Second Edition

CONSULTATION, COLLABORATION, AND TEAMWORK

FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

DETTMER • DYCK • THURSTON

Second Edition

Consultation, Collaboration, and Teamwork for Students with Special Needs

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Preface

The time for consultation, collaboration, and teamwork in schools is now. Society's problems are immense and complex. Educated citizens are needed more than ever before in the history of civilization. The public demands that school graduates enter the work world as capable citizens, and it holds professional educators accountable for ensuring that capability.

To meet these demands, sweeping educational reforms have been proposed, attempted, discarded, rethought, and reinstated in the past several decades. These reform movements have generated complex goals. Innovative plans are ripped from administrative and legislative drawing boards to be put to use before the pages are dry, much less well researched. Meanwhile, as test scores decline and school structures crumble, teachers continue to cope hour by hour and day by day with their formidable assignment—that of preparing today's students to be competent citizens in tomorrow's world.

In the midst of all the criticism and directives flung at the educational system and the educational profession, the sage words of Henry David Thoreau to "Simplify, simplify" are appealing. As we close out one remarkable millennium in civilization's history and usher in the next, can it be that we have overlooked very basic concepts that could help improve the education of children and youth? The processes of consultation, collaboration, and teamwork, put into practice by professional educators with parents as their partners, will be essential for constructing an effective educational context for the twenty-first century.

These processes may appear simple and basic, but, on the contrary, they are quite difficult to carry out, and they do create changes that can be unsettling. But they do not require costly bureaucratic overlays, and they have enormous, ongoing potential for positive ripple effects.

This book is designed to serve as a bridge between theory and practice. It contains both background information and field-tested recommendations to help teachers, parents, administrators, and support personnel become more proficient in working together as collaborators within their existing school context. Each chapter contains applications and activities that encourage single readers or groups of readers to delve into the subtleties and intricacies of these powerful interactive processes.

The book is organized into three sections in order to focus in turn on context, processes, and content as they relate to school consultation, collaboration, and teamwork. Part One is the *Context* section. Chapter 1 presents school consultation and delineates both benefits and concerns that can result from consulting, collaborating, and teaming in educational settings. Chapter 2 describes key elements in planning, implementing, evaluating, and preparing for consultation and collaboration roles. Chapter 3 includes a brief history, theoretical bases, and research bases of school consultation. It summarizes systems, perspectives, approaches, prototypes, modes, and models for implementing school consultation and collaboration, and recommends synthesizing the components into workable methods for a variety of school contexts. Chapter 4 focuses upon the constructive use of individual differences among adults, which is one of the most powerful but too often neglected factors affecting school consultation, collaboration, and teamwork. Cultural, ethnic, and language differences are addressed that can have significant impact on the ability of people to work together. The need for differentiated consultation in the context of rural, urban, and other demographically specific settings is discussed.

In Part Two, the *Process* section, Chapters 5 through 9 introduce process skills and problem-solving tools needed for effective consultation and collaboration. Chapter 5 focuses on a ten-step problem-solving process. Chapter 6 addresses verbal and nonverbal communication and suggests techniques for dealing with resistance and resolving conflicts. In Chapter 7, conference and interview methods are discussed, along with time management, organizational and record-keeping practices, and components of ethical consultation. Chapter 8 features techniques for using technology to enhance consultation and collaboration. Several procedures and tools for the evaluation of consultation and collaboration outcomes are offered in Chapter 9.

Part Three, the *Content* section, includes Chapters 10 through 13. Chapter 10 describes models and strategies for structuring learning environments and facilitating student achievement through consultation, collaboration, and support from teams of educators. Chapter 11 focuses on family members as partners in their children's education. Chapter 12 promotes staff development as an integral part of consulting and collaborating. Finally, Chapter 13 emphasizes the importance of developing support systems and advocacy techniques to encourage collaboration and teamwork for a changing world's educational and social needs. This final "Looking Ahead" chapter predicts that the ideal outcome from school consultation, collaboration, and teamwork will be a transformation of school learning environments into settings in which education is special for all students and educators are successful in their complex, demanding profession.

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Acknowledgments

The first edition of this book in 1993 was dedicated to our graduate students whose education roles required that they develop and use effective consultation and collaboration skills. As we explained at that time, our students both hindered and helped us with the writing. When we needed to write, they hindered because they were always there—taking classes, seeking information, requesting in-service, engaging in collaborative consultation with us for assistance with their own challenging and demanding roles. On the other hand, they helped us greatly with our writing by allowing us to "discover what we knew," and they verified that it was indeed important knowledge for bringing about better teaching and learning. Many times they contributed the seed of an idea, a key phrase, a caution, a necessary filter of skepticism, or, blessedly, a vote of confidence for our efforts. We began to sense then that we were on the right track.

Now, several years later, the concepts of collaboration and consultation are enriching many areas of contemporary life. School consultation is being promoted as a key component in the success of educational reform movements. The word *collaboration* appears frequently in the educational literature and has become a major element for progress in other professions, in business, and in government and international affairs. The concept of teamwork, employed so effectively in fields such as sports and music, is being applied productively to a wide variety of professional endeavors, including industry, medicine, and education.

The focus on consultation, collaboration, and teamwork in a variety of professional fields includes education and schools, and these processes are being accepted more and more as essential parts of preparation programs for educators. We are pleased that our personnel preparation grants, graduate degree programs, school district in-services, and the first edition of the book, have had a part in that development. We want now to dedicate this second edition to all educators—teachers, administrators, support personnel, and parents—who work hard each day to make education attainable and appropriate for every student.

When possible, we credit individuals for their contributions to our thinking and writing. However, within a collegial, collaborative process it is not easy to tell just where the contribution of one person occurs, another interfaces, and yet another takes over from there.

As we address this dilemma, we realize once again the complexity and the beauty of collaborative consultation. We know that our students' and educational colleagues' perceptions and suggestions were shared unselfishly without need for recognition or praise, in the spirit of professionalism and progress. This is what collaborative consultation is all about. Any oversights, omissions, or errors are ours, of course, but the essence of our philosophy comes from these colleagues and ultimately from the children and adolescents, schools and homes, they represent.

We trust that the material in this book will serve as a tangible example of the usefulness of consultation, collaboration, and teamwork in meeting the special needs of students and their educators. For all our former students who have been in our teacher preparation programs, and our current colleagues who encourage us with their purpose and perseverance as educators, we are very grateful. We applaud the dedication and commitment they bring to their demanding roles. Their energy, enthusiasm, and expertise are truly inspirational.

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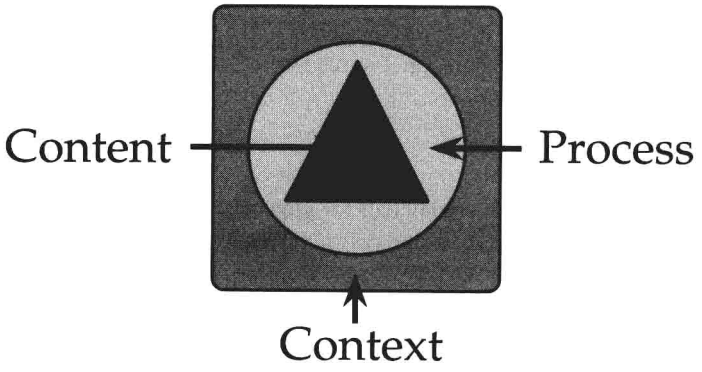
Chapter 1

The Foundation for School Consultation, Collaboration, and Teamwork



Introduction

What does the term *consultation* bring to mind? Is a consultant an expert? A specialist? Someone who assesses others' problems and makes recommendations for solving them? What does *collaboration* mean? Is it possible to collaborate within the school environment? What is *teamwork* in an educational setting? Can working in teams help educators meet the enormous challenges facing them in today's schools?

Life presents many situations in which people do not have all the information and expertise they would like, or the assistance that others could provide to help them work more effectively. In today's increasingly interdependent and specialized world it is unlikely that any one person has all the knowledge and skills needed for every situation. So it is reasonable to seek the services of consultants, to collaborate with other specialists, and to work with colleagues in teams.

The demand for *consultation* services is escalating in fields as varied as business, medicine, law, industry, fashion, construction, decorating, and finance. Sometimes consultants even have their own consultants! The appearance of the word *collaboration* in a wide range of literature has increased exponentially, just as the prevalence of the term *creativity* escalated in the 1950s and 1960s. *Teamwork* is now frequently used to discuss work philosophies and occupational formats. However, until recently these three concepts—consultation, collaboration, and teamwork—had been overlooked as key elements for structuring a strong educational system. Time and frameworks for collaborative, consultative, or teamed interactions among educators were virtually nonexistent. Furthermore, preparation for the complex processes of working together in the school environment was minimal in most teacher education programs. Now, however, the increasing complexity of school settings and intensified efforts toward school reform and restructuring have become catalysts for working collaboratively in schools.

Teaching is a multidimensional responsibility and teachers are involved more than ever with all facets of student development—cognitive, affective, physical, and social. Effective teaching and learning are not likely to occur without extensive interaction among educators, parents, and resource personnel in the home, in school, and in community settings.

Focusing Questions

1. What school conditions today call for greater emphasis upon working together?
2. How do educational reform and restructuring movements signal the need for consultation, collaboration, and teamwork in education?
3. What will be the effects of inclusion, or a unified educational system, on general education teachers, special education teachers, and support personnel?
4. What are definitions of consultation, collaboration, and teamwork that will be useful in the educational setting?
5. Who will serve as consultant, consultee, and client in school consultation?
6. What opportunities and benefits will become available for school personnel when educators consult, collaborate, and work together as professional teams?
7. What obstacles may hinder the practices of school consultation and collaboration?
8. What process skills and content skills are needed for consultation, collaboration, and teamwork within diverse school contexts?

Key Terms in the Chapter

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
America 2000
autonomy
client
collaboration
communication

consultant
consultation
consultee
consulting teacher
content skills
cooperation
coordination
Goals 2000
iatrogenic effect
IDEA (see Public Law 101-476)
inclusion/full inclusion
Individual Transition Plan (ITP)
least-restrictive environment
mainstreaming
multiplier effects
normalization
positive ripple effects
preschooler with disabilities
process skills
Public Law 94-142 (1975)
Public Law 98-199 (1983)
Public Law 99-457 (1986)
Public Law 101-476 (1990–91)
Regular Education Initiative (REI)
school context
school reform
school restructuring
synergy
teamwork
transition from preschool to school
transition from school to the adult world
unified educational system

Scenario

The setting is the faculty room of a typical high school where two teachers are sharing school news and professional concerns.

ENGLISH TEACHER: I'm getting another special education student next week—severe learning disabilities, the cumulative folder says. I guess this is more fallout from Public Law 94–142, or the IDEA, or whatever it's called now—along with the behavior-disordered student I've been coping with all semester.

MATH TEACHER: (grinning) Must be because you're doing such a great job with that one. (serious tone) But I know what you mean. Our special education teachers aren't taking these kids out of our classes as much as they did when I started teaching.

ENGLISH TEACHER: They say a person designated as a consulting teacher is coming to our next departmental meeting to talk about helping the students with special needs. And we're going to be asked to collaborate—whatever that means—along with all the other things we do, of course.

MATH TEACHER: Say, don't those two words cancel each other out? "Consult" and "collaborate", that is. I believe you English teachers call that an oxymoron. For example, we might consult a tax accountant for some expert advice, but isn't collaboration where we all work together to accomplish our goals? As for teamwork, our coaches probably could predict what a difficult process that would be among a group of independent-thinking adults who are accustomed to doing things their own way.

ENGLISH TEACHER: Frankly, I'm not interested in word games or coaching strategies right now. I'm more concerned about finding out where the time is going to come from to do one more thing. And I want to know who will have bottom-line responsibility for which students.

MATH TEACHER: Right. I've had some concerns about mainstreaming all along, and now I think we really need some answers about inclusion. So, I hope we get them.

Educators' Responsibilities in Schools

> *Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it.* (Winnie-the-Pooh, *p. 3, by A. A. Milne)*

Teaching has never been easy, and it becomes more challenging every year. The public is demanding fiscal responsibility and competent school personnel. The media present diatribes against declining test scores and urge higher student achievement. Rising costs, public criticism, low teacher morale, and an avalanche of regulations and paperwork create pressures on schools that erode their ability to prepare students for a successful future. Some educators remain in the profession and juggle their daily routines within a burgeoning new agenda of reform and mandates. Others burn out and leave the profession. Still others simply "fizzle out," "rust out," or "coast out." The latter go through the motions of their profession in lackluster fashion, just getting by until retirement age arrives or a better opportunity comes along. These educators create situations that are particularly penalizing for students who have special needs and are the most vulnerable to the effects of uninspired teaching.

Autonomy in the Classroom

In the past, teachers tended to function autonomously in their classrooms (Goodlad, 1984). After the attendance forms, lunch counts, and other daily procedures were completed, they closed their doors and taught their specified content. They tried to handle each school situation with minimal assistance. After all, hadn't the teacher of eight grades in a one-room schoolhouse managed without special help? To ask for assistance would have been tantamount to proclaiming incompetency.

Goodlad (1984) has described teachers as autonomous within the context of isolation. Autonomy minimizes the impact of outside influences (Rosenfield, 1985). Because teachers seldom have the privilege of rich professional dialogue with colleagues, they are isolated from sources of ideas beyond their own backgrounds and experiences. The chunking of the typical school day is insulating. Teachers often go through an entire school day without speaking to an adult in a meaningful way (Eisner, 1988).

Even today, few structured arrangements exist to assist teachers in the performance of their complex roles. This is particularly problematic at the high school level where teachers might teach five classes, prepare two or more lessons, and face as many as 150 students during a school day that is divided into 50-minute periods (Cuban, 1986). Although schools are, in a certain sense, very social places and classrooms are multidimensional centers of activity, an individual teacher may feel stranded on a crowded island devoid of adult interaction and stimulation. In a poll of over 1,000 teachers conducted by *Learning* magazine and reported by the Education Commission of the United States, 78 percent of the respondents said that isolation from their colleagues is a major or moderate problem (Turner, 1987).

On one hand, teachers may desire more small-group meetings on mutual interests, regular grade level meetings, frequent chances to observe other teachers, and richer opportunities

for in-service training. On the other hand, many teachers are not comfortable engaging in collaborative efforts with other teachers. Some state candidly that they did not choose a teaching career to work all that much with adults. Others think that calling on a colleague or requesting services from a school consultant will be perceived as a sign of professional weakness and incompetency.

Teachers have few incentives for getting together to collaborate or team-teach. They rarely have an opportunity to visit other school settings to obtain new ideas and revitalize their enthusiasm. When they do have the time and opportunity to interact with colleagues, it is likely to be during in-service or staff development sessions. Unfortunately, these activities often are too highly structured, inappropriately designed, or poorly managed to allow meaningful interaction. Many are scheduled at the end of a hectic day, when teachers are tired and want to turn their attention toward home or community responsibilities.

Teachers are visited now and then by supervisors, administrators, student teachers, and sometimes parents, in their classrooms. However, these occasions tend to create more feelings of anxiety and defensiveness than support and collegiality. Some schools encourage team teaching as a way of allowing teachers to support each other and broaden their teaching repertoires. But well-intentioned efforts to team-teach too often result in turn-teaching—"You teach this part of the lesson and then take a break while I handle the next part."

Wildman and Niles (1987) stress that professionals cannot be coerced into being collegial. Teachers who are accustomed to being in charge and making virtually all the day-to-day decisions in their classrooms cannot be ordered to just go out and consult and collaborate with each other to any meaningful degree. They need structure, training, practice, and feedback about their effectiveness in order to perform these sophisticated, demanding functions well. Unfortunately, the typical teacher preparation program provides little or no instruction and practice in collaborating with professional peers. Meanwhile, a growing body of school consultation literature and research forecasts wider use of consultation service and greater interest in collaboration and teamwork in the future. Current books, periodicals, conferences, staff development sessions, and media messages are convincing educators that by consulting, collaborating, and teaming, school personnel and parents can combine the best that they have to help students learn. Educational reform movements of the past three decades have strengthened these convictions.

Demands within School Reform Movements

During the 1970s and 1980s, educators witnessed an explosion of reports, proposals, and legislative mandates calling for educational reform. Reports such as *A Nation at Risk,* submitted by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983, and as many as 30 other major reform reports in the 1980s, directed the nation's attention to the status and conditions of its schools. After these reports were publicized, public pressure to improve schools escalated.

The first wave of educational reform sought to strengthen the rigor of American public education (Michaels, 1988). The issues focused on accountability, lengthening of school days and years, and increased investments of time, money, and effort in education. The second wave of reform featured the individual school as the unit of decision-making. It

promoted the development of collegial, participatory environments among students and staff, with particular emphasis on personalizing school environments and designing curriculum for deeper understanding (Michaels, 1988). One component of this second wave of reform was school restructuring. Many states initiated some form of school restructuring, however, few schools truly were restructured. Where restructuring efforts occurred, they tended to be idiosyncratic in that they were carried out by a small group of teachers, creating only marginal, easily eroded changes (Timar, 1989).

Effective restructuring calls for rethinking. In order to do that, educators must take their eyes off the rear-view mirror of first-wave reform and look carefully at the twenty-first century (Michaels, 1988). Futrell (1989) has charged that, in the 1980s, education was an arena of debate, not educational reform. When the redefinition of education was beginning, a primary outcome was just argument. But by the 1990s educators had learned the kinds of questions to ask. Many of these questions and the thinking they precipitated signaled the need for extensive consultation, collaboration, and teamwork by the entire school staff, and stressed the value of parents as partners. Futrell asserts that schools truly can be restructured only through cooperation, collaboration, and teamwork among many factions.

Friend and Cook (1990) reiterate that school reform efforts in the United States have been fueled by national concerns within four domains:

- Reestablishment of economic leadership, which will be determined by successful preparation of students to be effective workers and national leaders;
- Governance of schools, where teachers can participate more fully in decisions regarding their classrooms;
- Structure of schools, reorganizing traditional class groups and levels;
- Curricular reform, with collaborative staff activities and a climate of collegiality ensuring teacher participation in curriculum design and delivery methods.

Friend and Cook also point out that current reform efforts are regarded by many as a rehash of previous reform movements. However, the emerging interest in collaboration and teamwork adds a new dimension that could be the impetus for realizing major changes through school reform efforts.

The Regular Education Initiative (REI)

A significant ripple that helped create waves of educational reform was the Regular Education Initiative (REI), which called for a merger of general education and special education efforts. Demands for cost containment and growing concerns over labeling of students fueled interest in a merger of general education and special education. The primary impetus for the merger was the mainstreaming movement brought about by Public Law 94-142 in 1975. When Public Law 94-142 mandated placement for students with handicaps into a least-restrictive learning environment, classroom teachers were given the responsibility for the success of those students. However, in order to fulfill this new responsibility, they were promised help from special education personnel.

The least-restrictive environment mandate created changes in the way general education teachers and special education teachers were expected to interact in order to serve

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