

Tips for Building Collaborative Partnerships between Community Preschool Teachers and Special Education Teachers

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1. If at all possible establish a regular time for collaboration, planning, and sharing information on progress. This is a great time to discuss how to incorporate IEP goals into typical classroom activities and daily routines as well as how to use naturally occurring learning opportunities in the classroom to support the child’s development
2. Start slowly and be patient. Remember it can take several years to develop a truly collaborative partnership, but the little steps and successes along the way will motivate you to keep trying!
3. Respect and accept differences in teaching styles. Take time to learn about one another’s philosophies. Don’t be afraid to ask questions.
4. Let the classroom teacher know how much you benefit from her insights and feedback. Classroom teachers often provide the most valuable information regarding the child’s progress and how particular strategies are working or not working in the classroom.
5. Keep in mind what strategies and methods will work best with the teacher’s personal teaching style, comfort level and classroom management philosophy. Remember the classroom teachers are the ones who will be responsible for implementing the strategies on a daily basis, so help them feel comfortable with your suggestions and ideas. Incorporate their ideas and suggestions as well.
6. Try small changes first…these little successes will encourage teaching teams to be more open to new ideas.
7. Always collaborate and plan with the preschool staff prior to introducing a new strategy or suggesting a modification or adaptation. Ensure that each person on the team has a chance to play an active role in the planning process and to ask questions or express concerns. Success is much more likely if everyone on the team plays a role in planning for the child’s success.
8. Be prepared to make changes if the child is not responding as expected or if the teachers are having difficulty implementing a particular strategy into the classroom routine.
9. Allow plenty of time for self-reflection. And remember, collaborative partnerships are always a work in progress!