Collaborate with Professionals to Increase Student Success

The educator demonstrates behaviors for effective collaboration with other professionals to positively impact student outcomes.

Key Method

The educator demonstrates collaborative behaviors through effective communication with teachers, paraprofessionals, supervisors, and/or other related service providers while implementing the steps of shared problem solving to improve instructional outcomes for students.

Method Components

Collaboration

"In order to ensure all students learn at high levels, educators must work collaboratively and take collective responsibility for the success of each student" (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016).

Collaborate comes from "co-labor," meaning two or more people working together as equals to achieve a common goal. Integral to being an educator, collaboration begins with strong personal commitment, that is, a deeply held belief that the unified efforts of professionals are exponentially more impactful than those carried out in isolation. However, a commitment to collaboration is not sufficient. It must be accompanied by (a) skills for communicating with others and (b) the ability to effectively and efficiently use collaborative processes to address problems.

Effective collaboration requires

- maintaining a strong commitment to shared work,
- communicating and planning together regularly,
- sharing resources, decision-making, and accountability, and
- establishing and agreeing to clearly defined norms, roles, and responsibilities.

Collaborative Communication

To be collaborative, educators must be able to skillfully communicate with other professionals. Effective communication elements include the following components:

- **Verbal active listening:** Skillful listening is an active process that is essential to constructive collaboration and communication. The listener engages by asking clarifying questions, paraphrasing, and/or summarizing his or her understanding at the end of the communication. This provides the person speaking with an opportunity to affirm or correct what the listener understood.

- **Non-verbal active listening:** Non-verbal communication is strongly influenced by factors that often suggest attitude and emotion. Facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures and body language all have the ability to add or detract from verbal communication. Nodding, smiling, and maintaining appropriate posture for the situation support verbal communication and demonstrate engagement in the collaboration process. In collaborative interactions, educators should be mindful of their nonverbal communication to ensure they are conveying openness, respect, and understanding.

- **Questions and Statements:** Accurate, descriptive statements and open-ended questions contribute to effective collaboration. Successful collaborators make statements that can be supported with evidence and data, and avoid the use of vague generalities (e.g., Vague: Tyler is always late; Specific: Tyler was tardy 3 out of 5 days last week). They also ask questions that encourage active participation and elaboration from the responder. The use of skillful questioning and accurate, descriptive statements leads to productive collaboration focused on the identified problem and potential solutions.

It is important to note that the communication skills just described should not be used in isolation. Instead, when put to action, they should be carefully blended to foster partnerships among professionals that result in positive outcomes for students. Additionally, successful collaborators consistently consider culture within the context of their communication.

Shared Problem Solving through Effective Communication

Effective collaboration strongly relies on the power of shared problem solving. While collaborating, using skillful communication allows educators to combine their knowledge, skills, and efforts around solving a shared problem using the following 6-step approach. Each step should be completed before moving clockwise to the next step; however, at any time in the process, the team may decide to go back and repeat an earlier step.

Shared Problem Solving

Step 1: Identify the problem

Using effective communication skills, collectively define the problem. The team should identify and discuss the symptoms and scope of the problem. The real problem is further clarified as more symptoms are found. Often teams conflate the symptoms of the problem with the problem itself so be careful to identify the root cause of the issue. In addition to defining the problem, this step also includes establishing a clear goal. Having a shared understanding of the problem and the intended goal is critical to the process as well as recognizing each team member's interest in and motivation for solving the problem.

Step 2: Brainstorm potential solutions

Working together, generate several possible solutions to the problem that merit further discussion and exploration. As ideas are shared, teams should keep an open mind as this step is about creating a variety of solutions, not just one.

Step 3: Evaluate potential solutions

The perfect solution seldom exists, so the team should discuss the feasibility of the potential solutions as you debate the pros and cons for each. During this collaborative step, try to build on the ideas of your teammates rather than rejecting them. Additionally, assess how each solution relates to the root cause or symptoms of the problem.

Step 4: Decide on best solution

After carefully exploring the options, reach a group consensus to determine the solution you will pursue. By this step in the process, all team members should have a vested interest in solving the problem and be willing to negotiate for the best possible outcome. The selected solution should have sufficient technical quality to resolve the problem and be acceptable to those who will implement it.

Step 5: Implement the solution

In this step, team members agree on action steps for implementation, assign tasks, and utilize a timeline for completion. The team should also agree on the type of data that will be used to determine success and impact on the identified problem.

Step 6: Evaluate the outcome

Reconvene to provide collaborative feedback on the solution's effectiveness based on the collected data. Reflecting on the results helps the team identify next steps and brings the problem-solving process full circle. It is important to note that if the selected solution does not produce the desired outcome, the team should repeat Step 4 to collaboratively select a different solution for implementation or start the process over at Step 1.

Supporting Rationale and Research

The Supporting Rationale and Research includes several articles and videos for learning more about effective communication and why collaboration is very important to student success. As you interact with these learning materials, take time to reflect on your professional practice.

Supporting Research

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., Many, T. W., & Mattos, M. (2016). Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work. Solution Tree Press. To read Chapter 1, visit the website https://www.solutiontree.com/learning-by-doing-third-edition.html. Access "Why Should We Collaborate?" (https://bit.ly/3Nud8dk), access "Why Should We Create Norms?" (https://bit.ly/3MumV1H), and access other free resources by visiting the Solution Tree website https://www.solutiontree.com/free-resources/plcatwork/lbd3.

Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2014). Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals (7th edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. https://bit.ly/3GWVvAs. The following topics specifically relate to Collaboration HLP 1: "Chapter 1 Foundations and Perspectives" https://bit.ly/3tirwxm; "Chapter 3 Interpersonal Problem Solving" https://bit.ly/3tlA8mK; "Chapter 10 Issues Related to Education Collaboration" https://bit.ly/3mlna4C.

Hargreaves, A., & O'Connor, M. T. (2018). Solidarity with solidity: The case for collaborative professionalism. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *100*(1), 20–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721718797116

McLeskey, J., Maheady, L., Billingsley, B., Brownell, M., & Lewis, T. (Ed.) (2019). High-leverage practices for inclusive classrooms. New York: Routledge. [Chapter 1]

Qureshi, Z. (2008). Six-Step Problem Solving Model. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/8229711/Problem_Solving_Overview_SIX_STEP_PROBLEM_SOLVING_MODEL.

Rivers, D. (2015). *The Seven challenges workbook: A guide to cooperative communication skills for success at home and at work.* (9th ed.). Human Development Books.

Ronfeldt, M., Farmer, S. O., McQueen, K., & Grissom, J. A. (2015). Teacher collaboration in instructional teams and student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 52*(3), 475–514. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831215585562

Schleifer, D., Rinehart, C., & Yanisch, T. (2017). Teacher collaboration in perspective: A guide to research. In Perspective. Retrieved from http://www.in-perspective.org/files/PublicAgenda_TeacherCollaborationInPerspective_AGuideToResearch_2017.pdf

Shamberger, C. T., & Friend, M. (2012, November 30). Working Together for Learning together: Supporting students and teachers with collaborative instruction. Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1135492

Supporting Resources

Collaboration HLP 1. This video (https://bit.ly/3Q4E5Ge), by Michael Kennedy, provides an overview of Collaboration High Leverage Practice 1.

How Much of Communication is Really Nonverbal? This article (https://bit.ly/3khBMS2 explores communication and the impact of body language and other nonverbal signals.

The Six Step Problem-Solving Model. This article (https://bit.ly/3BQHf8c) outlines the six steps used in a collaborative problem-solving model as well as suggested tools and critical questions to support each step.

Collaborative Problem Solvers are Made Not Born – Here's What You Need to Know. This article (https://bit.ly/3JNgabb) explains the skills team members need to collaboratively work together.

Developing Norms. This guide (https://bit.ly/3eYgKVk) supports the development of team norms which are used to ensure the collaborative meeting(s) are efficient and focused on accomplishing the identified task(s).

All Together Now: Special and Regular Educators Prosper in PLCs. This article (https://bit.ly/3JM8ea4) highlights the powerful benefits of general and special educators collaboratively working together.

How to Adopt a Collaborative Problem-Solving Approach Through 'Yes, and' Thinking. This article (https://bit.ly/3H2Lxx1) reviews the attitudes, benefits, and techniques outlined in the collaborative problem-solving approach by Alexander Hancock.

Group Problem Solving Process. This fact sheet (https://bit.ly/31BP0lP) outlines the group problem solving process and provides a questioning approach used to help guide the process.

Teacher Collaboration: Spreading Best Practices School-Wide. This video by Edutopia https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85HUMHBXJf4 highlights the best practice of teacher collaboration to foster a supportive professional school-wide culture.

The 7 Keys to Creative Collaboration. This video briefly explores the seven key characteristics for successful and creative collaboration: ownership, dependability, trust, structure, a shared vision, fun environment, and candor.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DmFFS0dqQc

Submission Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria

This section is divided into three areas: Overview, Artifacts and Evidence, and Reflection. Each area contains guidelines for the item(s) you must submit for this micro-credential and the criteria by which your evidence and artifacts will be evaluated.

- Please read each task and corresponding rubric carefully to ensure a thorough understanding of the expectations for the artifacts and evidence you submit.

- Before uploading evidence and artifacts for this micro-credential, remove any personally identifiable information. When referring to students or student work samples, use fictitious names or Student A, Student B, etc.

- To earn this micro-credential, you must receive "Passing" on Part 1 and Part 3, and "Demonstrated" on all criteria in Part 2.

Part One. Overview

Read the Overview guidelines and evaluation criteria carefully to ensure a thorough understanding of the expectations for a "passing" submission.

The Overview submission should be uploaded as a Word document or PDF. (Please do not use Google Docs.)

Task: Submit a response to the following prompts:

- Consider current collaborative relationships with colleagues and service providers. Describe any collaboration in which you engage with others on a regular basis. Be sure to include the purpose(s) for the collaboration.

AND

- Identify a particular student or group of students who need additional academic or behavioral support, **or** identify a problem of practice that relates to you and your colleagues. Based on the need(s), how might the collaborative efforts of education professionals working together to plan and design learning benefit/impact the student or group of students?

This submission is scored either "passing" or "not passing."

Passing: Earner includes a response to each part of the prompts; total response should be a minimum of 150-words and provide adequate detail to help the scorer understand the context for your submission.

Part Two. Artifacts and Evidence

Read the Document Submission Requirements and Video Submission requirements carefully to ensure a thorough understanding of the expectations for "Demonstrated."

Any written documents should be uploaded as a Word document or PDF. (Please do not use Google Docs.)

Task 1: Collaboration Partner and Student(s) Information Written Response

Determine at least one collaboration partner whose expertise or knowledge is currently needed to assist in planning and designing learning (academics or behavior) for the particular student(s) or assist in learning about and problem solving the related problem of practice identified in Part One: Overview. Invite this professional (or professionals) to join you in a collaborative meeting to improve learning outcomes for the student(s) or the related problem of practice.

Provide a written response in which you

- Describe the student or group of students including the particular learning challenge or learning outcome (behavioral or academic), or the problem of practice that relates to you and your colleagues that you hope to improve. Explain the specific data used to support your selection.

AND

- Identify at least one collaboration partner or collaboration team and their current role(s). Explain how collaboration with this colleague or team might enhance your professional growth and assist in improving student learning outcomes or assist in improving the problem of practice.

Please submit the written response with the title "Task 1 Written Response" as evidence for Task 1.

Task 2: Post-Meeting Written Response

Schedule an initial planning time with your collaboration partner or collaboration team. Use this meeting time to discover the different perspectives and abilities of team members. After this meeting, provide a written response that includes the following

- The meeting norms that will set the parameters for future meetings.

- A statement of the mutually defined problem. Be sure to identify the problem and not merely symptoms of the problem.

- An explanation of each collaborating professional's role and responsibility to the collaborative effort.

- A thorough description of the specific action steps each professional agreed to fulfill during the planning collaboration.

Please submit the written response with the title "Task 2 Written Response" as evidence for Task 2.

Task 3: Video Recording and Annotations of Steps 2 - 4

Video the second collaborative session in which you and your collaborative team complete Steps 2-4 of shared problem-solving as presented in the Method Components. Your video submission should include annotations that identify where you engaged in brainstorming, evaluating, and deciding on the best solution.

Please submit the video recording and annotations with the title "Task 3 Video and Annotations" as evidence for Task 3. If you choose to submit the video and annotations separately, submit the video recording with the title "Task 3 Video Recording" and submit the annotations with the title "Task 3 Annotations" as evidence for Task 3.

Task 4: Video Recording and Annotations of Communication Elements

Video the next collaborative session with your team members as you evaluate the implementation of your shared problem-solving efforts. The video should provide evidence of collaborative communication skills as you discuss any progress toward the solution or any unexpected obstacles you might have encountered that hindered your progress. Your video submission should include annotations that identify where you engaged in collaborative communication elements.

Please submit the video recording and annotations with the title "Task 4 Video and Annotations" as evidence for Task 4. If you choose to submit the video and annotations separately, submit the video recording with the title "Task 4 Video Recording" and submit the annotations with the title "Task 4 Annotations" as evidence for Task 4.

Artifacts and Evidence Scoring Guide

Tasks	Not Met	Progressing	Demonstrated
Task 1: Collaboration Partner and Student(s) Information Written Response	Earner provides a completed written response to describe and explain one of the following • student(s) including the learning challenge/ outcome, **or** the problem of practice. Specific data is included to explain selection. **OR** • identification of the collaboration partner/ team including details regarding the impact on professional growth and the identified student learning challenges/ outcomes **OR** Earner submits a written summary or restatement that partially includes one component for Task 1	Earner provides a partially completed written response to describe and explain the following • student(s) including the learning challenge/ outcome, **or** the problem of practice. Specific data is included to explain selection. **AND** • identification of the collaboration partner/ team including details regarding the impact on professional growth and the identified student learning challenges/ outcomes **AND** Earner submits a written summary or restatement that partially includes all components for Task 1	Earner provides a written response to describe and explain the following • student(s) including the learning challenge/ outcome, **or** the problem of practice. Specific data is included to explain selection. **AND** • identification of the collaboration partner/ team including details regarding the impact on professional growth and the identified student learning challenges/ outcomes **AND** Earner submits a written analysis (200-word minimum) that includes all components for Task 1
Task 2: Post-Meeting Written Response	Earner submits a written response that minimally address the Task 2 components (one or two of four)	Earner submits a written response (250-word minimum) that partially addresses and includes most of the Task 2 components (three of four)	Earner submits a written response (250-word minimum) that completely addresses and includes all Task 2 components (four of four)
Task 3: Video Recording and Annotations of Steps 2 - 4	Earner does not submit a video, or the earner does not submit annotations to address the components for Task 3	Earner submits a video recording of the second collaborative session with annotations; The video or the annotations partially address the components for Task 3	Earner submits a video recording of the second collaborative session with annotations; The video and annotations completely address all components for Task 3

Task 4: Video Recording and Annotations of Communication Elements	Earner does not submit a video, or the earner does not submit annotations to address the components for Task 4	Earner submits a video recording of the collaborative session that evaluates the implementation of the shared problem-solving efforts with annotations; The video or the annotations partially address the components for Task 4	Earner submits a video recording of the collaborative session that evaluates the implementation of the shared problem-solving efforts with annotations; The video and annotations completely address all components for Task 4

Part Three. Reflection

Read the Reflection guidelines and evaluation criteria carefully to ensure a thorough understanding of the expectations for a "passing" submission.

Your Reflection should be uploaded as a Word document or PDF. (Please do not use Google Docs.)

Task: Reflect on and consider the collaboration activities, skills learned, and the potential impact this experience might have on future collaborative relationships. In a written response, reflect on the following questions:

- In what ways did the collaboration with professionals impact your work experience?

- What are some of the ways you noticed the student(s) and/or colleagues benefited from professionals working together to solve a mutually defined problem?

- What strategies might you consider as beneficial to sustain collaboration with other educators and service providers in the future?

This submission is scored either "passing" or "not passing."
Passing: Earner includes a response for each part of the prompt (250-word minimum). Responses should clarify and further explain how earning this micro-credential has impacted your professional practice and student outcomes.