

# INNOVATIVE THOUGHTS

## INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

**Volume 4**  
**Issue 2** **October 2016**

Indexed / Listed In



## THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: COLLABORATION

Dr. A. Jeyantha Mary

---

### Abstract

*The paper aims at how to improve education service through exploring the practicable methods of teaching collaboration. The paper concerns with the characteristics of effective teacher-teacher collaboration. It highlights on how to establish an effective mechanic for administrative teacher collaboration to promote the collaborative awareness. Teacher collaboration is a joint social task in education, not an individual or specific one, which will be universally applied in the current teaching. The paper reveals the approaches for teacher collaboration relate to education service delivery and gives some suggestions in practice.*

**Keywords:** *Teaching collaboration, Co-teaching, Alternative teaching, and Team teaching.*

---

### INTRODUCTION

Teachers' collaboration means many different things. They may refer to working together in a classroom to instruct a group of students, at other times they may be describing meetings they attend to discuss students who are transferring to the school, and they may also be reporting on the efforts of the school's staff development committee or any other situation in which they work closely with other teachers. Collaboration refers to how teachers are carrying out a specific task or activity, not the nature or purpose of the activity. Friend and Cook's (1992) definition of collaboration is intentionally general and takes this into account: "interpersonal collaboration is a style of direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal"(1992, p. 5). The paper aims at how to improve education service by the practices of teacher collaboration, concerns with the relationship between the teacher collaboration and teaching. It highlights on how to establish an effective mechanic for administrative teacher collaboration to promote the collaborative awareness. Besides, it answers the question that the teacher collaboration is a joint social task in education, not an individual or specific one, which will be universally applied in the current teaching. The paper deals with the concrete approaches of teacher collaboration in current school practice as well as reveals the characterization of teacher collaboration.

### COLLABORATION

Collaborative classrooms seem to have four general characteristics. The first two capture changing relationships between teachers and students. The third characterizes teachers' new approaches to instruction. The fourth addresses the composition of a collaborative classroom.

#### Shared knowledge among teachers and students

In traditional classrooms, the dominant metaphor for teaching is the teacher as information giver; knowledge flows only one way from teacher to student. In contrast, the metaphor for collaborative classrooms is shared knowledge. The teacher has vital knowledge about content, skills, and instruction, and still provides that information to students. However, collaborative teachers also value and build upon the knowledge, personal experiences, language, strategies, and culture that students bring to the learning situation.

Consider a lesson on insect-eating plants, for example. Few students, and perhaps few teachers, are likely to have direct knowledge about such plants. Thus, when those students who do have relevant experiences are given an opportunity to share them, the whole class is enriched. Moreover, when students see that their experiences and knowledge are valued, they are motivated to listen and learn in new ways, and they are more likely to make important connections between their own learning and "school" learning. They become empowered. This same phenomenon occurs when the knowledge parents and other community members have is valued and used within the school.

### **Shared authority among teachers and students**

In collaborative classrooms, teachers share authority with students in very specific ways. In most traditional classrooms, the teacher is largely, if not exclusively, responsible for setting goals, designing learning tasks, and assessing what is learned.

Collaborative teachers differ in that they invite students to set specific goals within the framework of what is being taught, provide options for activities and assignments that capture different student interests and goals, and encourage students to assess what they learn. Collaborative teachers encourage students' use of their own knowledge, ensure that students share their knowledge and their learning strategies, treat each other respectfully, and focus on high levels of understanding. They help students listen to diverse opinions, support knowledge claims with evidence, engage in critical and creative thinking, and participate in open and meaningful dialogue.

### **Teachers as mediators**

As knowledge and authority are shared among teachers and students, the role of the teacher increasingly emphasizes mediated learning. Successful mediation helps students connect new information to their experiences and to learning in other areas, helps students figure out what to do when they are stumped, and helps them learn how to learn. Above all, the teacher as mediator adjusts the level of information and support so as to maximize the ability to take responsibility for learning. This characteristic of collaborative classrooms is so important, we devote a whole section to it below.

### **Heterogeneous groupings of students**

The perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds of all students are important for enriching learning in the classroom. As learning beyond the classroom increasingly requires understanding diverse perspectives, it is essential to provide students opportunities to do this in multiple contexts in schools. In collaborative classrooms where students are engaged in a thinking curriculum, everyone learns from everyone else, and no student is deprived of this opportunity for making contributions and appreciating the contributions of others.

Thus, a critical characteristic of collaborative classrooms is that students are not segregated according to supposed ability, achievement, interests, or any other characteristic. Segregation seriously weakens collaboration and impoverishes the classroom by depriving all students of opportunities to learn from and with each other. Students we might label unsuccessful in a traditional classroom learn from "brighter" students, but, more importantly, the so-called brighter students have just as much to learn from their more average peers. Teachers beginning to teach collaboratively often express delight when they observe the insights revealed by their supposedly weaker students.

## **THE APPROACHES FOR TEACHER COLLABORATION RELATE TO EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY**

Teacher collaboration as it relates to education services should not be considered in isolation from other aspects of a collaborative school. With educational improvement for all students as the overriding goal of collaborative schools (Smith & Scott, 1990), teacher collaboration regarding students should be just another aspect of a school's collaborative ethic and an integral part of the school culture.

Applications of Collaborative Principles Collaboration cannot exist by itself. It can only occur when it is associated with some program or activity that is based on the shared goals of the individuals involved.

Depending upon their shared programmatic goals, educators can work together in many diverse ways to deliver services to students. Laycock, Gable, and Korinek (1991 ) have described several alternative formats or configurations that facilitate collaborative efforts to deliver educational services. The following sections consider applications of collaboration that may be used for improving the delivery of educational services to all students.

### **Co-teaching**

Co-teaching is becoming a viable approach for instruction in many school situations. For example, in some colleges, culture and English teachers are co-teaching classes that combine their subject matter into a course called American Studies. Similarly, in middle schools, teams of teachers are meeting regularly to discuss instructional issues and to monitor student progress. Many teachers, regardless of level, contact colleagues to engage in shared classroom activities either formally or informally.

This service delivery approach is also receiving increasing attention as a means of integrating students into general education classes. In co-teaching designed for this purpose, two teachers--one a general education teacher and the other a special education teacher--work primarily in a single classroom to deliver instruction to a heterogeneous group of students.

### **Alternative Teaching**

One teach, one observe or assist. In this type of co-teaching, both teachers are present, but one often the general education teacher takes a clear lead in the classroom while the other gathers observational data on students or "drifts" around the room assisting students during instruction. This approach is simple; it requires little planning on the part of the teachers, and it provides the additional assistance that can make a heterogeneous class successful. However, it also has serious liabilities. If the same teacher consistently observes or assists, that teacher may feel like a glorified aide and the students may have trouble responding to him or her as a real teacher. If this approach is followed, the teachers should alternate roles regularly.

### **Station Teaching**

In this approach, the teachers divide the content to be delivered and each takes responsibility for part of it. In a classroom where station teaching is used, some of the students may be completing independent work assignments or participating in peer tutoring. Although this approach requires that the teachers share responsibility for planning to sufficiently divide the instructional content, each has separate responsibility for delivering instruction. Students benefit from the lower teacher-pupil

ratio, and students may be integrated into a group instead of being singled out. Furthermore, because with this approach each teacher instructs each part of the class, the equal status of both students and teachers is maximized. One drawback to station teaching is that the noise and activity level may be unacceptable to some teachers.

### **Parallel Teaching**

The primary purpose of this type of co-teaching is to lower the student-teacher ratio. In parallel teaching, the teachers plan the instruction jointly, but each delivers it to half of the class group. This approach requires that the teachers coordinate their efforts so that the students receive essentially the same instruction. This type of co-teaching is often appropriate for drill and practice activities, projects needing close teacher supervision, and test review. As with station teaching approaches, noise and activity levels may need to be monitored.

### **Team Teaching**

The emphasis will be on two types in particular: pre-referral teams and multidisciplinary teams. Pre-referral team is a term used to refer to all the team approaches that address students' academic and behaviour problems prior to any consideration for education eligibility. Some teams consist of only teachers, while some include others who can assist in assessing student difficulties and supporting teachers.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

In a collaborative relationship: Everyone has the right to be heard and the responsibility to listen. Students are given guidelines/ expectations for positive behavior, according to the local discipline/referral policy of the school. Communication regarding students is documented. The administrator should always be kept informed. You are a professional. Know your local division's child study referral process. Don't wait until the child is failing academically. Identify some people in your school who can help.

### **REFERENCES**

- Assessment and Collaborative Learning: <http://bit.ly/d3dEy5>.
- Collaborative Learning Structures Strategies and Techniques: <http://www.gdrc.org/kmgmt/c-learn/methods.html>.
- Collaborative Learning: <http://www.gdrc.org/kmgmt/c-learn/index.html>. University of Wisconsin–Madison's Engage Program:
- Four Collaborative Learning Strategies: <http://www.gdrc.org/kmgmt/c-learn/strategies.html>.
- <http://engage.wisc.edu/collaboration/index.html>.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marzano, Robert J. et al., (2005). *Handbook for Classroom Management That Works*. Virginia: Associate Supervision for Curriculum Development.

Sullivan, K. O.(1994). Understanding Ways. Hale& Iremonger Pty ltd. Waters, A. (2006).  
Thinking and Language Learning. ELT Journal, 60 (4), 319-327.

Team Contract Sample 3: <http://math.arizona.edu/~sgfoster/115b/teamcontb.doc>.

TeamContractSample1:[http://pheatt.emporia.edu/CCSC\\_ARCHIVE/ccsc2007presentations/managing\\_student\\_projects/ccsc-TeamContract.doc](http://pheatt.emporia.edu/CCSC_ARCHIVE/ccsc2007presentations/managing_student_projects/ccsc-TeamContract.doc).

TeamContractSample2: [http://www.augsburg.edu/ppages/~schwalbe/team\\_contract.doc](http://www.augsburg.edu/ppages/~schwalbe/team_contract.doc).



Perinthattiri P.O, Cheloor, Malappuram Dt. Kerala, India, Pin - 676 507

Ph: 09745073615, 08907162762

Email: [naspublishers@gmail.com](mailto:naspublishers@gmail.com), web: [www.naspublishers.com](http://www.naspublishers.com)



 /9745073615  /NasPublishers