Communication and Collaboration within the IEP Process

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March 13, 2013

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Agenda and Objectives

Webinar participants will:

- Learn about key characteristics of collaboration (10 minutes)

- Learn about meeting structures and processes that promote effective collaboration (10 minutes)

- Reflect on individual strengths and challenges in communication and collaboration (25 minutes)

- Engage in a conversation about collaboration (15 minutes)

Key Characteristics of Collaboration

- Collaboration = "A style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal." (Friend & Cook, 2013, p. 6)

- IDEA: Parent participation is one of the 6 principles of IDEA. Schools need to involve parents as educational decision-makers; students need to be involved in transition planning; procedural safeguards are in place for parents.

- So: What is collaboration within the IEP process?

Key Characteristics of Collaboration

Underlying principles from the literature

Collaboration is:

- Voluntary
- Requires parity among participants
- Honors diversity and expertise
- Based on mutual goals
- Depends on shared decision-making
- Involves shared resources and shared accountability
- Involves trust and a focus on relationships

My Assumptions

- Collaboration is intentional, not natural
- The IEP process *can* be collaborative
- Schools need to create conditions for collaboration, but team collaboration occurs only when all individuals bring their "best collaborative selves" to the table
- Advocacy and collaboration *can* co-exist
- Collaboration is a balancing act requiring a focus on **task** and **relationships**

Characteristics of Collaborative Teams

- **Face-to-face Interaction**: Regular opportunities to meet

- **Positive Interdependence:** Mutual goals and norms

- **Interpersonal Skills:** Effective communication and conflict resolution

- **Individual Accountability:** Shared responsibility and follow-through

- **Group Monitoring and Processing:** Opportunities to discuss how the group is doing

Effective Meeting Structures and Processes

- Regular opportunities to meet
- Use of agendas, with time allotments
- Minutes and "to do" lists
- Clear roles: Facilitator, recorder, timekeeper
- Clarity around decision-making and responsibilities
- Clarity around communication between meetings
- Knowledge of stages of group development

Effective Meetings: Stages of Group Development

- **Forming:** Dependency and inclusion, establishment of initial norms

- **Storming:** Dealing with power and conflict (or not)

- **Norming:** Re-establishment of norms, increased skills in problem-solving and conflict resolution

- **Performing:** Effective and positive; not without disagreement

Collaboration and **You**

- Know what you are entitled to.

- Know what you want for your child.

- **"Know Thyself"**

- **Develop your skills in collaboration and leadership.**

Knowing Yourself

- Introversion or Extraversion?

- Decision-making style(s)

- Style and comfort with conflict

- Awareness of personal context

Energy and Communication

Introversion

Preferences:

- Thinking before acting or speaking
- Drawing energy from within
- Reflection and written communication
- Taking action on things that are very important

Extraversion

Preferences:

- Thinking/working out ideas out loud
- Drawing energy from others
- Learning through doing and speaking
- Spontaneous and action-oriented

Decision-Making Styles

Thinking

Characteristics of people who prefer Thinking:

- Logical
- Analytical
- Prefer cause and effect thinking
- Strive for objective standard of truth
- Focus on fairness

Feeling

Characteristics of people who prefer Feeling:

- Guided by personal values
- Empathetic
- Assess impacts of decisions on people
- Consider context in decision-making
- Focus on harmony and positive interactions

Conflict Styles and Comfort Levels

- **Competing**: Preferring to win
- **Avoiding**: Moving away from conflict
- **Accommodating**: Observing and giving into the wishes of others
- **Compromising**: Negotiating, "give and take"
- **Collaborating**: Problem-solving with others to identify a unique option

Awareness of Personal Context

- Family Context
- Time
- Role(s)
- Sources of Knowledge
- Emotions
- Resiliency

Developing and Practicing Skills

- Keep a journal
- Take time to prepare for meetings
- Ask others to observe your skills and strengths in communication and collaboration
- Stretch yourself
- Consider the developmental nature of individuals and teams
- Take time for yourself
- Listen to Colby Kervick's webinar!

Sources

- Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2013). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals (7ᵗʰ ed.). Boston: Pearson.*

- Humanmetrics.com   (Jung Typology Test)

- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

- Parents as Collaborative Leaders website: http://www.uvm.edu/~pcl/index.php

- Thousand, J., & Villa, R. (1992). Collaborative teams: A powerful tool in restructuring. In R.Villa, J. Thousand, W. Stainback, & S. Stainback (Eds.) *Restructuring for caring and effective education: An administrative guide to creating heterogeneous schools.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.