Collaborative Teaming for students who require AT/AAC

Working effectively to meet the needs of students who require AAC/AT in the educational setting

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ACTS

What is Collaborative Teaming?

* "An Interactive process that enables team members with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems. Outcomes are enhanced, altered and produce solutions that are different than those individual team members would produce independently."

    * *ACN, 1995, Vol. 8, #4)*

Who forms a Collaborative Team?

* A Collaborative team includes both core and extended group (IEP Team) members.
* Core team members have the most direct contact with the student (teacher, parent, paraprofessionals, service providers).
* Extended team members include members of the IEP team that do not have regular contact with the student (School psychologist, Principal, program specialist).

Who are the team members?

* Special Ed Teacher
* General Ed Teacher
* Parent
* Student
* Speech/Language Pathologist
* Occupational Therapist
* Physical Therapist
* Vision Specialist
* APE
* AAC Specialist
* AT Specialist

Other IEP Team Members

* Program (content) specialist
* School Principal
* School Psychologist
* Behavior Specialist

How are services provided?

* Integrated into the classroom
* Using the instructional activities that are part of the curriculum
* Taking advantage of opportunities for spontaneous interaction with adults and peers
* Unobtrusively fitting into the settings and supporting the communicator

What are the qualities of a collaborative team?

* Share common goals for the student
* Operate under shared principles or guidelines
* Communicate regularly with each other
* Make decisions as a team

What are the Roles of Team Members?

* Role delineation
* Role Overlap

IEP Goals and Team Members Responsibilities

* Team Members develop goals together and assume responsibility for implementation.

* Goals are written that necessitate team members provide more and better opportunities for communication and participation.

* Goals are focused on student outcomes; what objectively the student will be able to do.

Operating Principles

* Meeting the needs of children with complex communication needs requires that the collaborative team follow a set of operating principles to guide them in decisions about teaching (Snell & Brown, 2000) and to help increase their level of autonomy integrating AT/AAC in the classroom.

Teacher as Case Manager

* The SDC teacher is the leader of the team and oversees the implementation and integration of AT/AAC in the educational program.

* Core team members working in the classroom follow the teachers lead regarding when to include students in regular curricular activities and when to provide individualized instruction in the classroom.

* Core team members refrain from interrupting the teacher during class time and choose other appropriate means to communicate with the teacher outside of the classroom.

Student-Centered Classroom

* The focus is on the student(s) at all times in the classroom.

* Core team members document outcomes of intervention and distribute/disseminate information via encrypted group email or other secure electronic sharing.

* Core team members also contact other team members via text/phone for pertinent information.

Active Participation

* Students who use AT/AAC must participate actively in the educational setting

* Implementation Plans ensure that AT/AAC is integrated and used appropriately during various subjects and specifies.

* Partner and Instructional Strategies enable the student to be successful in their attempts to communicate and participate (Toomey & Buzolich, 2014).

Multiple Communication Systems

* "AAC interventions should always be multi-modal in nature; that is, they should utilize the individual's full communication capabilities, including any residual speech or vocalizations, gestures, signs, and aided communication".

    * *American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (1991). Report: Augmentative and Alternative Communication, ASHA, 33 (Suppl. 5), 9-12.*

Communication Systems

* Unaided Communication
* Low Technology
* Lite/Supplementary Speech Generating
* Mid Tech SGDs or
* High Tech SGDS

Unaided and Aided Communication

* Children without speech use multiple modes of communication including vocalizations, verbal approximations (limited speech), eye gaze, whole body movements, gestures, and facial expressions (Light, 1988, Kraat, 1985). Each individual has unique physical abilities and limitations and will use their own natural resources for communication to interact with others (Buzolich & Wiemann, 1988). Children with motor and speech impairments continue to use all modes of communication in combination with their augmentative communication systems.

Demand Levels of Communication Systems

* Each Communication System the student has will place different cognitive, linguistic, or motor demands on the child.
    * Red-New symbols, new access method, new vocabulary or a combination of these.
    * Yellow-Previously introduced to symbols, access, and vocabulary but still need practice
    * Green-Child can communicate using this system with a great deal of success
        * *Taken from Karen Erikcson's, "Integrating Academic, Communication, and Motor Programs for Students with Significant Disabilities. Center of Literacy & Disability Studies.*

Matching Communication System to Subject & Task

* Each subject or task will impose certain cognitive and linguistic demands on the student.

* Match a high demand instructional activity (red) with a low demand communication systems (green) for Participation Planning in the classroom.

  * *Dr. Karen Erickson identifies Red activities as those that challenging activities when new vocabulary or concepts are introduced. Yellow are moderately challenging such as reviewing information. Green impose a limited cognitive or linguistic challenge.*

Decision Making

* No one individual's input in the team is valued above others.

* No one or few team members make changes in the educational program, instructional strategies, or any aspect of the Intervention Plan without team consensus

* Everyone on the team is able to weigh in on decision making

What can go wrong in a Collaborative Team?

* Team members are unable to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.
* Team members make decisions without involving core team members.
* The classroom program and structure is lacking or weak.
* Team Meetings are long and/or nonproductive.
* Team Communication is time consuming and frequent.

What can go wrong?

* One or more team members are difficult to deal with.
* Team members are in disagreement regarding the student's level of functioning and consequently can not agree on intervention.
* Parent may lack trust in the team members.
* Team members have difficulty with collaboration.

What to do?

* Review and agree on roles and responsibilities of team members.

* Review and agree upon how team members will communicate with one another.

* Conduct Team Meetings and Develop Action Plans that keep team members accountable.

* Determine what to do when there is a conflict and how these will be resolved.

  * Face-to-face meeting versus email or phone

What else?

* Involve program specialist or site administrator (Principal) when:

  * There are problems related to case management.
  * The classroom program itself is weak.
  * Team is overly stressed and needs the support of the program administrator.