South Fentress Elementary School

Collaboration

By: Jessica Norman, OTDS
Belmont University School of
Occupational Therapy

Contact Information:
Phone: (931)397-6878
Email: jdnorman12@gmail.com

What is Collaboration?

- The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines collaboration as working jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor (2013).

- Collaboration involves two or more people coming together to share their collective knowledge, experience, and creativity to arrive at a shared understanding or tangible outcome that none of the individuals could have arrived at on their own.

- Team collaboration is defined as the formal and informal interactive processes among teachers and related-service personnel for planning, development, and monitoring of interdisciplinary interventions.

- Team collaboration involves the development of goals and objectives, initiation of instructional strategies, collaborative monitoring of these strategies, and reviewing of team efforts as related to educational outcomes.

(Barnes & Turner, 2001; Davis, 2011; Merriam-Webster, 2013)

(Norman, 2013)

Why is Collaboration Beneficial?

- Teachers see substantial improvements in:
  - ➢ *Student achievement*
  - ➢ *Behavior*
  - ➢ *Attitude*
  - ➢ *Attendance*

- In schools where teachers work collaboratively, students can sense the program coherence and a consistency of expectations, which may explain the improved behavior and achievement.

- Teachers, school personnel, and other service providers feel supported. They do not feel they have to do it all alone.

- Teachers, school personnel, and other service providers know "who to talk to" when there are concerns.

- Sharing knowledge and expertise advances everyone's repertoire of professional skills.

(Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004; Inger, 1993)   (Norman, 2013)

Collaboration Benefits for Students

- Researchers Goddard, Y., Goddard, R., and Taschannen-Moran, M. (2007) reported "a paucity of research investigating the extent to which teachers' collaborative school improvement practices are related to student achievement." They found a positive relationship between teacher collaboration and differences among schools in mathematics and reading achievement.

- Additional support for collaboration is found in a 2008 practice guide from the U.S. Department of Education. The guide, "Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools" cites teacher collaboration as a frequent approach to improving instruction in 35 chronically low-performing schools that achieved dramatic turnarounds (substantial gains in student achievement within three years).

(Norman, 2013)

Specific Areas that Promote Collaboration

- Faculty meetings
- Departmental meetings
- Grade-level meetings
- Subject area meetings
- Special education meetings
- Team teaching
- Lesson planning
- Faculty workshops
- In-services
- Committee meetings
- Beginning and end of the year meetings
- Peer observations
- Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

(Norman, 2013)

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

- Supportive and shared leadership
  - ➢ *Administrators and teachers are viewed as equal partners in decision-making*

- Collective creativity
  - ➢ *Encourages and promotes collaborative brainstorming to solve common problems*

- Shared values and vision
  - ➢ *Strong focus on what is most important – student success*

- Supportive conditions
  - ➢ *Includes available time and resources to implement the work of PLCs*

- Shared personal practice
  - ➢ *Requires colleagues to open up their classrooms for observations, discussion, and critique*

(DuFour, 2004)

(Norman, 2013)

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

- Louis and Marks (1998) found that professional communities boost student achievement because they tend toward authentic pedagogy.

- When teachers work in genuine PLC groups, school cultures begin to evolve as teachers explore new instructional practices and learning becomes more authentic.

- Tasks transform from those requiring simple rote memory and recall to more sophisticated, intellectually challenging activities, resulting in higher standardized test scores.

(Louis & Marks, 1998)

(Norman, 2013)

Benefits of PLCs for Faculty and Staff

- By establishing collaborative cultures and promoting teachers as leaders through PLCs, numerous benefits are apparent.
  - ➤ Teachers decreased the time they worked in isolation, shared more responsibility for student achievement, increased their understanding of content, and adapted more quickly to change.
  - ➤ Became well-informed, professionally renewed, and inspired to inspire.
  - ➤ New teachers, engaged with and supported by colleagues, are beginning their teaching career with expectations for collaboration and active roles as leaders.
  - ➤ Experienced teachers are taking on new leadership roles that draw on their knowledge skills and dispositions.
  - ➤ Teachers are systematically examining data to assess the progress of their students and to learn from one another about strategies for effective instruction.
  - ➤ Beginning steps toward becoming life long learners

(DuFour, 2004; Louis & Marks, 1998)

(Norman, 2013)

Benefits of PLCs for Students

- By establishing collaborative cultures and promoting teachers as leaders through PLCs, numerous benefits are apparent.

  ➢ Students made larger academic gains in math, science, history, and reading and decreased their rates of dropout, truancy, and absenteeism.

  ➢ Students are experiencing increased consistency among teachers and administrators in school policies and expectations as well as benefiting from instruction that is informed by their learning needs.

(Norman, 2013)

PLCs and Administration

- School administrators should reinforce teacher empowerment by promoting teacher leadership.
  - ➢ When school administrators schedule regular PLC meeting times into a teacher's workday, it demonstrates their commitment to supporting the PLC process and goals.
  - ➢ By scheduling PLCs into the school day, school administrators enable their teachers to focus on collaborative and reflective practice on a regular basis.

- Policies and procedures must be in place to ensure a smooth transition from a top down school culture to a bottom up environment were teachers and administrators share responsibility for inquiry, reflection, and decision-making.

(Louis & Marks, 1998)

(Norman, 2013)

Recommendations for Administrative Support for Collaboration

- Scheduling to facilitate teacher interactions during the day

- Arranging for team teaching

- Providing substitute teachers to free up teachers to work together

- Organizing classroom allocations more effectively

- Providing directives and incentives for after school work

- Setting stronger expectations that teachers collaborate in meaningful ways

(Norman, 2013)

School Leaders and Collaboration

- School leaders who foster collaboration among novice and veteran teachers can improve teacher retention and teacher satisfaction.
  - ➤ New teachers seem more likely to stay in schools that have an "integrated professional culture" in which new teachers' needs are recognized and all teachers share responsibility for student success.

- Kardos and Johnson suggest that school leaders foster a sense of shared responsibility, engage veteran teachers in the induction of new teachers and in their own professional growth, and earmark resources to support collaborative planning, mentoring, and classroom observations.

(Norman, 2013)

Barriers & Strategies to Collaboration

- Related Barriers
  - Lack of knowledge of other professionals roles in the school system
  - Not knowing the other professionals

- Strategies to Overcome those Barriers
  - Review job descriptions of other employees
  - Observe other professionals
  - Schedule a meeting with unknown professionals
  - Beginning of the year faculty luncheon with ice breaker games to divide up typical "groups"

(Norman, 2013)

Barriers & Strategies to Collaboration

- Related Barriers
  - Need for privacy and not wanting to intrude on other privacy
  - Sense of autonomy
  - Preference to work alone

- Strategies to Overcome those Barriers
  - Support from administration for collaboration
  - Introducing collaboration slowly in small groups
  - Building relationships of trust and respect

(Norman, 2013)

Barriers & Strategies to Collaboration

- Related Barriers
  - ➤ Subject affiliation
  - ➤ Department organization
  - ➤ Separation among different professions
  - ➤ Separation based on grade level

- Strategies to Overcome those Barriers
  - ➤ Meetings not based on subject/grade level
  - ➤ Administrative support
  - ➤ Opportunities to collaborate during the school day

(Norman, 2013)

Barriers & Strategies to Collaboration

- Related Barriers
  - Level of education
  - Experience level

- Strategies to Overcome those Barriers
  - Understand you can learn from those different levels of education and experience.
  - Experienced teachers may learn new practices from new teachers right out of school and vice versa.

(Norman, 2013)

Barriers & Strategies to Collaboration

- Related Barriers
  - Time constraints
  - Physical separation
  - Lack of space for meeting
  - Planning time

- Strategies to Overcome those Barriers
  - Arrange common planning time
  - Reserve work rooms/conference rooms for meeting space
  - Provide web-based teacher networks

(Norman, 2013)

Barriers & Strategies to Collaboration

- Related Barriers
  - Lack of administrative support
  - Lack of general support for collaboration
  - Resistance to change
  - Lack of commitment

- Strategies to Overcome those Barriers
  - Set expectations for collaboration
  - Listen to teacher suggestions
  - Increase administrative support
  - Provide in-services on collaboration
  - Better utilize in-service time
  - Collaboration training for teachers
  - Arrange common planning time

(Norman, 2013)

Barriers & Strategies to Collaboration

- Related Barriers
  - ➢ Educational standards
  - ➢ Different goals/objectives for students

- Strategies to Overcome those Barriers
  - ➢ Common goals/standards for all students
  - ➢ Increase familiarity with standards of different grade levels and/or subject material

(Norman, 2013)

Barriers & Strategies to Collaboration

- Related Barriers
  - Overwhelmed
  - Increased amounts of paperwork
  - Too tired
  - Too many other responsibilities
  - Varying work styles

- Strategies to Overcome those Barriers
  - Decreased amounts of required paperwork
  - If funding allows, more teachers and smaller class size
  - Providing time to collaborate during the school day
  - Understanding of individual work styles and provide a common ground for each work style of every member

(Norman, 2013)

Barriers & Strategies to Collaboration

- Related Barriers
  - ➢ Lack of professional development directed at improving collaboration
  - ➢ Time spent planning and conducting other activities takes away from professional collaboration
  - ➢ Lack of interest

- Strategies to Overcome those Barriers
  - ➢ If financially possible provide substitutes/teaching assistants to provide time for collaboration
  - ➢ Limit the number of other activities faculty and staff are responsible for
  - ➢ Encourage faculty and staff to share their interests underlying their positions

(Norman, 2013)

Barriers & Strategies to Collaboration

- Related Barriers
  - Attitudes of other teachers/professionals
  - Personality conflicts
  - Competition
  - Feelings or intimidation
  - Feelings of superiority

- Strategies to Overcome those Barriers
  - Most of these barriers deal with personal feelings and do not represent professional attitudes or behaviors.
  - By demonstrating professional behaviors, you will over these barriers to collaboration and be a positive role model for not only students, but also other faculty and staff.
    - Professional behaviors handout is include in this online booklet
  - Recruit teachers from outside the area

(Norman, 2013)

Conditions for Collaborating Successfully

- Road blocks to Successful Collaboration
  - Teacher perceptions
    - Some teachers may prefer to work alone
  - Lack of focus
  - Groups generally underestimate the task of developing collaboration skills

- Overcoming the Road blocks
  - Establish standard operating procedures
  - Establish a regular time and space
    - Do not allow personal conversations or by a mandate, project, or crisis to highjack your collaboration time
  - Collaboration thrives in a climate of continuous, positive, and respectful critical inquiry
    - Be careful some teachers may mistake critical for criticism and fear that other will point out their instructional shortcomings
  - Keep the group focused on the meeting

(The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2012)

(Norman, 2013)

Sharing

- Sharing learned information is a critical component of learning communities.

- Truly productive collaboration leads not only to individual reflection on instructional practice but also to conversation among collaborators about what they have learned.

- Sharing learned information is a sign that teachers have moved to deprivatize their practices and accept their own vulnerability as learners as well as teachers.

- One key factor to success in any profession is to make a commitment to becoming a life long learner.

(The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2012)

(Norman, 2013)

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(Norman, 2013)