

# 8

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## Key to Successful Implementation

### *Collaborative Strategies*

*Information age rest in pieces. This is the age of collaboration.*

— Grace Rubinstein

#### **OVERVIEW**

The goal of this chapter is to explore the collaborative practices that English-as-a-second language (ESL), bilingual, special education, and general education teachers engage in to implement the Common Core English language arts (ELA) standards. We will outline the types of collaboration among teachers that yield effective standards-based instruction to meet the diverse academic and language development needs of students. Both instructional and noninstructional collaborative activities focused on the Common Core State Standards implementation are presented. Extensive research on both professional learning communities and teacher collaboration supports our notion that effective and successful implementation of the CCSS cannot happen without systemic collaboration.

#### **WHY COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES HELP MEET THE COMMON CORE**

In a recent publication on research-based literacy practices for English language learners (ELLs), Nancy Cloud, Fred Genesee, and Elsie Hamayan (2009) painted an accurate picture of emergent bilingual students as follows:

ELLs who are learning to read and write English have all of the challenges that mainstream English-speaking children face, and, in addition, they must acquire proficiency in English for both social and academic purposes; they must acquire background knowledge that is the foundation of the school curriculum; they must acquire enough knowledge of mainstream culture to integrate and function effectively in school and with their schoolmates; and they must keep up with the academic curriculum. (p. 14)

The complexity of the challenges ELLs and all diverse students encounter on a daily basis calls for a collaborative approach so teachers can pool their talents and resources and offer the best possible education to these learners. The implementation of the CCSS presents a unique opportunity for educators to collaborate on multiple levels to foster a shared mission and vision for diverse learners, to have honest conversations about instruction, to share instructional practices, to align curriculum, to create a student-centered approach to teaching and learning, and to perpetuate avenues for effective professional learning.

## CORE COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES

Many teachers find engaging in ongoing professional dialogue with colleagues who share common concerns and experiences to be among the most rewarding experiences. Charlotte Danielson (2009) also noted that “it’s through conversations that teachers clarify their beliefs and plans and examine, practice, and consider new possibilities” (p. 1). Most teachers agree, however, that while informal interactions keep teachers connected, they are not enough to support sustained, professional collaboration. For successful collaboration—especially with the CCSS in mind—formal structures and procedures must be developed, implemented, and maintained. Such formal collaborative practices may have a more or less direct instructional or noninstructional focus, as we discussed in greater detail in *Collaboration and Co-teaching: Strategies for English Learners* (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010). Instructional activities include (1) joint planning, (2) curriculum mapping and alignment, (3) parallel teaching, (4) codeveloping instructional materials, (5) collaborative assessment of student work, and (6) coteaching. Noninstructional activities include (1) joint professional development, (2) teacher research, (3) preparing for and conducting joint parent-teacher conferences, and (4) planning, facilitating, or participating in other extracurricular activities. The following section details each of these collaborative activities as they pertain to aligning instruction to the CCSS.

## Instructional Activities

### 1. Joint Planning

The purpose of a focused joint planning process—also referred to as cooperative or collaborative planning—is to allow specialists and classroom teachers to share their expertise as they (a) consider the Common Core expectations, (b) discuss students’ needs and the specific challenges each learner has to overcome to meet the Common Core goals, and (c) plan lessons and units that they may deliver jointly or independent of each other. Sharing responsibility for the CCSS implementation through collaborative planning ensures that a sustained professional dialogue takes place. As a result, instruction offered by a team of teachers involved is aligned to the standards, rather than disjointed or fragmented. Joint planning helps ensure that the K–5 ELA curriculum is made accessible to all learners through scaffolding, tiering, or other differentiated instructional techniques. Joint planning opportunities must be part of the regular school schedule; common preparation time is often the most frequently cited obstacle to successful teacher collaboration.

A unique form of coplanning is when general education and ESL or bilingual teachers use the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP Model) (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012) or the ExC-ELL protocol (Calderón, 2007) in conjunction with the CCSS. Classroom teachers may provide the ELA-specific content goals and objectives and the ESL/bilingual teacher contributes appropriately aligned language goals. Similarly, classroom teachers may present the required grade-appropriate ELA curriculum along with instructional resources commonly used to teach that curriculum, whereas the ESL/bilingual specialist provides supplementary materials and addresses the linguistic complexity in the core curriculum by adapting difficult texts, assignments, or assessment tools based on ELLs’ needs as well as by planning on preteaching and reteaching select target language features.

*Coplanning Basics.* Regardless of grade level or instructional program model, key coplanning activities include the following:

- Identify the Common Core ELA standards and language proficiency standards for the lesson.
- Align language development objectives to ELA goals.
- Identify essential questions that scaffold meaning and clarify information.
- Select supplementary materials that help bridge new content to students’ background knowledge.
- Develop multilevel, tiered activities that match students’ language proficiency or readiness levels.

- Determine the types of instructional supports (multisensory, graphic, and interactive resources) needed to assist in making meaning from the required reading and assignments.
- Select target linguistics structures (word-, sentence-, and discourse-level language features).
- Plan standards-based learning activities that integrate the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Design formative assessment tasks and matching assessment tools that may offer data both about student progress and lesson effectiveness.
- Use individual student profiles to further differentiate instruction whenever possible.

Villa, Thousand, and Nevin (2008) suggested that coplanning could be most effective when there is a set agenda used as a framework for coplanning time to guide teacher conversations between specialists and classroom teachers. When planning time is scarce, teachers need to develop communication strategies that consistently keep all parties informed and allow for shared decision making. Resourcefulness regarding planning and implementing instruction is often supplemented with creative ways to communicate with each other about students, lesson ideas, teaching strategies, and instructional materials. A shared planbook or aligned curriculum maps can serve to frame the major concepts and skills that all students must learn for a particular unit of study and assist collaborating teachers to organize lessons. Teachers can also agree on a coplanning template (see Figure 8.1) or a coplanning agenda (see Box 8.1) to ensure effective use of their collaborative time. (A full page, reproducible version of the coplanning template is available at the end of this chapter.)

**Figure 8.1** Common Core ELA Standard-Based Coplanning Template

Date:	Class:	Collaborative Teachers:
Common Core Standards Addressed		
Learning Objectives (Content/Language)		
Activities/Tasks (Rigor and Engagement)		
Resources and Materials		
Technology Integration		
Accommodations/Modifications		
Assessment Procedures		
Reflections/Special Notes		

Teachers engaged in regular coplanning may add additional lesson planning headings to this template. Similarly, the *Sample Common Core ELA Standards-Based Co-planning Agenda* in Box 8.1 may also be expanded and modified as needed.

### **Box 8.1 Sample Common Core ELA Standards-Based Co-Planning Agenda**

1. Review previous unit/lesson and student assessment data.
2. Select target CCSS.
3. Determine unit or lesson goals/objectives.
4. Identify instructional procedures.
5. Differentiate instructional and assessment strategies.
6. Assign roles and responsibilities for individual follow-up planning.

## ***2. Curriculum Mapping and Alignment***

*Curriculum mapping.* Heidi Hayes Jacobs (1997), Udelhofen (2005), and others agree that curriculum mapping is an effective procedure for collecting data about the taught curriculum in a school or district using a yearly or monthly calendar as the framework. Even when standards-based collaboration is the ultimate goal, participating teachers may first independently map their own taught curriculum. Once such overviews of students' actual learning experiences are created, teachers engage in a dialogue to ensure alignment and explore possible misalignments of essential knowledge and skills taught in the general education, ESL, bilingual, or special education curriculum. As Jacobs (1999) noted,

The fundamental purpose of mapping is communication. The composite of each teacher's map in a building or district provides efficient access to K–12 curriculum perspective both vertically and horizontally. Mapping is not presented as what *ought* to happen but what *is* happening during the course of a school year. Data offer an overview perspective rather than a daily classroom perspective. (p. 61)

With the CCSS, curriculum planning, mapping, and alignment among classroom teachers and support service professionals are receiving increasing attention. Most maps reveal five types of information: the content (essential knowledge taught); the standard which is addressed in the

curricular unit; the processes and skills used to teach the content; the assessment tools; and key resources used in the unit.

Curriculum mapping may be carried out both by looking back (backward mapping) and looking ahead (forward mapping). Table 8.1 offers a useful summary to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of different types of curriculum mapping from the ESL perspective.

**Table 8.1** *Backward (Journal) Mapping Versus Forward (Projection) Mapping*

Initial Mapping Format	Advantages	Disadvantages
Backward Mapping  <i>(Sometimes referred to as journal or diary mapping)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This type of mapping is less time-intensive; it requires a small amount of time on a regular basis to record the ESL and general-education content, language skills, and assessments taught each month.</li> <li>• When various levels of language proficiency are considered, this type of mapping allows for a more accurate account of what was actually taught to various groups of ELLs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It slows the completion of the initial mapping cycle, as teachers cannot proceed to the editing step until maps are completed.</li> <li>• The next steps probably would not occur until the beginning of the subsequent school year.</li> <li>• The curriculum mapping process can lose momentum.</li> <li>• Monthly check-ins must occur with each teacher to keep abreast of everyone's progress.</li> </ul>
Forward Mapping  <i>(Sometimes referred to as projection mapping)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The initial curriculum maps are completed within a short time frame, enabling teachers to move to the next steps of mapping much faster.</li> <li>• If a district allocates the appropriate amount of time, the initial cycle of mapping can be completed in one academic year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is more time-intensive.</li> <li>• Some teachers may have difficulty projecting future teaching.</li> <li>• It is troublesome for teachers who wish to document their differentiated maps for the three language proficiency levels.</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from S. Udelhofen (2005). *Keys to curriculum mapping: Strategies and tools to make it work* (p. 19). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin; A. Honigsfeld & M. Dove (2010). *Collaboration and co-teaching: Strategies for English learners* (p. 68). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

*Curriculum alignment.* What effect has the standards reform movement had on the curriculum for ELLs and students with disabilities? Are districts able to incorporate the general education curriculum into the instruction of these youngsters?

In our investigation of districts with an ESL curriculum, we found that there are a number of curricular options.

1. A stand-alone ESL curriculum following a locally developed scope and sequence of language and literacy development
2. A stand-alone ESL curriculum following a statewide ESL curriculum framework
3. A stand-alone ESL curriculum based on a commercially available ESL program
4. A content-support ESL curriculum based on content standards

Developing an ESL curriculum with the CCSS in mind is expected to result in an ELA-standards-based curriculum aligned to grade-level literacy/English language arts expectation. If the ESL program does have a strong, purposeful connection to the grade-level ELA content through curriculum alignment, instruction in the mainstream classes becomes more meaningful for ELLs. Without such curriculum alignment, the ESL services may become fragmented, the lessons delivered in each class may become disjointed, and the skills introduced and practiced may become confusing for ELLs.

In further consideration of the CCSS to create more instructional rigor for all students, special education teachers need to collaborate with general education teachers in order to align students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) with content curricula. The absence of knowledge of the general education curricula places both special education and ESL teachers in a position that often leads to the teaching of a narrow, skills-based curriculum for those pupils identified for these services. Furthermore, curriculum alignment through collaborative practices allows for a wider acceptance of shared academic goals and the use of differentiated instructional materials in all general education, second-language learning, and remedial programs.

### ***3. Parallel Teaching***

Academic intervention services (AIS), remedial reading, and ESL often continue to be implemented in the form of a stand-alone, pull-out program. At the elementary level, specialists often gather the children from one or more classrooms and take them to a designated room. What happens while those students are away from their regular classrooms? Their teachers are often puzzled by this challenge: what to teach and what not



to teach during the pullout periods? One solution to this dilemma is for specialists and general education teachers to coordinate the objectives of their ELA lessons aligned to the CCSS. One recommendation is to use the grade-specific standards section of the CCSS, track the standards across two, three, or occasionally more grades and *back-map* to previous grade-level expectations when working with students who either need remediation or first-time skill-building as is the case with many ELLs.

#### **4. Codeveloping Instructional Materials**

When teachers collaborate with diverse students' needs in mind, their attention may be focused on not only creating CCSS-based lesson or unit plans together but also developing instructional materials, resources, activity sheets, inclass and homework assignments, and assessment tools. There are many already-available classroom items that can be easily adapted for diverse students. The following are examples of how students' lived experiences and out-of-school literacies are reflected in the ELA curriculum or the core content areas with a literacy focus:

- In kindergarten, when the topic of families is introduced, teachers consider each student's diverse family backgrounds—recognizing the importance of extended family members—and design oral language development activities around family histories.
- In first grade, when the three main types of communities (rural, urban, suburban) are explored, students' lived experiences are built into the curriculum. Their countries of origin or places they visited are featured in photographs, video clips, and other supplementary materials, including native language resources if applicable, while students are engaged in reading nonfiction selections about various communities.
- In second grade, when students learn about school areas and school personnel, they collaboratively develop a brief interview protocol and go on a tour of the school building. At each key location, they interview the school staff members about their jobs.
- In third grade, when students learn about important historic events, they also share current events happening in their communities.
- In fourth grade, as students are exposed to literature that revolves around heroes, they are invited to write a news article about a hero in their own lives.
- In fifth grade, when the geography of the world through the study of time zones and climate zones is introduced, students' unique experiences of living in or visiting various regions of the United States or the world are capitalized on.



The possibilities of joint ELA-standards-based and content-based material development are as diverse as lessons taught in the K–5 classroom!

### **5. Collaborative Assessment of Student Work**

A powerful collaborative activity specialists and general education teachers may engage in is sampling and carefully examining representative work by diverse students. In one recently developed model, *Collaborative Analysis of Student Work: Improving Teaching and Learning*, Langer, Colton, and Gott (2003) suggested the use of rubrics within a framework of collaborative conversations and inquiry. Specifically, they proposed that participating teachers focus both on students' strengths and challenges and identify appropriate strategies to respond to patterns of learning difficulties. Using a protocol, members of teacher study groups analyze student work, offer plausible explanations for student performance levels, explore promising strategies to implement, and plan interventions. Once the teacher follows the collectively determined steps, new data are collected from the student, and the performance is assessed. This cycle is repeated, as teachers reflect on their students' learning and their own growth and needs.

In our work, we found it helpful to customize the protocol of examining student work by focusing on the challenges of specific students. For example, in order for teachers to jointly review the work of ELLs, we developed a protocol called *Sampling Work by English Language Learners* (SWELL) (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010) as a guide for teachers to examine students' language, academic, cultural, and social-emotional development. See Box 8.2 for the entire protocol adapted for standards-based ELA instruction.

#### **Box 8.2 Protocol for Sampling Work by English Language Learners (SWELL)**

As you collaboratively examine student literacy work samples produced by English language learners, consider the following questions organized in four subcategories.

##### 1. Linguistic Development

- a) What stage of second-language acquisition is evident?
- b) Which linguistic features has the student mastered and been able to use systematically?

*(Continued)*

(Continued)

- c) What are two or three prominent linguistic challenges the ELL's work demonstrates?
- d) Other comments:

## 2. Academic Needs

- a) What are two to three examples of successfully acquired ELA knowledge and/or skills?
- b) What are some noticeable gaps in the ELL's prior knowledge?
- c) What are some gaps in the ELL's new ELA skills and knowledge attainment?
- d) What ELA domain-specific skills does the ELL need to work on?
- e) Other comments:

## 3. Cultural Experiences and Challenges

- a) In what way are the ELL's cultural experiences reflected in his or her work?
- b) Is there any evidence that the ELL was struggling with cultural misunderstandings or misconceptions?
- c) Other comments:

## 4. Social-Emotional Aspects of Learning

- a) Is there evidence of motivated, self-directed learning in the ELL's work sample?
- b) Has the ELL been engaged in the task?
- c) Is there evidence of task persistence?
- d) Is there evidence of being engaged in cooperative learning (peer editing, etc.)?
- e) Other comments:

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Source: Adapted from A. Honigsfeld & M. Dove (2010). *Collaboration and co-teaching: Strategies for English Learners* (p. 71). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

## **6. Coteaching as a Framework for Sustained Teacher Collaboration**

Coteaching frameworks have been presented for special education inclusion models (Friend & Cook, 2007; Murawski, 2009; Vaughn, Schumm, & Arguelles, 1997; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008), as well as for English learners (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010, 2012). In our work with ESL teachers and their general education colleagues, we have

documented seven coteaching arrangements, which we refer to as *coteaching models*. In three of these models, both teachers work with one large group of students. In three additional models, two groups of students are split between the two cooperating teachers. In one final model, multiple groups of students are engaged in a learning activity that is facilitated and monitored by both teachers. Each of these configurations may have a place in any cotaught classroom, regardless of the grade level taught or the ELA standard targeted. We encourage our readers to consider both the advantages and disadvantages of each and pilot various models in their classes to see which ones allow them to respond best to both the students' needs, the specific content being taught, the type of learning activities designed, and the participating teachers' teaching styles and own preferences (see Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010, for detailed discussion of each model):

1. One Group: One Lead Teacher and One Teacher "Teaching on Purpose"
2. One Group: Two Teachers Teach Same Content
3. One Group: One Teaches, One Assesses
4. Two Groups: Two Teachers Teach Same Content
5. Two Groups: One Teacher Preteaches, One Teacher Teaches Alternative Information
6. Two Groups: One Teacher Reteaches, One Teacher Teaches Alternative Information
7. Multiple Groups: Two Teachers Monitor and Teach

### ***What Is Unique About Coteaching?***

During any of the above coteaching configurations, the partnering teachers share the responsibility for planning instruction, implementing the lessons, and assessing student performance and outcome. In a cotaught classroom, all students participate in CCSS-driven ELA lessons. When learning groups remain heterogeneous, students have the opportunity to work with others who have various academic capabilities and English language fluency. This is in contrast to remedial or pull-out programs, in which students are either grouped with youngsters who are struggling readers and writers or have no English language proficiency.

In our view, there are some basic ingredients of a successful coteaching program. Within a general education classroom, a specialist can demonstrate strategies during a cotaught lesson, and the classroom teacher can

continue to use the same strategies with students when the specialist is no longer present. Very often, the exchange of ideas between both teachers allows for more risk-taking and the use of innovative strategies on the part of each teacher to benefit all students in the classroom.

## **Noninstructional Activities**

### ***1. Joint Professional Development***

All teachers may benefit from participating in joint professional-development activities based on the CCSS either at their school, within their district, or outside their own professional environment. If they attend external, offsite training programs together, they have an open forum to share their experiences with standards-based ELA instruction, voice their concerns about the challenges the CCSS pose for diverse learners, and get feedback and responses both from colleagues from other school districts and from the course leader or workshop facilitator. Upon returning to their schools, teachers have the opportunity to share the information they gained both formally and informally with their colleagues. When they transfer the new information to their own practice and implement the new strategies in their own teaching, not only are they obtaining new skills, but they can also share these skills collaboratively with colleagues who did not attend the same training. When teachers train together, the benefit is even greater since they are able to support each other in their endeavors.

The collaborative professional development practices that yield the most effective partnership and team building between specialists and their general education colleagues have the following common elements:

1. Regular, work-based opportunities to reflect on and improve instruction
2. Shared topics of interest
3. Team membership and participation based on self-selection
4. Focus on teachers' instructional practices and students' learning

Below we outline three possible forms of collaborative professional development activities: (a) collegial circles, (b) peer observations, and (c) collaborative coaching or mentoring.

*A. Collegial Circles.* Collegial circles are small groups of teachers who meet on a regular basis to discuss common questions, share concerns, offer solutions to common problems, and discuss appropriate instructional techniques. However, to keep professional conversations on task, protocols

or formats for discussion are often beneficial. In a classic educational resource, *Looking in Classrooms*, Good and Brophy (2000, p. 490) outlined a model for group discussion. To transfer this model to the current standards-based instructional context, we renamed the stages, adjusted the goals, and gave CCSS-specific examples for each stage, as seen in Table 8.2.

**Table 8.2** *Phases of Group Discussions*

Phases	Types of Knowledge	Goals	Examples
Phase 1	External Knowledge: ↓ Review and Discover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore existing, research-based information</li> <li>• Find out what experts say about the topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find recently published articles on the CCSS and diverse learners</li> </ul>
Phase 2	Personal Knowledge: ↓ Reflect and Relate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in active listening</li> <li>• Share personal experiences related to the topic or problem</li> <li>• Connect and compare external knowledge to group members' own experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the challenges and opportunities the CCSS present for diverse learning needs</li> <li>• Invite everyone to share his or her personal experiences</li> <li>• Compare own challenges and successes to those documented in the literature</li> </ul>
Phase 3	Future Actions: ↓ Revise and Devise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internalize new knowledge about the topic</li> <li>• Review and revise prior understanding of the problem</li> <li>• Develop a plan of action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate recommended practices found in the literature and shared by group members</li> <li>• Develop a plan to experiment with and implement new CCSS-based instructional strategies</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from A. Honigsfeld and M. Dove (2010). *Collaboration and co-teaching: Strategies for English learners* (p. 82). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

*B. Peer Observations.* One powerful, school-based professional-learning opportunity for specialists and general education teachers is created by visiting each other's classes. When observing the teaching-learning process and monitoring student outcomes in a diverse classroom, teachers may set a specific purpose for the visit or choose one of the following:

*Kid watching:* What are some of the observable challenges students face as the lesson unfolds? How do they respond to the literacy tasks and language focus activities presented by the teacher? How do they interact with their classmates? What opportunities do they have to meaningfully use and, thus, develop their English language skills? What percentage of the time are students engaged? What do students do differently in the observed class?

*Teacher watching:* How clearly are the standards-based goals and objectives communicated? How does each teacher approach the varied needs of students? What types of adaptations are used? What percentage of the time is the teacher talking? In what ways are the assigned texts, tasks, homework assignments, and assessment practices modified (if at all)?

It is important to note that peer observations are not meant to be evaluative or judgmental, but rather serve as an opportunity for the teacher-observer to learn from the teacher being observed.

Allen and LeBlanc (2005) promote a simple yet effective collaborative peer coaching system they call the *2 + 2 Performance Appraisal Model*. The name suggests that teachers who engage in this form of peer support offer each other two compliments and two suggestions following a lesson observation. Table 8.3 offers possible target areas for the 2 + 2 models used with diverse learners.

*C. Collaborative Coaching/Mentoring.* When teachers participate in a mentor-coaching program either as a mentor-coach or as a mentee, opportunities to improve or learn new techniques for diverse learners while also aligning their instruction to the CCSS abound. Collaborative coaching and peer mentoring imply that teachers support each other's practice beyond conducting peer observations. Through a framework of coaching, teachers learn from each other, model effective instruction for one another, and benefit from sustained, job-embedded, and student-centered classroom assistance. Collaborative coaching requires an equal relationship between the two partners, such as the relationship between coteachers or those who collaborate formally in other ways to provide instruction. It is effective (a) when both participants possess knowledge about the topic or issue, such as high-stakes testing and test preparation for diverse learners or (b) when the coach understands one part

**Table 8.3** Target Areas of Feedback in the 2+2 Model

<b>General Feedback</b>	<b>Feedback Specific to Working With Diverse Learners</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Clarity of lesson objectives	Alignment of lesson objectives to ELA CCSS standards	
Motivation	Connection to students' prior knowledge and experiences or building background knowledge	
Lesson sequence	Lesson accessibility, instructional supports	
Differentiated activities	Scaffolded and tiered activities	
Student engagement	At-risk students' participation	
Questioning techniques	Questions matched to students' language proficiency and readiness levels (and addressing all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy)	
Grouping techniques	Using flexible (heterogeneous and homogeneous) groupings (including bilingual peer bridging if possible)	
Assessment techniques	Differentiation of assessment for diverse learners	

Source: Adapted from A. Honigsfeld and M. Dove (2010). *Collaboration and co-teaching: Strategies for English learners* (p. 85). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

of a problem—content requirements for all students to pass a state exam, and the partner understands another part—ELLs' linguistic development (Dunne & Villani, 2007). Thus, collaborative coaching becomes a vehicle for professional growth both for the novice and experienced teacher.

## **2. Teacher Research**

When teachers engage in classroom-based practitioner research, they may do so individually or collaboratively using a number of different formats. Working in research and development (R&D) teams, participating in collaborative inquiry groups, and engaging in collaborative action research or lesson studies are examples of this.

Research and development teams are formed by small groups of teachers who more formally decide on a particular instructional approach that



they study collaboratively. In some districts, R & D projects and accompanying teacher portfolios that document teachers' success with the target strategy may be used in lieu of more traditional teacher evaluations (which are often based on observations by an administrator and may only yield limited data on the teacher's performance). After collaborating teachers review research related to the selected instructional approach, they jointly plan and implement lessons based on the approach, assess their own (and each other's) growth, and evaluate the student outcomes.

When teacher discussion groups or collegial circles elect to engage in more in-depth explorations, they may decide to form collaborative inquiry groups. They may investigate an overarching concept (such as the teaching-learning process or second-language acquisition patterns) or choose more specific topics that deal with ELLs' instructional needs (such as using effective note-taking strategies). A form of collaborative inquiry is conducting teacher research or action research. We use Johnson's (2008) definition of action research as "the process of studying a real school or classroom situation to understand and improve the quality of actions and instruction" (p. 28). When collaborative action research is woven into the school culture and supported strongly by both the administration and the faculty, it allows teachers to examine their standards-based practice systematically and participate in the highest level of professional learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

Another form of teacher research is the lesson study concept originated in Japan as a professional-development movement for experienced inservice teachers who wanted to regularly engage in examining their teaching practices to improve their effectiveness (Lewis, 2002). In the classic format, participating teachers jointly plan a lesson in response to a preestablished study question or goal. One teacher teaches the lesson while others observe. Next, teachers discuss the lesson, revise it, and another team member teaches the lesson in a new class. This process of observation and discussion is repeated and ends with a written report (Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002). Yoshida (2004) emphasized that "lesson study helps to make teachers into lifelong learners. It is especially important to think of lesson study as a professional development activity, not as teacher training and lesson development. It creates opportunities for teachers to think deeply about instruction, learning, curriculum, and education" (para. 5).

### ***3. Preparing for and Conducting Joint Parent-Teacher Conferences***

When specialists and general education colleagues compare students' behavior, attitudes, and overall academic performance in their respective classes, they may observe that the same child acts quite differently in different settings.

When specialists and general education teachers write progress reports and quarterly, semiannual, or annual report cards based on collaboratively reviewed student work samples, portfolios, and test scores, multiple perspectives are included. Such collaborative effort is beneficial in assessing students' linguistic and academic progress since it leads to providing a clearer picture of areas of strengths and needs for both teachers and families.

#### ***4. Planning, Facilitating, or Participating in Other Extracurricular Activities***

Jointly preparing and facilitating parent outreach and family involvement programs, as well as other community-based activities, also enhances collaboration. What are some common and uncommon collaborative practices?

1. Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings
2. Parent information or new family orientation night
3. Parent workshops (For example: Information about the advances/shifts presented in the CCSS)
4. Family game night
5. Cultural events
6. Collaborative class, grade, or school newsletters
7. Family field day
8. Class and school plays, concerts, and talent shows

## **ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES**

The successful implementation of the collaborative practices outlined here has been observed in numerous school districts around the United States (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010, 2012). Most notably, collaborations that are anchored in the Common Core Standards allow teachers to use a shared framework and shared purpose, which leads to (re)examining not only their instructional practices and materials used in the general education and special program classes but the entire instructional service delivery system as well. The consistency and cohesion of the support services will have to be evaluated periodically to ensure diverse students receive rigorous, research-based services that lead to both academic language proficiency development and content-specific academic achievement. The establishment

of a common set of goals and a shared language to talk about goals—as intended by the CCSS—contribute to effective collaborative practices.

## CHALLENGES

Collaborating for the sake of diverse learners using the CCSS is no small feat! In order to establish the right context for such collaborations, school leaders—administrators, teacher- and parent-leaders together—must create an inclusive, welcoming school learning community with a shared vision of respect and acceptance of everyone’s cultural heritage and background. Building a professional learning community (DuFour & Eaker, 1998)—that continually engages in collaborative inquiry on all students’ needs as they are working toward meeting the CCSS—is a critical component of Common Core collaborations. Finally, addressing the logistics for these collaborative practices must include (a) using “flexible teaming” that allows for both horizontal (on grade level) and vertical (across grade level) teacher teams, as well as cross-disciplinary teamwork to support diverse students’ curricular, instructional, and extracurricular needs, (b) time and place for collaborations, and (c) human and other resources that make collaborations possible in the short and long run.

## COMMON CORE COLLABORATIONS— (UN)COMMON REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do you define successful collaboration to meet the CCSS?
2. How do schools create the time and resources for Common Core collaborations to take place?
3. What type of school leadership is needed for collaborative practices to be implemented successfully?
4. How do schools accurately assess whether or not the CCSS are being addressed with diverse learners?

## KEY RESOURCES

### *Professional Books*

Friend, M. (2008). *Co-teach! A handbook for creating and sustaining classroom partnerships in inclusive schools*. Greensboro, NC: Marilyn Friend Inc.

- Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2007). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals* (5th ed.). New York: Prentice Hall.
- Jacobs, H. H. (2004). *Getting results with curriculum mapping*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Murawski, W. W. (2009). *Collaborative teaching in elementary schools: Making the co-teaching marriage work!* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Roberts, S., & Pruitt, E. (2009). *Schools as professional learning communities: Collaborative activities and strategies for professional development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

### ***Online Resources***

<http://www.coteachingforells.weebly.com>  
<http://www.powerof2.com>

### ***Multimedia Sources***

- Friend, M. (2005). *The power of 2*. DVD. Greensboro, NC: Marilyn Friend Inc.
- St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS). (2007). *Coteaching*. DVD. St. Paul, MN: SPPS.

### COMMON CORE ELA STANDARD-BASED COPLANNING TEMPLATE

Date:	Class:	Collaborative Teachers:
Common Core Standards Addressed		
Learning Objectives (Content/Language)		
Activities/Tasks (Rigor and Engagement)		
Resources and Materials		
Technology Integration		
Accommodations/Modifications		
Assessment Procedures		
Reflections/Special Notes		