



Created by Kira Kliment

Tool Kit for Collaboration

In the inclusion model classrooms, general education and special education teachers have shared students; students who are on class rosters as well as caseloads. In this situation, it has been determined by the IEP team that students are going to be taught either in the classroom by both the general education and special education teachers OR spend a combination of time inside and outside the classroom. In this situation, it is important for both teachers to collaborate with each other and understand the student equally in order to create a positive learning environment as well as a positive relationship with parents and families. Given that teachers have rosters of 20+ students and caseloads of 10+ students, this is not always the easiest task.

This artifact builds on best practices for ongoing communication with parents while providing methods and tools to use towards collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers within the realm of ongoing parent communication.

From the beginning:

Communicate with each other- teacher to teacher

- Talk about how you would both like the partnership to work.
 - In order for the partnership to be cohesive, useful and work effectively, it should be collaborative and consistent.
 - Decide who will organize and send or provide the communication as well as who should respond to communication from parents.
 - Decide if communication should be collaborative or separate depending on the situation, etc.
 - Understand the others preferred method or 'style' of communication and how that can fit in with yours
 - Ex. Face to face, call/text, every day, once a week, etc.
 - Develop a way for you two of you to effectively communicate with each other concerning the student to allow for a consistent understanding of what the student is doing with each of you.
 - Daily/weekly check-ins, text messages, emails, written log, notes, etc.
 - Decide the best way to collectively communicate with families and parents. Depending on the situation what is the best way to communicate:
 - Always communicate together as partners, communicate separately, etc.
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Understand the parents preferred method of communication

- Ask from the start how parents want to be reached (in person, call, email, text, etc.) and be sure that you and your partner teacher are both using that method.

Ensure that parents know you both equally

- Start the year by going on home visits together and sending welcome calls, emails, and letters home together.
 - Introduce yourselves as the student's *teachers* and explain the way in which you each will be working with the student collaboratively and separately.
 - Give parents both teachers' contact information and preferred method of communication.

Throughout the year:

Consistency is key

- Communicate with each other (teacher-to-teacher) about what has happened with the student that class, day, week, etc. and know collectively what needs to be communicated to parents.
 - If only one teacher knows what happened or what is communicated, the parent will be unable to use the other as a resource.
 - Avoid sending mixed messages to parents.
 - Ensure that information being given to parents (positive or negative) is consistent with what your partner teacher is sending.
 - Differing information is confusing and frustrating to parents and may cause distrust of either or both teachers.
 - When communicating with parents, be sure that your partner teacher has not already communicated the same information.
 - Tell your partner teacher about communication that you have had with parents. Use a log or keep a running email or text chain to ensure communication is not sent more than once.
 - Getting the same information more than once can be overwhelming and annoying for parents. Plan ahead of time who will be sending certain information or check with your partner teacher before communicating something to parents.
 - With this, both teachers should still be available for parents as a resource or support if necessary for further communication.
 - Start communication with something positive.
 - Each teacher should consistently share positive information with parents.
 - One teacher should not have to deal with all of the negative information while the other send all positive information.
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- Allow for both teachers to be seen in a positive light rather than playing good cop, bad cop.

Meetings

- Plan and attend IEP, PTC, and APTT meetings at times that both teachers are able to attend.
 - IEP meetings present a great opportunity to share information about how a student is doing as well as concerns and strategies to help that student.
 - Ensuring that both teachers are present at IEP meetings allows for consistency of knowledge and understanding about parental concerns, and how both teachers and parents would like to support the student in school and at home.
- PTCs and APTT meetings are great opportunities to talk about what is being done in class as well as how both teachers are working with and supporting the student.
 - Often times, IEP meetings can be stressful for parents and full of negative information. PTCs and APTT allows for a more positive exchange of information.
 - Having both teachers present allows parents to see that both teachers are involving in their child's learning as well as what the student is doing in class with both teachers and how to continue this learning and support at home.
 - PTCs and APTT meetings allow parents a safe place to receive feedback as well as ask questions or give both teachers information in one place.

As with all communication, begin each communication with something positive. Parents of students with special needs often assume communication is needed for the negative information more often than the positive. Ensure that both teachers in the partnership are able to share positive information more often than negative.



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Example Welcome E-mail for Partner Teachers

Hello Mr. and Mrs. _____!

I hope you are both enjoying a great summer!! We wanted to reach out to you to introduce ourselves and give you some information about the upcoming year. Our names are _____ and _____ and we are your child's classroom teacher and special education teacher respectively. We are both so excited to be working with _____ in our class and think it is going to be a great year!

We were hoping to get to know you as well as _____ this summer before the school year begins or throughout the first couple weeks of school with a home visit. Please let us know the best day and for you and your family for a home visit. Please also let us know if you would prefer to meet at a location other than your home.

We look forward to partnering with you all this year and having _____ in our class. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns and feel free to reach out to us with anything you may need. We cannot wait for the upcoming year!

Thank you,

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Example Home-School Communication Log ^{*have}

one table below for each day of the week

Student's Communication Log

Date:	☺	☹	Comments
Morning			
Specials			
Lunch/Recess			
Afternoon			
Ms. K's Comments			
Mr. J's Comments			
Parents comments			

Parent Signature: _____





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Example Partner Teacher Communication Log

Date:	Teacher:	Mode of Communication:	Information given:	Other information:
4/3	Ms. K	Text	John had a great day, finishing all of his work and problem solving at recess after some frustration.	A picture was sent as well with his completed writing assignment.
