulary, and higher level thinking skills. Overall, the teachers involved accomplished quite a lot in a short period of time (Sanderson, 2003).
Parents were also involved because as research has shown, a supportive home life can be critical to a student’s literary success. (Sanderson cites Barton & Conley, 1994) For the T.O.A.S.T. program, parental involvement included two T.O.A.S.T sessions-held in the evenings to accommodate working adults. At the meetings, demonstrations of the tutoring framework, ideas for activities and folders full of literature were given to the parents. Parents also had the opportunity to conference with their child’s tutor. Narrative reports along with frequent phone calls home also helped to keep the parents involved. Overall the feedback from the T.O.A.S.T program was very positive. Programs such as these show that when time is taken to work in small groups or in one on one situations, student success is almost a guaranteed outcome.

CURRENT TRENDS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Collaborative efforts, the inclusion of students with special need, and increasing overall student achievement and performance can be enhanced with rich and meaningful opportunities for professional development. In this age of accountability, school and district leaders must take into account their allocation of funds and staff (Miles, 2001).

Miles suggests that districts match dollars available to priorities within the school. Putting literacy first, by reducing class size and providing powerful professional development in teaching literacy are crucial for developing readers.

Although they are the very things that schools are tested on, often, reading, science, and mathematics take a backseat to cherished sports and band programs. Miles suggests reducing spending on nonacademic teaching staff in secondary schools. She reiterates that, even though all subjects are important, literacy is most important.
In 2000, Miles suggested that the first step in rethinking professional development is to outline current spending and set up a district level strategy. Administrators then have the task of cutting out inessential subjects and activities, and putting core subjects first.

A critical part of professional development is evaluation of what has been provided. Guskey, (2002) suggests that there are five critical levels of professional development. Taking these into consideration may help organizers to provide useful and worthwhile professional development. The analysis of the five major levels can help in determining if the professional development activity has met its objectives. The five levels include:

1. Looking at the participant’s reactions to the experience
2. Measuring the knowledge and skills that the participants gained
3. Looking at the organization and characteristics that are necessary for success
4. Assessing whether or not the participants use the new information and adapt the new ideas to their own settings
5. Looking at student learning outcomes- how did that professional development activity affect students? Did it benefit them in any way?

Looking at each of these areas certainly can help in decision making for future planning. While each stage is important to consider, the most important may be the last. After all, increased student outcomes are often the reason for professional development. While professional development opportunities have been offered countless times to
districts, the evaluation component is often left out. Assessing whether a program is worthwhile can enhance professional development efforts everywhere (Guskey, 2002).

Before organizing schedules and implementing co-teaching models and practices, it might be a good idea to come up with a survey for all adults that are involved. Often schools look critically at their programs, focusing on what was not working. This process can have a negative effect on school climate and student achievement (McKenzie, 2003).

McKenzie, (2003) reported on the use of a more positive approach called Appreciative Inquiry, or AI. AI is a new way of goal setting that focuses on what’s working in an organization instead of what isn’t. Appreciative Inquiry is a strengths-based approach to problem solving that focuses on positive aspects of organizations and examining past successes.

To set up an AI survey for teachers and support staff within a school, the basic AI process can be followed. Appreciative Inquiry has four phases known as the 4-D cycle. McKenzie describes each phase in detail.

1. *The discovery phase.* To begin the process, members reflect on their peak experiences and try to understand what factors contributed to these successes.

2. *The dream phase.* The purpose of this phase is to create a vision for the future based on successful past experiences. All involved are invited to give their input on strategies to achieve these goals.

3. *The design phase.* The organization identifies specific activities that will help the group achieve its goals.
4. *The destiny phase*- Each member plans how he or she can contribute to the shared vision of the group. (McKenzie, 2003, p. 38)

By employing the positive techniques suggested by AI, schools can become energized by focusing on past successes and planning for positive and rewarding future experiences.

Miles, (2001) states, If we hope to meet our seemingly unreachable goals, districts and schools must define priorities for student performance, make choices about how to organize to meet them, and then move the dollars and people to match those commitments.

**CONCLUSION**

Teachers and support staff working with students who have special education needs as well as those who typically work with Title I students can effectively collaborate to meet the needs of students. It takes a commitment to making time for planning, professional development, and a sharing of ideas. As a result of current trends in educational testing and mandates, we will continue to see the need for collaboration among those people in schools who work with a vastly diverse population of students. The idea of collaborating with others can be overwhelming. However, if positive efforts are made to provide meaningful professional development and planning time for teachers and support staff, the benefits to students may be well worth the effort.
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