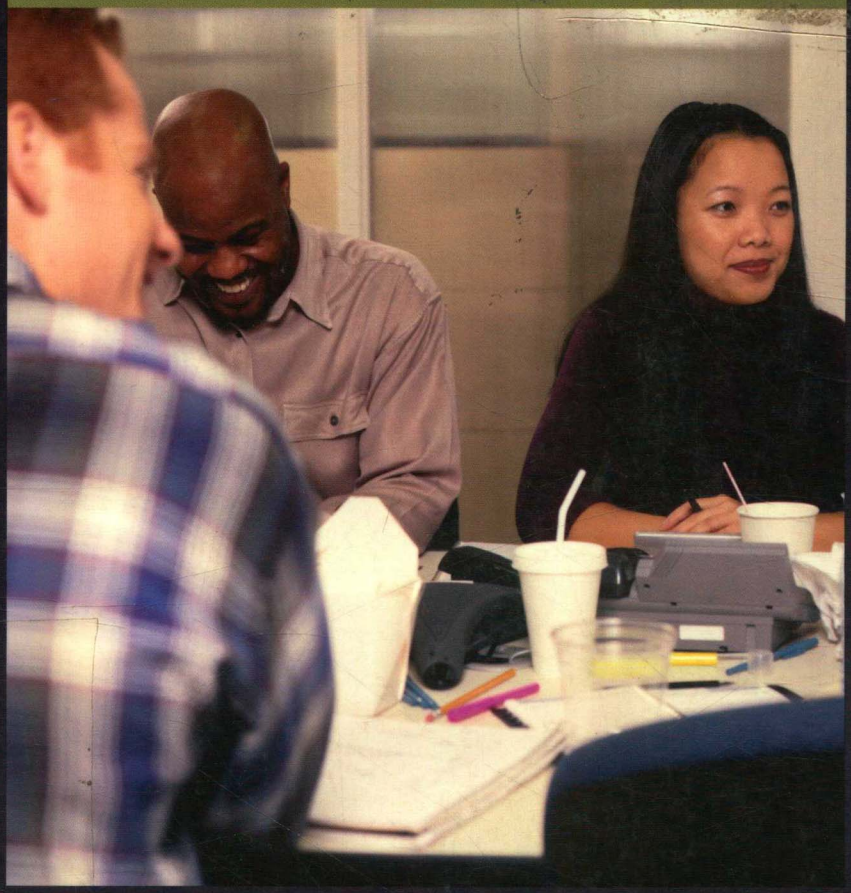
INTERACTIONS

Collaboration Skills for School Professionals

FOURTH EDITION



MARILYN FRIEND • LYNNE COOK

INTERACTIONS

Collaboration Skills for School Professionals

FOURTH EDITION

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Allyn and Bacon

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To Joseph Percy Price
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An extraordinary educator who lives on through those, like us, who were blessed by his life and teachings.

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Preface

When the first edition of *Interactions* was published in 1992, it was a slender volume with fewer than 200 pages, no photographs, and a principal focus on communication and interaction skills. In many ways, its small physical size and narrow substantive coverage reflected the place of collaboration in schools at that time: Collaboration was acknowledged as important but was still primarily a small concern pertaining mostly to special educators, it was viewed by many as a luxury within the context of classroom instruction, and its study within an education framework was somewhat limited.

Much has changed since then. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the legislation governing the provision of services for students with disabilities, now carries a clear assumption that most students will be educated in typical classrooms with their peers. Further, access to the general education curriculum for students with special needs has become an expectation at the same time that accountability for all students' learning has continued to grow. These changes have led to a third: Services delivered to students within the general education classroom have become more and more common. Collaboration also has moved far beyond the school setting. There is increasing recognition that all of the agencies that work on behalf of families and children—for example, education, social service, mental health, and medical—must share their efforts and resources in order to have any long-lasting positive impact on poverty, homelessness, and other issues that affect children and their families. The vastly increased breadth of concern for collaboration and depth of its examination are seen in the thousands of websites that now exist on the topic and in the explosion of professional literature about it.

This fourth edition of *Interactions* is intended to be responsive to the changes in school policies and practices that have led to today's focused attention on collaboration as an essential skill for meeting the ever-increasing diversity of student needs. It is a guide for preprofessionals and professionals to help them understand and participate effectively in their interactions with other professionals and parents. This book was written for a broad audience, but especially for preservice and in-service special educators, general educators, and related services professionals who educate students with disabilities. Although the examples and activities focus on providers of special services, they are not unique to that group. We continue to believe that the principles for effective interaction are not dependent on roles or settings—they are universal. Our experiences in schools tell us that the concepts and skills in *Interactions* are thus equally applicable to individuals who educate English language learners, to those who work in early

intervention and preschool programs, to site-based school management groups, to middle school teams, and to many other situations in which educators come together to work toward a common goal.

Over the past decade, we have received much positive feedback about the practicality of this book (and we thank you for that and the suggestions you have made for improvement). In this edition, we continue to use the principles we believe lead to instructional effectiveness: a measured amount of theory and concept heavily seasoned with examples, cases, and applied activities. *Interactions* was written specifically to enable readers to quickly use the knowledge and skills they acquire in their professional settings. In addition, because many interaction situations are complex with many possible variations and outcomes, we have tried to present possibilities but leave the reader thinking critically about personal applications and alternative options.

Overview of the Book

Collaboration is truly a topic for lifelong learning. As we interact with our colleagues at the university and in the field, we continue to grow in our own understanding of the fundamentals and subtleties of professional interpersonal relationships. We have had the good fortune of working and learning with talented teachers, administrators, parents, paraprofessionals, and providers of related services as they developed collaboration skills and put specific applications of collaboration in place. The lessons we have learned from them have helped us immensely in preparing the fourth edition of *Interactions*. Specifically, we have maintained our core of information about collaboration concepts, communication, and interaction process skills; we have expanded some material from the third edition; we have omitted a few topics that we learned have a lower priority in today's schools; we have reorganized the order of the chapters in response to student and instructor feedback; and we have augmented again the practical applications of the textbook's ideas.

Chapter 1 presents a conceptual foundation for understanding collaborative interactions and activities as well as the settings and structures that support them. In this chapter we define collaboration and highlight its benefits and risks. In addition, we distinguish collaboration from other terms that are sometimes used interchangeably, and we explore the development of collaboration as it relates to special education, including the current trend to educate students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

The next three chapters of the book comprise a unit on communication skills. These chapters existed in the third edition, but they have been updated and moved forward in the book so that students are introduced to effective communication skills earlier in their coursework. Chapter 2 serves as an introduction and overview of principles of clear and constructive communication. Concepts are presented that underlie communication and interaction skills, including recognizing diverse frames of reference and preparing to listen. This chapter also sum-

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marizes the principles of interpersonal communication, both verbal and nonverbal. An in-depth discussion of verbal communication occurs in the next two chapters. Chapter 3 provides the reader with knowledge and skills regarding using statements. Chapter 4 provides similar information about asking questions. In these two chapters, verbal strategies in using statements or asking questions are examined according to their intent to provide, solicit, or clarify information.

Chapter 5 introduces interpersonal problem solving as the most central interaction process of collaboration and one in which effective communication skills must be applied to achieve successful outcomes. It draws on but differs from professionals' skills for individual problem solving. The chapter has been moved forward in the book so that students will understand the problem-solving process that they will use later as they learn about services for students.

The next three chapters of *Interactions* explore services and applications in schools whose success relies heavily on collaboration. Chapter 6 addresses the topic of teaming, including ideas for establishing and maintaining teams and problem solving to help teams work effectively. Chapter 7 considers the service of consultation. It examines the various models through which consultation can be delivered, and it also offers a variety of suggestions for making consultation a viable means of supporting students and teachers. Chapter 8 takes up the topic of co-teaching, the service delivery option in which two educators share instructional responsibility in a single classroom. Suggestions for setting up co-teaching programs and specific information about how such arrangements should function are provided.

Chapter 9 is new. Although the topic of paraeducators has been mentioned in previous editions of *Interactions,* we decided that the increased use of paraeducators in providing services to students with disabilities and the issues that accompany that increase warranted significant attention. This chapter outlines appropriate and inappropriate roles for paraeducators, professionals' supervision responsibilities when working with paraeducators, and issues that may arise when paraeducators are part of an educational team.

Chapter 10 is also new. Although we have always believed that professionals' interactions with parents and family members are critically important in student success, we have never before dedicated an entire chapter to this topic. The chapter emphasizes understanding families, particularly their developmental stages and the unique perspectives that families from various cultures may bring to school environments, and facilitating family participation in decision making about their children.

A somewhat different direction is taken in Chapter 11, which deals with awkward and adversarial interactions by focusing on both conflict and resistance. Strategies such as negotiation and persuasion are emphasized. These require the use of many of the interactive processes and communication skills addressed earlier in the text.

The final two chapters of *Interactions* form the final essential components of collaboration. In Chapter 12, special issues related to collaboration in specific

contexts are outlined. Collaborative efforts are influenced by the roles of the persons who collaborate as well as the contexts in which they work, and these topics are explored in the chapter. For example, the issues of student collaboration and collaboration for transition planning are explored. Also in Chapter 12 is a discussion of some of the critical ethical issues that arise when professionals collaborate. The final chapter, Chapter 13, addresses the practical matters that affect collaboration in all of its many applications. Topics include finding and managing time for planning, scheduling, program development and evaluation, and staff development. The chapter emphasizes the issues that arise when professionals collaborate "in the real world." For readers struggling in situations in which collaboration seems nearly impossible because of constraints on logistics, this chapter may be an appropriate starting point.

Most of the features of earlier editions of *Interactions* have been kept in the fourth edition, and others have been added. The features include the following:

- *Advance Organizers.* Each chapter begins with a section titled **Connections,** which is designed to assist the reader in understanding how the specific chapter content relates to the overall organization of the book.
- *Learner Objectives.* Each Connections section is followed by **Learner Objectives,** which inform the reader about the main purposes of the chapter. The objectives also help the reader to set expectations for what he or she will be able to do after studying the chapter.
- *Photographs.* In the fourth edition, more photographs have been added, and they more clearly illustrate collaboration in action.
- *Case Materials.* Case studies are presented throughout the text to illustrate relevant concepts and principles. These often include descriptions of specific school situations and extended dialogue between professionals or parents.
- *Putting Ideas into Practice.* In each chapter additional elaboration of concepts or skills practice is offered in boxes called **Putting Ideas into Practice.** These boxes are another means of making written ideas come to life for application in real school settings.
- *Addressing Diversity.* We have tried in this edition to pay even closer attention to matters of diversity that may arise in the context of collaboration. Each chapter contains a feature called **Perspectives on Diversity** that highlights pertinent issues and considerations.
- *Skill Models.* Chapters 2 through 5 provide instructional formats that give concrete models or examples of specific skills. This feature is designed to help the reader to discriminate between different elements of skills.
- *Application/Practice.* Application items are embedded throughout the chapters to involve the reader in analyzing the principles described and applying them to actual interpersonal situations. These items are also found at the end of each chapter; they assess the reader's understanding of important information in the chapter and provide suggestions for skill

development activities. These exercises may be used independently or as part of organized training experiences.

- *Chapter Summaries.* Each chapter concludes with a summary that briefly recaps the major points addressed in the chapter. The summaries are intended to assist the reader in assessing his or her understanding of the primary concepts within each chapter.
- *For Further Reading.* A brief list of additional readings is included at the end of each chapter. These references enable the reader who wants more detailed information about a particular topic to access that information quickly.
- *Instructor's Manual.* For the first time, *Interactions* is accompanied by an *Instructor's Manual* that includes chapter outlines, overhead transparency masters, additional activities and cases, and a test bank. The intent is to provide for readers and instructors more of the resources we like to use in teaching about collaboration than can be placed within the pages of the book itself.

We hope you enjoy the fourth edition of *Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals.* We continue to hold to our belief that collaboration is the foundation on which successful contemporary public schools are based as well as the only effective means through which to provide services to students with disabilities and other special needs. We hope this edition of *Interactions* helps you to further understand collaboration as it occurs in your workplace and enables you to refine your skills as a collaborative educator.

Acknowledgments

We often tell our students that collaboration is the epitome of lifelong learning, and we are reminded of this fact ourselves when we work with teachers, administrators, related service personnel, families, paraeducators, and others in schools. We are indebted to them and to our students and colleagues who have contributed in many direct and indirect ways to the creation of this book. Even though we cannot name them all, we hope they see their influence reflected in this volume and know of our appreciation.

We would also like to thank the following colleagues who provided professional reviews of the third edition of *Interactions* to make suggestions for the fourth edition: Susan M. Bruce, Boston College; Kathryn Calabrese, Wittenberg University; John W. Filler, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; and Linda A. Pehlman, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. We know that being asked to review a manuscript means making time in already-crowded schedules. We sincerely appreciate your commitment to the field and to collaboration, and we are grateful for the detailed and insightful comments you provided. We also are thankful to our colleagues who offered informal feedback.

Throughout the development of *Interactions,* Fourth Edition, we received guidance, encouragement, and advice from the professional staff at Allyn & Bacon. We are very appreciative of Virginia Lanigan, who encouraged us through the writing process and listened patiently and responded promptly to our authoring crises and explanations for delays. We thank her for her gentle and persistent prodding, careful reviews, and continuing support. We also feel fortunate indeed to have worked with Donna Simons, Production Administrator at Allyn & Bacon, and Merrill Peterson, project manager at Matrix Productions. They managed to guide all stages of production expertly, keep track of our whereabouts, correct our errors, and provide us with strong support.

Our families also played a critical role in supporting us in our efforts. Our moms, Florence Cook and Mary Ellen Penovich, as always did the sorts of things that only wonderful moms can do—listened as we agonized over decisions and deadlines, consoled us when we were discouraged, and encouraged us to be realistic in reaching our goals. They offered to help however they could; we hope they know that just caring and being there was sometimes what we needed most. Thanks, Moms. Bruce Brandon (Marilyn's spouse) and Fred Weintraub (Lynne's spouse) deserve medals for their patience as we disappeared into our respective offices for hours on end, their willingness to help us frame our organization of the book, and their ability to help us keep a healthy perspective on the funny (but frustrating) parts of preparing the new edition of a textbook. We don't tell them often enough how much we appreciate the offers to cook and clean up, the reading of pages that are just not coming together, and the understanding that sometimes a walk is more important than a book chapter. They both also patiently tolerated our long phone conversations and our late-night faxes and e-mails. Thanks, Fred and Bruce—how could we have done this without you?

Marilyn Friend
Lynne Cook

Foreword

Even since the last edition of *Interactions,* the demands on educators, whatever their roles, to collaborate effectively have continued to increase. And few educational personnel have been prepared for this new educational way of life, a transition from the closed-door isolation of classroom and office to the communal school. A case in point is the increasing inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom and the co-teaching that often accompanies this shifting placement trend. The collegial experience is fraught with both promise and danger depending on the quality of the collaboration. Another example is the pressure for accountability, which demands a new level of collaboration between school and family to insure students' educational progress and social development. The growing number of students from culturally and linguistically diverse families compels professionals to upgrade their skills in collaboration with parents. Thus, collaboration is moving away from being a helpful accompaniment to instructional and therapeutic skills: It is becoming the professional educator's most important skill to provide quality education; it even sometimes becomes a survival skill.

The fourth edition of *Interactions,* updated to reflect contemporary issues, is a guide for those who are engaged in the daunting task of building communities of learning. *Interactions* provides a road map of the essential concepts that special educators, general educators, speech/language therapists, administrators, psychologists, and others must have in order to work together effectively on behalf of students. Only by learning, practicing, and implementing the skills of collaboration can schools of this decade accomplish their mission. The increasing emphasis on accountability also requires additional emphasis on collaboration.

Educators who know what is happening in other fields recognize that the search for new ways of human exchange pervades the culture. Acknowledgment now exists that human beings must find new ways to interconnect if we are to survive. Espousing independence in lieu of collaboration is no longer an option. Mental health workers have accepted this as have juvenile justice personnel, social services providers, and public health educators. Families in poverty cannot be supported unless service providers work in concert to streamline procedures, make the most efficient use of funds, and employ the best available expertise. Schools are, of course, a central partner in this collaboration. As the authors make clear, collaboration goes beyond compromise and cooperation to shared understanding, meaning, decision

making, and accountability for outcomes. It is a transformation replete with risks but also opportunities.

Because the authors continue to relate the collaboration enterprise to the foundations of individual and group psychology, infused with an ethical base, the book retains its vitality. They have not only read widely in the literature but also have evaluated the relevance of the research and applied the results to clarify particular issues. However, they also have addressed emerging developments in the study and implementation of collaborative practice. For example, they have devoted a full chapter to paraeducators, essential school personnel for whom collaboration can be a particularly complex endeavor. Likewise, this new edition focuses attention on parents and families, particularly those from diverse groups. These additions are reflective of their conviction that families are at the center of professionals' work on behalf of students.

The book continues to be user friendly and focused on practical applications. I am particularly pleased that Drs. Friend and Cook have maintained a high number and variety of examples in *Interactions*. These examples provide a means for novice and experienced practitioners alike to reflect on actual practice of effective collaboration. It is clear that these examples come from the authors' own continuing experience working in schools: Upon reading the examples the reader will probably say, "I have experienced that very situation!" A hallmark that distinguishes this book from others addressing the same topic, continuing from the very first edition, is an admirable blend of theory and practice. Readers at all levels are offered a clear grounding for the skills presented, but they are simultaneously provided applications that enable the immediate use even the next day at school. Theory-practice complementary coverage lends usefulness not only for self-study and staff development but also for undergraduate and graduate college classes.

Readers of *Interactions* also will find that it continues to address in a realistic manner the complexities of collaboration. The dilemmas caused by professionals' need for control, the sometimes hostile environment where collaboration is undertaken, and the paucity of time available for collaboration are recognized. The authors do not run away from these realities. Instead, they explicate the challenges so that they can be examined and addressed.

I applaud this fourth edition of *Interactions*. Given the increasing diversity of our students and our society, we need to strive for constructive partnerships that will assist in the goal of improving the lives of children. The challenge is to use the knowledge and skills presented in this book to transform the way we think about our work with others and to value what we accomplish together.

William C. Morse
Professor Emeritus
University of Michigan

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