

# Teaming Collaboration

## I. Highlights

- A. Co-worker problems = the 2<sup>nd</sup> most common reason people leave a job
- B. Cooperation = getting along. Collaboration = deeper, honest communication, trying to accept the other person's point of view, working toward the same goals.
- C. Problem-solving goal = negotiate and find a win-win solution, not just prove that I was right all along
- D. 10 essentials of successful teaching: open/frequent communication, self-awareness, satisfying job, mutual respect/acceptance, team spirit/empathy, flexibility, willingness to share the spotlight, clearly defined roles, professionalism, evaluation.
- E. Children with special needs can be included in a general classroom with: no support, one-to-one assistant, special training for existing staff, or consultation or co-teaching by a special education teacher in the general classroom

## II. Homework

- A. Journal V due 11/26 (same day as presentation) -- *Important! Write this on Chapter 10. (Okay if Chapter 8 or 9, she prefers Chapter 10. This changed from last week.)*
- B. Group presentation due next week (11/26)
- C. All late assignments due next week (11/26)! After that is too late.
- D. Presentation summary due in two weeks (12/3) based on questions she'll give us next week.
- E. Snack potluck on 12/3 too. Will be watching more inclusion videos.
- F. Final exam (12/10) then go home.

## III. Chapter 10: Teamwork

A. Discussion about working in teams

1. Not always easy -- emotions get in the way, attitudes / tone of voice / body language, looks given, rolling eyes
2. When interviewing and we ask why they left their old job, #1 reason is pay, #2 is problems getting along with co-workers
3. More hours closer together with co-workers than we are with our spouse / significant other! Even if nothing is wrong, that's just a lot of togetherness every week. That can be tough.
4. Sharing responsibilities can be hard for a lot of us.
5. Can be incompatible philosophies or cultural ways of doing things. This can be a constant clash.
6. Sometimes issues with admin people who do the annual evaluation. May not talk about our resentments toward them, but it comes out somehow when it's bottled up.

B. Collaboration isn't just cooperation or "getting along." It's honest, deep communication and trying to accept the other person's point of view as well as our own.

1. Why do we need collaboration? It keeps us on the same page. If we're not consciously connecting with each other, we will be giving conflicting messages to children and parents.
2. We talk a lot, but often we don't really communicate. "She went to the bathroom and she didn't even tell me! I didn't know she was gone!"
3. We need to practice active listening and all the communication skills we have. Remember that non-verbal communication still sends messages.
  - a) Need to listen actively. Nod, pay attention, make sure the message they said is the message I received. Check for clarification if needed.

- b) Communication is a big deal. People lose jobs or break up marriages over miscommunication. Don't take this lightly!
- C. Problem-solving = the agreement/feeling that we are here to resolve our problems, not to butt heads. It's not about proving that I'm right. It's about negotiating and coming to an understanding/compromise together.
- D. Consultation = when you don't know how to do or solve something, ask for help. "I don't know" is better than faking it or doing it wrong. It's always okay to ask for help from each other, your director, or another expert. It's good to seek other points of view, especially from people who know more than you do on a particular topic.
- E. Coaching = modeling how to do things, hands-on instruction, connecting newcomers to experienced people they can learn from.
- F. Co-teaching = equal teachers in a classroom. (It isn't co-teaching if there's one lead/master teacher and one assistant.)
- G. Self-evaluation is important. In Montessori, we do self-evaluation on a daily basis.
- H. Addressing the needs of children with special needs and their families
1. This is time-consuming, but it's what we're here for.
  2. If you feel pressed for time, talk to the director about it. See if there's a way to arrange things so you can spend more individual time with the child or family.
- I. 10 Essentials of Successful teaching
1. Open and frequent communication (happens all the time when we're teaching together in the same room)
  2. Self-awareness (aware of what I know about the children, about myself, and my co-workers -- what are my own capabilities, what do I need help learning)

3. A satisfying role (Do I enjoy my job or is it a drag? Is it easy to get up in the morning and go to work? If not, it maybe time for a change.)
4. Mutual respect and acceptance (among co-workers, between teachers and directors, between teachers and families)
5. Team spirit and empathy (Children can't learn empathy if they don't see it role modeled during the day. If co-worker looks overwhelmed, invite them to go take a break and come back. Say it out loud so children hear that loving, caring empathy. Open the door for the person. Do the things you want the children to do for each other.)
6. Flexibility (Every day with young children is different. Sometimes we have to sub in another room when someone is sick. Roll with it.)
7. A willingness to share the spotlight (When parents tell you how wonderful the other teacher is, or when she gets a raise and you don't, how do you feel? Celebrate each other's successes together. Don't feel less than the other person when you don't get the same recognition. Your turn will come.)
8. Clearly defined roles (Go to the director and ask for a detailed job description if you don't have one. It's important to know your responsibilities. This can avoid a lot of clashes between co-workers.)
9. Professionalism (Look/talk/dress/ behave like a teacher, not a babysitter, not like you just rolled out of bed and came to school. No cleavage. Professional interactions with co-workers and families.)
10. Evaluation (Ask for this once a year if your director doesn't do it. We have the right by law to ask for it. This forms a necessary history for us. Future jobs sometimes ask for old evaluations.)

J. Team spirit and empathy

1. A sense of team spirit only happens by conscious effort. It won't happen by accident.

2. Each staff member is important to the success of any program. This means:
  - a) being empathic to the moods, feelings and needs of co-workers
  - b) being tactful in disagreements
  - c) being positive in suggesting change
3. Teachers should ask, "How can I relate to and be supportive of my co-workers? Have I ever been in their shoes?"
4. When you've been there for a while and you're working with a new person, remember how tough it was in the beginning. Be patient and supportive.
5. Ask, "What do you need from me? How can I support you?"
6. Some people's feelings get hurt very easily. Can be the littlest thing that sets them off.
7. It's easy to put too much under the umbrella of "culturally sensitive" and excuse it that way. Don't take that too far. It's okay to say, "I know in your culture, people don't smile as much, but when you're working here, you're part of the culture of early childhood education. Our culture requires smiling and getting on the floor with kids. Be affectionate."

#### K. Communication

1. Successful teaming
  - a) is easier when you're working with people you respect and admire
  - b) have to make a conscious effort every morning to get along
2. Cooperation vs. collaboration
  - a) Cooperation = helping someone to accomplish something
  - b) Collaboration = deeper than that. Work hand-in-hand, look at each other's viewpoints, commit to solving problems together
3. Nonverbal communication behaviors
  - a) Body language: folded arms doesn't look like you're listening

- b) Eye contact, facing the person, invading personal space, rolling eyes, “the silent treatment,” touching me, etc.
  - c) Acting “dramatic,” lots of sighing, telling kids they’re making your headache worse, showing you’re tired or bored or don’t want to be there
  - d) Sometimes have to explain to new people what’s normal in ECE (may be different in their culture or their last job)
4. Verbal communication behaviors
- a) Tone of voice, vocabulary
  - b) Raising your voice
  - c) Overly demanding parents who feel entitled to special service because they’re the “paying customer” -- need to respect ourselves as professionals enough not to let that happen
  - d) Rude people (helps to be very respectful to rude or angry people)
5. Conflict resolution
- a) Both parties have to come out happy when you resolve a conflict
  - b) It’s not about proving your side is right or getting your way. It’s about both sides coming up with a win-win solution.
  - c) We do this with the kids all day, so we get to practice it a lot. The same teacher who teaches it to children can have a hard time doing it respectfully herself in a conflict with a co-worker.
- L. Problem-solving approach to conflicts
- 1. Identify the problem
  - 2. Generate potential solutions
  - 3. Discuss and select a solution to implement (negotiate)
  - 4. Implement the solution
  - 5. Evaluate the outcome

6. Important: Both sides have to agree this is a problem before you can work together to solve it!!
7. Resolve problems in the time and place they happen. Don't drag old stuff into it, don't wait to talk about it tomorrow.
8. When you have to go to the director or someone else to resolve it for you, you're not learning to address it yourself. Can't constantly rely on the director to solve it for you; she has her own job. We teach children to do this all day. We need teachers to do it for themselves too.
9. Some people really shy away from conflicts, try to pretend problems are not there instead of addressing them.

M. Conflict avoidance

1. Strategies to learn to prevent conflict (#1 = communicate openly!)
2. Pause and take time (think it over, stand back for a little while, think it out before speaking)
3. Look at both sides in a neutral way (can be very difficult!)
4. Be honest with yourself (there is a possibility that the other person could be right too; maybe I'm distracted or have a hidden agenda)
5. Move toward problem-solving approach (try to resolve it respectfully before dragging the director into it)
6. Use your sense of humor (don't take yourself so seriously; smile more; a well-timed joke can break the tension)

N. Supporting children with special needs in inclusive settings

1. No support (let them struggle sometimes to achieve it themselves; don't always support and solve it for them or they won't learn to be independent)
2. One-to-one assistant (individualized care, get to know their own special way of dealing with their needs, find creative ways to meet their needs)

3. Staff in-service models (train staff in meeting this child's needs; much more useful to ask the director to help you find training than to go to the director and complain)
4. Consultation, itinerant consultant model, collaborative consultation model (consultants have training and experience in some topic, can ask them to come in to observe a child with parent permission, can have the consultant model it for you hands-on in the classroom)

O. Collaborative challenges for inclusion specialists

1. Early childhood staff may or may not be willing to work with this (often ECE teacher wants the specialist to take the child out and not bother the teacher)
2. Families' expectations are often very high, may not be realistic
3. Child may not cooperate, especially if the specialist is only seeing the child once every week or two (children with special needs often take longer to build relationships)
4. Progress monitoring may rely on classroom teacher's evaluations/ observations because they see the child 40 hours/ week instead of 1 hour/ week, but the classroom teacher feels like it should be the specialist's job

P. Strategies provided by itinerants

1. Providing information
2. Observation
3. Modeling
4. Coaching (more hands-on help than modeling)
5. Using developmentally appropriate material (all materials intended for their real age, not their developmental age, but then modify it to meet their needs. Don't give a 3-year-old a baby puzzle just because he acts like an 18-month-old. Give him the 3-year-old puzzle and modify it if needed so he can use it.)



6. Direct instruction, adapting curriculum and material (make a conscious effort to do individualized, direct teaching on the topic you're working on for a given child: sit with your back to the wall, have the child focus on you, work on the skill together)
7. Example: If curriculum is for 5-year-olds to know numbers 1-20, even the child with special needs should be expected to get there. It may need more materials, more practice, more repetition, which is more work for the teacher, but it's important. Don't make it easier for him.

Q. Co-teaching

1. Definition = both are lead teachers
2. Challenges = communication, compatible philosophy
3. Components of effective co-teaching = respectful, share same philosophy, same approach to children and their families
4. Remember that every teacher is an individual, and there is room to put your own "style" in it as long as you're still within the curriculum and approach of the school
5. Director's job to design co-teaching structures, trade off one teaching and one supporting, use "complementary teaching" so each teaches the subjects they're best at, have time for them to plan together and meet outside of ratio (can't co-teach effectively by making it up as you go)