Supporting Inclusive Classrooms with Teacher Partnerships

SUMMARY

Teaching partnerships are powerful tools in addressing the needs of academically and socially diverse classrooms. Inclusive classrooms are opportunities for all students to learn and practice the skills they need to meet the demands of the workplace.

Much of what happens to hamper the growth of co-teaching teams begins with communication gaps between general education and special education teachers. Lively debates about the difference between accommodation and modification, or integrated co-teaching and consultant teaching, even inclusion and programming are meaningful and often passionate. There is no doubt that all educators are invested in the success of inclusive classrooms, but these discussions also illuminate a tension between special educators and general educators.

When it comes to students with disabilities, how much support and how to support is where it gets messy. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are designed for one student at a time, there is no template for a student with autism as opposed to a student with intellectual disability. The Committee for Special Education (CSE) approaches this responsibility with input from general education teachers, parents, students and service providers, but many general education teachers don't feel confident in this process. This tension is also fueled by the historically rooted narrative that describes special education as a separate education (Bateman and Cline, 2016). This tension is manifested across the nation. According to Learning Forward, a 2019 research report by the National Center for Learning Disabilities, "only 56 percent of teachers surveyed believe IEPs provide value to students … often include services that are not

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necessary." (p. 14). It can be daunting to maintain high expectations while serving every student's needs. There exists a leap of faith for teachers to trust each other as we adjust our practices.

Framing special education as services within the general education system and providing general educators with a sense of efficacy in skill and knowledge of the processes and vocabulary that describe those services is one of the most powerful advocacy tools of special educators. Assumptions about the needs of students with disabilities are malleable once we have the opportunity to reflect with our colleagues. When teaching partners understand the role of the special educator and are able to communicate with accuracy about their students, they can move on from the debates to the more powerful actions that support students at risk or students with disabilities. Reflective conversations start with establishing a common ground and require a shared vocabulary. Let's start with the fundamental phrase, teaching partnerships: What exactly do we mean by co-teaching and direct consultant teaching?

Defining the partnerships: Co-teaching and direct consultant teaching

According to the guidance from New York State Education Department (NYSED), co-teaching and direct consultant teaching are two types of services in which a general education and special education teacher partner to support students with disabilities. Understanding the differences as described by NYSED's Continuum of Special Education Services (2013) helps each partner define roles and responsibilities and avoid assumptions which might hamper the partnership. The intent of this document is to support practitioners in a working understanding of the regulations:

> *Integrated co-teaching services means students are intentionally grouped together based on similarity of need for the purpose of receiving specially designed instruction in a general education class, usually daily for the identified class. In this model, a general education teacher and a special education teacher share responsibility for the delivery of primary instruction, planning and evaluation for all students. Direct CT*

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> *services are specially designed individual or group instruction recommended for an individual student with a disability in his or her general education class, the purpose being to adapt, as appropriate to the needs of the student, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to support the student to successfully participate and progress in the general curriculum during regular instruction. The focus of services provided by the CT is to an individual student with a disability* (New York State Education Department, 2013, p. 14-15).

What you will notice in a direct Consultant Teach (CT) classroom, as opposed to a Co-teach classroom, might be indicated by the positioning of the special educator. In the direct CT classroom, most often the special educator will be working next to a student or small group of students, whereas in the co-teach classroom the special educator might be seen leading a whole group review of content or skill instruction, or working with a small group. There is a level of responsibility for all students in co-teaching that narrows to only the small group in direct CT. In another example, in a station rotation in the direct CT classroom, the special educator might move with the small group, rather than stay in one station in order to work with all students within the co-teaching classroom. What looks the same in both CT and co-teaching classrooms is specially designed instruction. For example, when writing a paragraph that states a claim, this instruction might begin with practice identifying claims within exemplars, or students might have a writing organizer that scaffolds the organization of a paragraph. Specially designed instruction will look and sound different than general education instruction.

Much as the success of any classroom teacher is rooted in timely and effective planning so is the success of teaching partnerships. In both partnerships the responsibility for the learning outcomes of the students with disabilities is shared between both educators requiring each partner to be explicit in their plans. Here's the tough part, most educators report that they do not have adequate time to meet with their partner. And without understanding the full implication and intent of inclusion, co-planning can become something we do only if we have the time. As my teaching partner Kerri Bundy says, much like IEPs are individualized, inclusive classes are individualized! Even though both educators know the content and have spent years teaching together, they have to meet often to individualize instructional practices and customize student products to meet the needs of diverse classrooms. Planning is where

we build trust in each other, design a predictable classroom environment and address any issues that might risk our classroom choreography.

So why the focus on "inclusion" and what might be the shifts all educators are required to make by this term which is commonly used to describe attributes and attitudes, but is in our case, a specific technical term? Bateman and Yell (2019) report that, "Inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education programs is important not only because it is a core component of IDEA, but also because it is good for both general education and special education students." (p. 193). A separate education is inherently an unequal education. As Whitbread describes in her research summary, *News – What Does the Research Say About Inclusive Education?* for wrightslaw.com: "Although separate classes, with lower student to teacher ratios, controlled environments, and specially trained staff would seem to offer benefits to a child with a disability, research fails to demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs (Lipsky, 1997; Sailor, 2003)."

In the following vignette Mary Lillge, one of my teaching partners in 11th grade English, tells of the impact of inclusion on one of our highest achieving students:

> *One of the students in our class was giggling about the reaction of another student, who has autism, to a new writing assignment. At the end of class, we addressed it with him. We had just a few minutes to process this but instead of jumping right to discipline, Mrs. Daley started with gently asking him the question, "What do you know about autism?" The student was clearly surprised by this approach and as we explained autism and engaged him in identifying how it impacts a student with this diagnosis, we saw this young man change. Since this day, this young person became an ally to his classmate.*

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Describing Inclusion

We begin with a description of inclusion (on the following page) from the New York State Board of Regents (Promoting Inclusion of Students with Disabilities, 2015).

The practice of inclusion requires all teachers to be intentional in their planning, both in terms of instruction and environment. Each inclusive setting is focused on high expectations, expectations that are amply and appropriately supported by evidence-based practices. Inclusive classroom practices dovetail with the practices that support students whose

Defining High Quality Inclusion

High quality inclusive settings would be defined to mean that:

- Instruction and configuration of classrooms and activities include both students with and without disabilities;
- Students with disabilities are held to high expectations for achievement;
- Special education and general education teachers intentionally plan teaching lessons to promote the participation and progress of students with disabilities in learning and social activities;
- Individualized accommodations, supports and specially-designed instruction are provided to students with disabilities to participate and progress in regular education classes and activities; and
- Evidence-based services and supports are used to foster the cognitive, communication, physical, behavioral and social-emotional development of students with disabilities.

This proposed definition is consistent with the definition/components of high quality inclusion as provided in the ***U.S. Department of Education policy statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs.***

Source: NYSED Engage NY

learning is interrupted by trauma, poverty, weak social-emotional skills, even English language learners and students navigating an unfamiliar culture. (Bateman & Cline, 2016).

When facilitating training for co-teachers, whether those partnerships are consultant teachers or integrated co-teaching, whether the classroom or building considers this inclusion or not; three domains of effective collaborative partnerships have been considered here: rapport, instructional strategies, and student outcomes.

Relationship vs. rapport

As defined by Miriam-Webster (n.d), rapport is a *friendly, harmonious relationship especially: a relationship characterized by agreement, mutual understanding, or empathy that makes communication possible or easy*. In the classroom, rapport is heard in "we" language and happens when teachers model communication. For example, in order to address a possible misconception when discussing *The Great Gatsby*, the special educator asks the general educator the following: "I'm confused by the term, modernity. I know the root word is modern, but how does it connect to a book written 100 years ago?"

Rapport is seen in the ease with which student routines are supported — students know how to access supplies, ask questions and which teacher is responsible for attendance, how their work is evaluated and who is giving feedback. Rapport is characterized by respect. Primary to rapport between a special educator and general educator is communication. It's fundamental to the partnership of professionals that they continually connect their practice to common and oft-stated goals. Rapport cannot be assumed.

Ms. Tully and Ms. Daley co-teach in a ninth-grade social studies classroom. One is a special educator who is also certified to

teach secondary English, the other certified in social studies. As the two teachers work with their students through a station lesson, Tully, the content teacher, works at a table with heterogenous groupings of students on map skills. The two teachers have prepared to provide graphic supports (rulers, modified atlas, models) to the students with disabilities. Daley maintains the movement of students through the stations, clarifying directions, giving all students immediate feedback on skills. The students recognize the content strengths of Tully and the assessment strengths of Daley. Teachers refer to each other by their teacher names – "Mrs. D." – and evidence clarity and parity in their roles. Rapport is seen in the effective use of each teacher's strengths, in the smooth transition between the stations and the ease with which all students respond to both teachers as teachers of equal value.

Most teachers hone their craft in relative isolation from their peers. While we mentor new teachers, and create content area Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to support each other, due to time and scheduling constraints, we don't always have the opportunity to observe each other, reflect on what we see, and relate it to evidence-based practices expected by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). What might happen when teachers who have always worked in isolation begin or continue working with another professional in the room? At first, it's a relief to have some help with grading, and managing students with disruptive behaviors, and making copies. But beneath the surface, we've opened ourselves up to criticism, and exposed our insecurities. It's best practice to address these possibilities by systematically reflecting on what brings us together and exploring professionally how to address any differences that might interrupt the synergy that our students deserve.

Many teams attribute their success to simply being together for years – having the time to build a relationship. Time spent together can build a relationship. But when we see ourselves as professionals, we recognize that rapport isn't left to chance, time or experience, but we apply skills to strengthen rapport. We hold ourselves accountable to using targeted discussion and careful honesty to build rapport throughout the school year, for the entire tenure of our teaching partnership. It's important for professionals to recognize that collaboration is integral to inclusive cultures. Collaboration is a professional skill that infers action, not attributes.

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Create your own team rapport builders:

Here are some of the issues and the rapport building questions we created:

Issue: Content Teacher feels "put at risk" when paired with a special educator.

Prompt: When is the right time for the special educator to step up and teach? How can two teachers share instruction to support students? When will each teacher deliver instruction during a lesson? How will you plan each piece for the teachers?

Issue: Content area teacher doesn't want to devalue the special educator.

Prompt: How can your co-teacher make you feel valued? What do you need from each other to feel valued?

Issue: Both teachers feel that they can't give up control because of the implications of high-stakes tests.

Prompt: What are our goals for our students in terms of high-stakes tests? How can we be sure our students are making progress toward our goals?

Issue: Teachers feel that it's just luck when they are successful or unsuccessful in partnering.

Prompt: What does "lucky" mean to you in terms of students, teachers, colleagues? Relate your definition of lucky to your expectations of yourself and others in the co-teach classroom.

Issue: Are we adequately addressing how students "see" co-teaching and co-teachers?

Prompt: In what ways might co-teaching be confusing to students? What questions might we need to address from our community of learners?

Issue: Good relationships sometimes get in the way of common planning time.

Prompt: What are our planning priorities and in what ways can we continue to honor our friendship without risking our professional tasks?

In order to support teams in creating open-ended questions that we called "rapport builders," the teams can scan teaching blogs, academic article abstracts, professional organization websites for articles about co-teaching. Then together the members should brainstorm a list of 10–15 topics/issues gleaned from that review. Those topics are then turned into open-ended questions. Embed these questions into your planning format and save 15–20 minutes each month just to discuss these prompts. This exercise helps teams nurture rapport, avoid assumptions and ground their practice in professionalism.

For example, in a recent gathering of co-teachers, each member of the group created a six-word summary of an article they found in a simple internet search. The discussion that followed the sharing of the summaries brought forth common issues that might interrupt rapport. Each team of teachers participating in this training created rapport builders. These questions could be embedded in planning time to support co-teaching teams as our team does in the model vocabulary unit plan.

The bulk of the special educator's impact on the students they're supporting in the inclusive classroom happens during planning. Unfortunately, most teaching partnerships report inadequate planning

time and most secondary teaching partnerships – consultant models or teaching assistants or aides – do not have scheduled collaborative planning time (McDuffie et al.). Regardless of scheduled time or lack of scheduled time, planning must be done. Some teams use shared documents and calendars to support planning, others use time in the classroom when students are working independently to collaborate. Other teams take conference days, summer curriculum, or clubs and activities periods to plan. Either way it happens, it's imperative to plan your planning time and planning routine before the school year begins (Murawski, 2012).

When my 11th grade English team approaches planning, we have to prioritize. We often start with our topic, for example, vocabulary. My teaching partner Kerri Bundy describes our planning priorities as follows: I think it is most effective to begin with the skill we are hoping students to take away from the unit or lesson, then to break down who can do each part toward that end.

Then we tease out what students will know, understand and be able to do (Tomlinson, 2018) in a specific planning document format. We don't break until we have described our formative and summative assessments. If the time is up – we'll collapse it with technology applications – and collaborate about activities and the specially designed instruction via our shared planning form (Charles, 2012). (See vocabulary unit plan sample on page 11.)

The reality for secondary classrooms is that the content area teacher is the curricular expert while in both secondary and elementary classrooms, the special educator or English as a New Language teacher tend to have practice in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and specially designed instruction (Scruggs, 2007). UDL is a framework for designing instruction for each of the three guidelines: Engagement, Representation, Action and Expression. When discussing the activities and the elements of the

Collaboration

Collaboration is ethereal in that it is never an end in itself, instead operating as a culture or a means through which any goal can be reached. Collaboration often is indirectly fostered among members of a school work group by arranging time for participants to meet face-to-face, guiding them through the development of positive professional relationships, establishing explicit and implicit procedures for working together, and teaching them about school programs that rely on collaborative interactions (e.g., teams, co-teaching). Collaboration is not explicitly mandated in the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), nor is it generally part of formal policies related to educating students with disabilities, but the requirements of the law and established school practices strongly infer that it is through collaboration that the effective education of students with disabilities is achieved. (Mc Lesky, et al., p. 28).

Source: High Leverage Practices in Special Education (2017)

Co-teaching is all about improving outcomes for all learners.

learning environment that fosters student learning, the give and take between the two teaching partners is where the real excitement and synergy is easiest to see. As a special educator, I am more comfortable deferring to the content expert. But one of my teaching partners, Ms. Lillge, had an opportunity to address my misconception during our planning that changed the way I saw myself and my role for the better. When her teaching partner takes a less active role in planning she said, *"I want to know your thoughts on instruction and curriculum. If I know you feel passionately about something within the subject, I want you to plan it. I do not like doing all the planning and then handing it over to the special education teacher. It makes me feel like a boss, and it probably makes you feel devalued, and then the whole cycle of frustration starts."*

When our collaborative planning is effective and timely, we take creative risks and notice that all of our time in the classroom can be spent in coaching learners and observing learners coach each other (Scruggs, 2007). No student is left unengaged, frustrated or bored.

Instructional Strategies

Accommodations means adjustments to the environment, instruction or materials (e.g., instructional materials in alternative format such as large print or Braille, fewer items on each page; extra time to complete tasks) that allow a student with a disability to access the content or complete assigned tasks. Accommodations do not alter what is being taught.

— New York State Education Department (2013, p. 5)

Program modifications may be used to describe a change in the curriculum or measurement of learning, for example, when a student with a disability is unable to comprehend all of the content an instructor is teaching (e.g., reduced number of assignments; alternate grading system).

— New York State Education Department (2013, p. 5)

Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible student, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs that result from the student's disability; and to ensure access of the student to the general curriculum, so that he or she can meet the educational standards that apply to all students.

— New York State Education Department (2013, p. 3)

Student Outcomes

Student outcomes is the vision and why of what we do. Co-teaching is all about improving outcomes for all learners. For our team, we consider three domains of assessment recommended by Tomlinson, et al. (2018): student product related to the learning target; student process related to transition values like diligence, preparation; and finally, student growth. We teach 11th grade English, so for our ultimate learning target we expect that all our students can achieve proficiency in the standards that guide our teaching as measured by the New York State ELA Regents Exam. In designing the sequence toward that end, the expectations for the student products are scaffolded for students with disabilities. Scaffolds are

temporary supports, a writing outline for the central idea task, or a model of an introductory paragraph. These scaffolds allow a student with a disability independent practice of an academic task. In an inclusive classroom, our goal is that all students are completing the same student products at the same time.

In terms of process attributes: we want our students to practice not only the reading, writing, listening and speaking skills of adults but to use them to make their community a better place. We design learning activities that offer opportunities to independently practice attributes like grit, preparation, and

Vocabulary Unit Plan Sample

Rapport Builder: Co-teaching is a model created to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. What outcomes are we looking for in our classroom? How might we measure those outcomes to ensure success?

Unit: Vocabulary
Dates: September - May 10 units
Standard: 11-12L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
11-12L4a: Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
11-12L4b: Identity and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., conceive, conception, conceivable).
11-12L4c: Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses) to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage
11-12L4d: Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

Understanding: Having a greater vocabulary helps us communicate our needs, describe our conflicts and analyze solutions.

Know: root word, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, context, etymology, precise	Do: Create grammatically correct sentences that use the given vocabulary words accurately

Formative Assessments: definitions, images, sentence practice, paint chips
Summative Assessment: Vocabulary Assessment

Possible misconceptions/challenges: not changing the word form to fit the sentence structure, inaccurately using the meaning of the word, recognizing the word in text but not in speech (vice versa)

Scaffolds, strategies, co-teaching, grouping: heterogeneous grouping, teach all words, everyone chooses 5 to master, can earn extra points on the assessment beyond 5, struggling students can choose a test paper differentiated with synonyms for, visual prompt to challenge students at every level. Day 1: write your own definition, compare at your table - paint chips sort. Day 2: create rules to remember the difference, draw a visual, write sentences. Day 3: review using sentences and image.

Reflection: Students wanted to see the definitions rather than rely on their own definitions. In what ways does this impact higher-order thinking habits? Some students need a scaffold to write sentences - perhaps sentence stems?

Self-assessment is a powerful tool in building independent level self-advocacy which is often a challenge for students with disabilities.

accountability. If we want each of our students to identify their strengths and interests and find ways to contribute to the class culture, we need to provide instruction and opportunities to practice that. In Ms. Lillge's English class, we embed a routine to support social emotional learning. All students periodically assess themselves in terms of lesson targets and their contribution to classroom culture. Self-assessment is a powerful tool in building independent level self-advocacy which is often a challenge for students with disabilities. Self-assessment is also a style of formative assessment for our team. By first teaching self-assessment and then embedding it as a habit, students develop a stronger sense of self and also accountability for their learning.

In one unit, we provide more direct instruction in these attributes. Ms. Kerri Bundy designed a unit called *Speech for a Cause*. Within this unit, students connect with a charitable organization, research their needs and the efficacy of their use of funds, and write a speech to present to their peers. In order to provide scaffolds for this unit, I use Google Classroom to provide a writing outline for my students. In addition, for some of the students with profound reading challenges this outline also provided sentence stems. For some of the students, in order to support executive function deficits, we provide the research link within the outline and limit the search to one site. During specially designed instruction within the classroom, students with disabilities benefit from having time to practice meta-cognitive strategies like talking about the process of writing or oral modeling of a research strategy. For the domain of student growth, I refer to progress in the goals determined by the IEP for the students with disabilities. For all 11th grade English students, we have quarterly checks that provide evidence of growth.

Before embarking on a co-teaching model; co-teachers need to know why they're co-teaching. And not just in a general sense, they should have the opportunity to state the outcomes and be able to use data to measure their impact.

We teach what we value. If we don't identify those values from the start, our students, parents and communities may not understand why we spend the money to put two teachers in one classroom. The roles of the co-teachers can be confusing to students and to parents. Many of the parents of our secondary students didn't attend inclusive schools. Having a district vision shared with parents and all stakeholders in language that is clear and understood by all is supportive to the teaching partners, and to all students.

Co-teaching is a unique instructional model that has the potential to move inclusion forward. Think of a truly inclusive classroom as a pebble in the pond which impacts the culture of a grade level, a building and a generation of adults that see inclusivity and diversity as a strength rather than a deficit. Though the co-teaching model has been in place for years, practitioners struggle to feel successful in the model (Fowler, 2019). Strengthening inclusive teaching partnerships needs comprehensive and sustained skill support.

The elements necessary to support effective teacher partnerships are the same elements needed to strengthen inclusive practices in schools. These elements include sharing a vision for student outcomes, strengthening trust by using a shared vocabulary to describe outcomes and professionalizing the partnerships that support those outcomes. Consider the parallels between effective teaching partnerships as a microcosm of inclusive communities. Professional Development Plans that support inclusive schools, like the instruction that supports an inclusive classroom, need to be comprehensive, meet the needs of all stakeholders with multiple points of access to content, and create opportunities for participants to individualize application of learning.

Needs Assessment Checklist for a Comprehensive Approach to Supporting Inclusive Schools

Often in our planning, my teaching partners and I consider the needs of their classrooms in which there is no special educator. Today's classroom teachers need community support to be successful. Classroom teachers are taking on the challenge of designing learning environments that frame diversity as a strength. We can use these experiences to do the same for our school communities. A Needs Assessment Checklist is a tool for districts to self-assess their approach to addressing the barriers to truly inclusive communities.

School communities are finding it a challenge to put in place sustainable policies and practices to create an inclusive school culture, with classrooms that are designed to welcome diverse learners and instruction that moves all learners toward achievement on the Next Generation Standards. Parents struggle to understand why their child with a disability is expected to meet certain academic standards. Some parents wonder how the teacher is managing to teach all students when the classroom includes students who demand more attention. Teachers struggle to maintain high expectations, and keep instruction accessible to all. Forward Together, a study of teacher efficacy

The elements necessary to support effective teaching partnerships include sharing a vision for student outcomes, strengthening trust by using a shared vocabulary and professionalizing the partnerships that support those outcomes.

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in instruction of students with disabilities, published by the National Center for Learning Disabilities describes "what general education teachers currently know and believe about teaching students with identified disabilities and/or learning and attention issues. While many feel unprepared to teach the 1 in 5, (students diagnosed with learning/attentional disabilities) many are committed to learning more and improving their abilities." (2019, p. 7).

In our experience, students are confused by the roles of each member of the collaborative teams that support their education (Scruggs, et al., 2007). Because we need to balance confidentiality with reality, it's a challenge in the classroom to state with clarity the role of each teacher. And each classroom is unique in its needs, so even though many students have experience in two-teacher classrooms, the model they see practiced in each might be distinct. All stakeholders agree that students who struggle in school should have extra supports – special education, related services, multiple tiered systems of support, nutrition, counseling, transportation and mental wellness instruction among others. But in the classroom, teachers are sometimes overwhelmed by the needs of their students and short on time to identify needed skills, let alone find the resources they need to adjust their teaching to truly activate an inclusive classroom experience.

Every district has its own needs, but the following checklist can be used to design an innovative, tailored and comprehensive series of conversations and professional learning experiences that build and support the many teaching partnerships for inclusive schools. The value of this list is that it comes from the experiences of the special educators, co-teaching teams and paraeducators and my own classroom experiences. These are the stakeholders impacting classroom practices and supports for students with diverse needs. And these are the issues that most directly impact our daily practice.

Conclusion

Teaching partnerships are powerful tools for truly inclusive schools! Effective collaborative teams model and instruct the attributes of civil social engagement and work readiness attributes. This unique instructional style not only provides for students with disabilities highly effective instruction from a content specific teacher, but access and specially designed instruction through the support of a special educator.

The benefits for all students of this type of inclusive learning environment are well documented (Grindal et al, 2016). The everyday real and exhausting challenges of working with an academically, emotionally and behaviorally diverse group of students are overcome when approached with a growth mindset for our students as well as for ourselves, a shared vision and trust. And while these team attributes can develop over time, the surest path to achievement is through targeted professional learning experiences. Embedded time to share knowledge of each teacher's specific content area expertise contributes to the academic outcomes of all students and the independent level outcomes of students with disabilities. Access to coaching and training in evidence-based practices support both members of teams in using systems of anecdotal and quantified data collection through varied methods to inform the design of the instructional environment. We feel lucky when we're paired with a teacher whose style fits ours, or whose expertise we respect. Let's not leave it to luck, let's professionalize the teaching partnerships with systems of support and growth!

Needs Assessment Checklist

Administrators:

- Have we addressed with our constituents the mandates, the reality, the vision of our district policies on inclusive classrooms?
- Presentation for districts and parent organizations: Have we shared with our families, *Why inclusive classrooms?*

Classroom Teachers:

- Have we adjusted our assessment practices for the inclusive classroom?
- Have we adjusted our instructional practices for the inclusive classrooms?
- Instructional resources for inclusive classrooms. Have we identified online resources from NYSED, IDEAs that Work, High Leverage Practices as well as local, in-person resources including BOCES and Center for Disability Services available to our practitioners?
- Collaborative Teams: Are we prepared to introduce new practitioners to the skills of building a collaborative team and developing systems to hold teams accountable to the families and students they serve?
- Co-teaching: Are we giving current practitioners support in moving beyond "a good rapport?" Are we gathering data for co-planning, grouping, accountability?
- Mental Health Wellness/ Social Emotional Learning strategies for every classroom environment: What are the strategies that can be embedded in our classroom routines that support classroom management of this uniquely diverse grouping as well as meet the individual needs of each student?
- In what ways might we better use technology to ensure multiple pathways to achievement in secondary classrooms and support collaborative practices?

Teaching Assistants and Aides:

- In what specific ways might offering meaningful professional learning for TAs support student growth and independence?

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