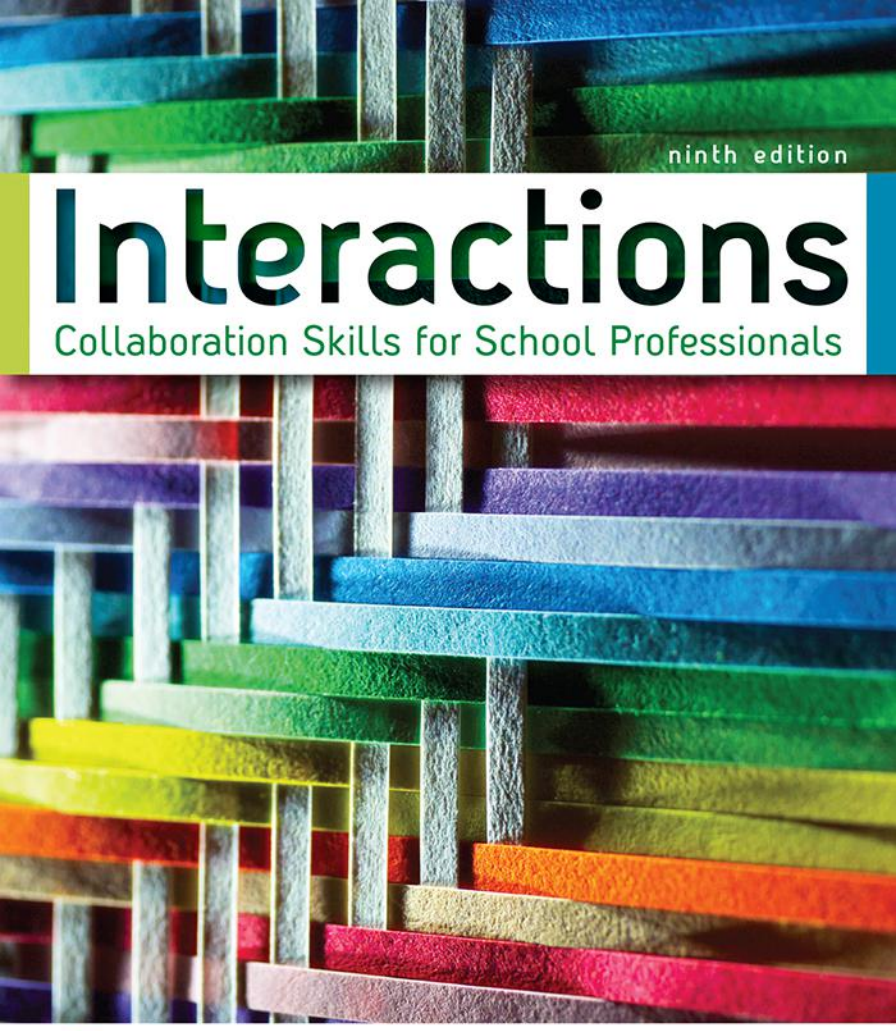

ninth edition

Interactions

Collaboration Skills for School Professionals

Marilyn Friend

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Collaboration Skills for School Professionals

Ninth Edition

Marilyn Friend
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (Emerita)

Pearson

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With fond memory of Fred Weintraub (1942–2014) and Lynne Cook (1947–2015), who loved each other and life; who both fought illness but couldn't win; and who, separately and together, changed in an immeasurably positive way the lives of children with disabilities and their teachers.

Preface

When the first edition of *Interactions* was published, collaboration was an emerging consideration in schools, largely a curiosity. It was often associated with special education procedures, and it was offered as a promising option for teachers whose work generally was completed in isolation. How much schools have changed since then! Professionals now understand well that their goal of effectively and efficiently reaching all their students is a shared effort that provides opportunities for constructive problem solving, mutual learning, healthy disagreement, and essential self-analysis. That is, successful schools now are strongly grounded in collaboration.

The evolution of collaboration in education is not surprising: Schools generally reflect larger societal trends, and collaboration continues to expand as a defining characteristic of modern society. As the world becomes increasingly complex but at the same time ever smaller because of instant worldwide communication, professionals in virtually every discipline have realized that there is simply too much to know and understand, too much to complete and accomplish for individuals to succeed in isolation. This assertion is confirmed by a web search on collaborative practices, a review of innumerable books offering advice on creating and sustaining a collaborative workplace, and scholarly articles that build the knowledge base on how individuals interact. Collaboration is everywhere, and it is presented as the most effective strategy for reaching meaningful goals.

It is within this education and broader societal context that this ninth edition of *Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals* is offered. This new edition reflects the continued changes in the priorities for education based on federal mandates as well as practitioner trends, and it is grounded in the real-life experiences of school professionals. Mostly, this edition of *Interactions* is a testament to the centrality of working together in today's schools.

New to This Edition

Whenever this book is revised, the goal is to make it better by updating critical information, eliminating information deemed less important, and addressing questions and concerns that have been raised by those teaching from it and those reading it. For this ninth edition, these are several of the most significant revisions:

- Collaboration with parents has always been a priority for school professionals, and *Interactions* has had a chapter about working with parents across several editions. For the ninth edition, however, this chapter was extensively revised in response to reviewers' suggestions. Chapter 11 directly outlines dimensions of diversity in family structure, and it more clearly incorporates real-world interactions with parents and families, realistically addresses challenges that can arise, and emphasizes the importance of respect for diversity when teaming with family members.
- Another topic frequently mentioned as needing focused attention is collaboration with paraeducators. In this edition, Chapter 10 specifically addresses paraeducators, and this chapter was significantly revised with an emphasis on practical information about appropriate tasks and responsibilities for paraeducators, ways to build a strong collaborative relationship with paraeducators, and issues that sometimes arises in working with these valuable personnel.
- Diversity has always been a critical factor in professional collaboration, and the extent to which educators understand the many facets of diversity and recognize how it affects interactions can determine whether collaboration is successful. Each chapter has been reviewed specifically for attention to diversity, and revisions were made to highlight coverage of this topic. For example, in Chapter 1 the diversity of family structures is introduced, and this topic is expanded in Chapter 11. The importance of consideration of culture is also emphasized as part of shared problem solving (Chapter 5) and community collaboration (Chapter 12).
- Each chapter of this book begins with a case study that is revisited at the conclusion of the chapter. Several of these have been updated in order to illustrate situations common in today's schools and to demonstrate how the use of collaboration skills can affect interaction outcomes.
- Although the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has not been reauthorized since the last edition of this book, the general education law—now called the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—has been changed, and it includes the expectation that schools will use a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) to screen for student progress and intervene to prevent failure. This highly collaborative process is clearly outlined, and examples of its implementation are used to illustrate collaboration concepts at several points in the book.
- Technology is an expected part of today's textbooks. One key element of *Interactions* is a completely updated set of video clips, embedded in the margins at the relevant place in the text, that illustrate points being made, and demonstrate the do's and don'ts of effective communication. These hyperlinks are called Learn More About.
- Every chapter in *Interactions* was thoroughly reviewed as part of this revision, and those who have previously used the book will notice that a significant number of

examples, illustrative vignettes, and end-of-chapter activities have been updated in order to ensure the applications of key collaboration concepts are relevant to today's school professionals.

- Also updated in every chapter is the research and scholarly base for the topics covered. These changes demonstrate the growing importance of collaboration and the efforts being made to deeply understand it. Across the book, more than 400 new references are included.
- End-of-chapter quizzes have been updated so that they accurate reflect the changes that have been made in the content of the text.

These are not the only changes made to enhance the quality and timeliness of *Interactions*. Language has been revised so that it is consistent with today's educators, and up-to-date technology resources and applications have been included. New examples have been added that reflect the realities of today's schools. The goal of these changes is to present a realistic picture of the collaborative challenges that professionals may encounter in their jobs, while simultaneously providing practical ways to respond to them. We sincerely hope you will find the entire package of revisions helpful.

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Interactions is available for the first time as a Pearson eText. The affordable, convenient, interactive version of this text includes tools to help navigate and understand important, current content.

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Overview of the Book

Each edition of *Interactions* has been carefully written to include a balanced amount of theory and related conceptual principles as well as practical examples, cases, and applied activities. The same is true for the ninth edition. It is written specifically to enable readers to quickly use in their professional settings the knowledge and skills they acquire. The intent for the book to be a useful tool for preservice educators and practitioners in improving their skills and deepening their understanding, whether they are engaged in formal instructional settings, study groups, or independent study. The examples are not intended to be comprehensive. Instead, they were prepared so that readers could use the concepts they illustrate and apply them to their own interactions. Moreover, because many situations are complex with numerous variations and outcomes, I have tried to avoid being prescriptive and instead present possibilities, while still allowing the reader to think critically about alternatives.

My late colleague Lynne Cook and I had the good fortune over many years of working and learning with talented teachers, administrators, parents, paraprofessionals, and providers of related services as they developed collaboration skills and specific applications of collaboration. We benefited immensely from our interactions with these diverse educators who are implementing collaborative practices; of that learning is reflected in the pages of this ninth edition of *Interactions*. Specifically, the core information about collaboration concepts and applications has been maintained, some material from the eighth edition has been significantly revised (as noted previously), a few topics that have dropped as priorities in today's schools have been omitted, and the practical applications of the textbook's ideas have been augmented.

Chapter 1 presents a conceptual foundation for understanding collaborative interactions and activities as well as the settings and structures that support them. In this chapter, collaboration is defined, and its benefits and risks are highlighted. In addition, *collaboration* is distinguished from other terms that are sometimes used interchangeably with it, and the development of collaboration as it relates to special education is explored, including the current trend to educate students with disabilities and other special needs in general education classrooms. Also included is the twenty-first century context of collaboration as it pertains to fields beyond education.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 introduce the communication skills on which effective collaboration rests. Chapters 2 and 3 outline the context for communication and specific skills that enable professional to communicate with precision so that they achieve their interaction goals. Chapter 4 provides an integrated structure for learning and applying communication skills by focusing on the topic of interviewing.

Chapter 5 builds from the communication skills by introducing the key interaction process in which those skills are used, and the most central process in professional collaboration: group problem solving. It draws on but is

differentiated from professional skills for individual problem solving. Most educational collaborative applications involve some type of problem-solving process; therefore, the information in this chapter is integral to all the chapters that follow. It should be noted that this chapter also provides detailed information on multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), a specialized application of the problem-solving process.

The next three chapters of *Interactions* explore school programs, services, and applications in which success relies heavily on collaboration. Chapter 6 addresses the topic of teaming, including ideas for establishing and maintaining teams and problem solving to help teams work efficiently. Teaming is addressed in a pragmatic manner that emphasizes the nature of teams and how to make them function effectively as well as what to do when problems arise. Chapter 7 explores the topic of co-teaching, the service delivery option in which two educators share instructional responsibility in a single classroom. Among this group of chapters, this one signals more than any other the evolution of and increased interest in professional collaboration, and it has been updated to reflect the most recent trends related to this instructional arrangement. Suggestions for setting up co-teaching programs, specific information about how such arrangements should function, and the role of specially designed instruction in shared classrooms are provided, as are ideas for the universal co-teaching issue: the need for common planning time. Chapter 8 presents indirect service models, including consultation, coaching, and mentoring. Emphasis is placed not only on guidelines for providing these services but also, because many early career educators will work with professional assigned to such roles, on strategies to effectively receive them.

Chapter 9 deals with awkward and adversarial interactions by focusing on both conflict and resistance. Strategies such as negotiation and persuasion are emphasized. These require the use of many of the interactive processes and communication skills addressed in the previous interpersonal communication and problem-solving sections of the text. Further, as professionals begin implementing the collaborative approaches from the preceding three chapters, the value of the information in this chapter quickly becomes apparent.

Chapter 10 represents a shift to a different dimension of collaboration: the unique circumstances of role-specific collaboration. It focuses on the paraeducators' contributions in providing services to students with special needs. This chapter directly addresses appropriate and inappropriate roles for paraeducators, professionals' responsibilities for supervising the work of paraeducators, and issues that may arise when paraeducators are part of an educational team. Practical ideas for interactions with this valuable group of educators is a central theme for this chapter.

Chapter 11 considers in detail the nature of professional interactions with parents and families, including those that are traditional and those that represent the diversity of today's society. The chapter reminds educators of the history as well as the current roles of families in the education of students with disabilities and other special needs, and it provides an overview of family systems theory. It stresses strategies for effectively interacting with family members, with particular emphasis on families from diverse cultural groups. More than anything, this chapter focuses on how to ensure that family members are truly partners in educational decision making for their children.

Chapter 12 is a chapter that addresses collaboration topics mentioned in other chapters but gathered here for emphasis and reflection. The topics included are these: (a) interagency collaboration; (b) the impact of professionals' roles and responsibilities on collaboration; (c) systemic barriers to collaboration in education; and (d) ethical issues that sometimes arise as part of collaboration. We believe this chapter provides an opportunity for additional reflection on significant topics and together they form a figurative exclamation point for the book on the critical need for collaboration among those providing services to students with disabilities and other special needs.

The features in the ninth edition include most of those from previous editions of *Interactions*, and others have been revised. The features include the following:

Collaboration framework graphic. At the opening of each chapter is a graphic that depicts five components of collaboration and their relationship to one another. The components consist of personal commitment; communication skills; interaction processes; programs, applications, or services; and context. These are components of the framework described in Chapter 1. The components most relevant to the content of each chapter are highlighted in the icons at its opening.

Connections. Each chapter begins with a section entitled Connections, which is designed to assist the reader in understanding how the specific chapter content relates to material in other chapters and to the overall goals and organization of the book.

Learning Outcomes. Each Connections section is followed by Learner Outcomes, which inform the reader about the main purposes of the chapter; generally, one objective is written for each major section of a chapter. The objectives also help the reader set expectations for what he or she will be able to do after studying the chapter.

A Case for Collaboration. Instructors have shared with us that realistic cases, in which professional candidates can apply what they are learning, are particularly effective learning tools. Thus, each chapter includes a case designed to encourage this application. The case is introduced at the beginning of the chapter, and it is referred to several times as relevant concepts are introduced. This strategy provides a mechanism for ongoing class discussion of the material.

Back to the Case. Based on instructor feedback, we have kept this feature. At the conclusion of each chapter, readers are directed back to the introductory case and asked several questions that enable them to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired through their reading, class discussions, review of supplemental materials, and so on. This feature brings full circle the learning of chapter content.

Photographs. In this ninth edition, photographs are inserted to illustrate collaboration in action.

Case materials. Brief case descriptions and vignettes occur throughout the text to illustrate relevant concepts and principles. These often include descriptions of specific school situations and extended dialog between professionals or parents. The goal is to bring the concepts and skills to life for professional candidates.

Learn More About. Each chapter includes an array of video clips, web sites, and other linked material that supports the topics being addressed. Items in this feature often include questions or explanations to extend readers' thinking about a topic.

Apply Your Knowledge. At least two (and usually three) linked quizzes are part of each chapter. Located at the conclusion of major chapter sections, these brief assessments enable readers to apply what they have just studied. The assessments are another means of encouraging readers to reflect on what they are learning and to incorporate information into their own collaboration.

Putting Ideas into Practice. In each chapter, additional elaboration of concepts or skills practice is offered in Putting Ideas into Practice. These features are another means of making written ideas come to life for application in real school settings.

A Basis in Research. A research base is developing in the area of collaboration, and research-based practices are increasingly necessary. A Basis in Research, with many updated studies presented in this ninth edition, highlights pertinent research findings related to the topics addressed in each chapter.

E-Partnerships. Given the rapidly growing use of technology across disciplines and across topics, electronic collaboration must receive considerable attention in this book. In every chapter, you will find a feature that addresses a technology application. Some are familiar to most; others may stretch readers' experience in the world of electronic collaboration.

Summary. Each chapter concludes with a bullet-point summary in which the major points addressed in the chapter are recapped; the points are based on the major chapter sections. The summaries are intended to assist readers in reviewing their understanding of the chapter's primary concepts.

Collaborative Activities. Application items are found at the end of each chapter. Consideration has been given to the very real need for candidates to be able to address the activities during a class session without accessing outside resources, and most can be completed within that constraint. Many of these exercises may also be used as out-of-class or independent assignments.

End of Chapter Quiz. The final item in each chapter is a quiz accessed through a hyperlink. These quizzes span all the topics addressed in the chapter and are intended as an overall check on reader understanding.

This text is accompanied by an **Online Instructor's Manual and Testbank** and **Online PowerPoint Presentation**, both accessible to you at the Instructor's Resource Center at http://www.pearsonhighered.com. To access the IMTB and online PowerPoint slides, go to http://www.pearsonhighered.com and click on the Instructor's Resource button. Here you will be able to log in or complete a one-time registration for a username and password. The IMTB chapter outlines, additional activities and cases, and a test bank. It provides many more resources for teaching about collaboration than can be placed within the pages of the book itself.

My greatest hope is that this ninth edition of *Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals* is useful to you and that you enjoy reading it. I firmly believe that collaboration is the foundation on which successful contemporary public schools are based, as well as the most effective means to provide services to students with disabilities and other special needs. If you are reading this material as a teacher, teacher candidate, or other preprofessional, my hope is that this edition of *Interactions* helps you further understand collaboration as it occurs in your workplace and enables you to refine your skills as a collaborative educator. If you are an instructor, I hope you find the revisions we have made useful as you prepare professionals for the high-pressure, complex world of today's schools. And if you have suggestions, they are welcomed.

Acknowledgments

The material in this book is a deliberate mix of the technical and scholarly literature on collaboration from a variety of disciplines as well as the real-world stories that we hear from teachers, administrators, family members, related services personnel, and teacher candidates. Although the former information is essential and establishes the validity of the topics presented, it is the latter that breathes life into this book. And so, a sincere thanks to all the school professionals and family members who explained, with satisfaction or dismay, their experiences in working with others in school and related settings. It is their wisdom and insights about what it takes to make collaboration a reality that enables us to offer practical examples and exercises in *Interactions*. Thank you for all you have taught us.

We are also indebted to our colleagues who teach coursework on collaboration and who engage us in fascinating discussions on topics related to contemporary education, whether in panel presentations at conference sessions or over cocktails after the day's professional work is concluded. As we write and edit, we are frequently using your thoughts to guide our own. Even though we cannot name all of you, we hope you see your perspectives reflected in this edition and know of our appreciation.

I would also like to acknowledge the following colleagues who provided professional reviews of the eighth edition of *Interactions* to make suggestions for the ninth edition: Thank-you for your thorough reviews and for the detailed analyses you provided. Although it is not possible to make every change suggested by every reviewer, as part of the revision, each review is thoroughly read, and key points are summarized. Themes are identified, and those become priorities for change. I hope that you can see your influence in the ninth edition; your wisdom is a key to a successful revision.

The publishing industry has been evolving rapidly, and the remarkable professionals at Pearson are a godsend in ensuring that *Interactions* is completed in a timely manner and with all essential components. Several individuals deserve a grateful callout for their guidance, encouragement, patience, and advice. Kevin Davis, senior editor (now retired), has an extraordinary ability to take a big-picture view of a book and make recommendations about how to improve key aspects of the book. His dedication to making the book all that it can be is always on display, and his constructive suggestions and positive approach was instrumental in creating the ninth edition of *Interactions*. I also want to profusely thank Alicia Reilly. She has been a partner ii most of the editions of this book, and she often goes far beyond her specific responsibilities of working with the interactive elements of the books to help in many other ways. She combines careful attention to detail, gentle reminders about deadlines, direct communication when something is amiss (like overdue chapters), and all the positive support and patience that any author could hope for. In addition, Patricia Walcott of Integra Software Services shepherded *Interactions* through production, a complex process that requires attention to the myriad details (from missing features to line spacing errors, to problems with the color palette of figures, to a thousand other items) that must be addressed in order to go from manuscript to final product. Sincere thanks go to her for keeping in close touch, responding to my many comments on the copyedited manuscript and page proofs, and repeatedly demonstrating that she was juggling all the parts of production capably and patiently.

Finally, many books—and this one for sure—have ghost authors, otherwise called family members. My husband Bruce regularly says he will help in whatever way he can, and sometimes that means making sure that the hours for writing are available, sometimes it means lending an ear because saying something out loud is part of deciding how to solve a problem, and sometimes it means showing infinite patience and humor when the writing is slow and inspiration has taken its leave. Thanks is an inadequate word; you make this book possible. And then there are other family members and friends … they are too many to name, but I cannot understate the importance of their direct and indirect input, whether it is listening to a passage, offering an opinion on how to write about a particular topic, or being available to take a walk or go out for dinner as a break from the work at hand. Thank you so much for all your support.

Marilyn Friend

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Chapter 1

Foundations and Perspectives

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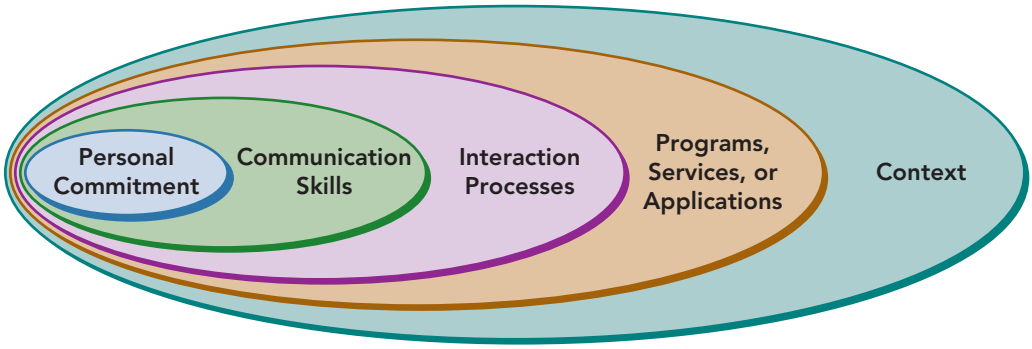

CONNECTIONS

In today's fast-paced and complex educational context, collaboration has become a necessity. To the extent that teachers, administrators, and other school professionals are skillful in their interactions with each other, as well as with parents and others, they are likely to succeed in creating a supportive learning environment that enables students to reach their potential. Chapter 1 begins your journey of the study of collaboration and lays the groundwork for all the information covered in subsequent chapters; in fact, you may find as you read those chapters that it is helpful to refer back to the concepts outlined here. Specifically, in the pages that follow you will learn what collaboration is (and is not) and how it fits into a broader societal context. You will also find out about the increasing attention collaboration is receiving throughout education, as well as some of the challenges educators face as their collaborative responsibilities increase and become more multi-dimensional. Finally, you will be introduced to a framework for studying collaboration that serves as the organizational structure for this textbook.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Define *collaboration* and describe its critical characteristics, distinguishing it from related but distinctly different concepts.
2. Outline the importance of collaboration from a broad societal perspective, including its place in disciplines such as business, health, and human services.
3. Analyze the place of collaboration within contemporary schools, given the expectations set by current legislation and reform initiatives and including formal and informal collaborative practices and those specific to special education.
4. Discuss challenges that may arise as educators' collaborative responsibilities expand.
5. Describe a framework for studying collaboration.

A Case for Collaboration

A Day in the Life . . .

The Madison Independent School District is in the midst of many efforts to improve academic outcomes for its students. All of those efforts include an emphasis on collaboration among its staff members, between district and school staff members, and with parents and community members. At the district level, administrators meet regularly, and any committee formed to make curricular or program decisions includes representatives from special education, gifted/talented services, and English learner (EL) programs. Administrators are participating in ongoing professional development designed to increase their knowledge and skills for fostering leadership among their teachers and building a strong sense of community in their schools. At the school level, principals are held accountable for fostering a collaborative culture in their schools. Here are examples of professionals' typical days and their collaborative roles.

Ms. Williams is a middle school social studies teacher. In addition to her daily teaching duties, she is a member of her school's leadership team, and so today she attends a team meeting from 7:30 to 8:15 a.m. to discuss several issues, including the priorities for next year's staff development plan. At lunch, Ms. Williams arranges to meet with Mr. Newby, the school psychologist, to discuss the needs of a student who recently arrived unaccompanied from Guatemala and who is demonstrating many acting-out behaviors that she is concerned are escalating. Ms. Williams knows the upcoming field trip will be the primary topic for discussion during her team preparation period, a meeting that occurs every other day, and during her individual preparation period she needs to call two parents, one to thank for supporting at home an intervention that is having a positive effect on classroom behavior and one to follow up on a concern about homework. After school, she plans to meet with the assistant principal, Mr. Robinson, to discuss the peer tutoring program the university interns would like to establish.

Mr. Garcia is a second-year student support teacher (SST), the formal title for special educators in the district. He begins each day at Hawthorne High School by touching base with his colleagues in the math department and completing paperwork relating to monitoring student progress. Once classes begin at 7:50 a.m., he spends the morning co-teaching two sections of Algebra I and teaching one section of a study skills class that has a math emphasis. During his preparation period, he meets with two students and the counselor about problems the students are experiencing in their classes. He also prepares directions for the paraprofessional assigned to support Matt, a student with significant physical disabilities. In the afternoon, Mr. Garcia facilitates an annual review and transition planning meeting for one of the students on his caseload. After school, he meets briefly with Ms. Young, the social studies teacher with whom he co-chairs the school's multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) team. Mr. Garcia considers himself an advocate for students, and he finds that he must pay close attention to the personalities of the teachers with whom he works; if he establishes a strong working relationship with them, students are the beneficiaries.

Mrs. Lee is an instructional coach at Fairview Elementary School. Her primary responsibility is to assist teachers, especially those in the first two years of their teaching careers, to refine their instructional practices so as to increase student achievement. Her job usually does not include directly teaching students unless it is to model a technique or demonstrate a strategy. Thus, Mrs. Lee spends her time observing in classrooms, meeting with teachers individually and in small groups to plan instruction and reflect on lessons already delivered, advising the principal about needs she identifies related to instruction, conducting staff development on specific strategies and approaches, and analyzing and sharing data with school staff members. She also works closely with the school's parent advisory group to help families foster student learning at home.

Introduction

Of all the complex tasks facing educators today, none is as demanding or as critical as creating a school culture of collaboration because it is this type of a deeply collegial foundation that enables all the other work of educators to be successful. To accomplish this goal, each

person who works in schools must have the disposition, knowledge, and skills to collaborate. For example, each of the professionals just described in A Case for Collaboration has adult–adult interactions as a significant day-to-day job component. Ms. Williams, whose primary responsibility is instruction, is also expected to work with colleagues and parents. Half of Mr. Garcia's teaching is co-teaching, occurring in partnership with general education teachers in that setting. Mrs. Lee's job illustrates today's emphasis on improving student outcomes; school leaders have realized that teachers need support in their classrooms in order to ensure that all students access the general curriculum and reach high standards. Thus, Mrs. Lee is tasked with the highly collaborative process of coaching teachers. Taken together, these professional interactions illustrate three critical points for understanding the premise of this text.

First, collaboration has become an integral part of today's schools (e.g., Butera & Martinez, 2014; Hadfield & Ainscow, 2018; Rosenfield, Newell, Zwolski, & Benishek, 2018). In the past, educators who were not very effective in working with other adults were often excused with a comment such as, "But she's really good with students." Although working effectively with students obviously is still the most important aspect of educators' jobs, it is not enough. Everyone in schools—including special and general education teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, related services providers, and other specialists—needs the knowledge and skills to work with one another and parents (DeWitt, 2018; Stearns, Banerjee, Mickelson, & Moller, 2014). This is true in early childhood programs, in elementary schools, and in middle schools and high schools. It is true in schools that are still regarded as traditional in terms of programs and services, as well as in those leading the way in educational innovation. Part of the reason for the importance of collaboration is the general trend of expanding and increasingly complex responsibilities, which are more realistically addressed when professionals pool their talents (e.g., DuFour & Reeves, 2016; Sparks, 2013; Supovitz & Sirinides, 2018). Another part of it is legislation setting high standards for academic achievement and clear accountability systems for all students (e.g., Eslinger, 2014; Smithson, 2017), and an additional part of it is the continued trend toward inclusive practices (Hedegaard-Soerensen, Jensen, & Tofteng, 2018; Thew, 2014).

Second, examples of professionals' collaborative activities demonstrate that such interactions occur both formally and informally (Woodland & Mazur, 2019). School leadership teams, middle school teams, co-teaching teams, professional learning communities, teams that meet to discuss students who are struggling to learn, and consultative meetings are representative of the growth of formal structures and activities in schools that rely on collaboration for success. Models emphasizing collaboration such as these are described in detail later in this text. Meetings between teachers to respond to immediate student needs and phone calls to parents are examples of informal collaboration. Both types of collaboration are important. However, informal collaboration often occurs whether or not a context for collaboration has been fostered and whether or not any formal structures for collaboration are in place. Formal collaboration typically requires that strong leadership has ensured that a collaborative school culture—one that values collegial interactions—has been created (e.g., Berg, 2018).

Third, this text is based on the belief that collaboration is the common thread in many current initiatives for school reform (Greene & McShane, 2018; Nguyen & Hunter, 2018; Weiss & Friesen, 2014). Collaboration is crucial as educators move to implement MTSS practices, differentiate instruction, meet standards of accountability for student achievement as measured through high-stakes testing, and design and implement local professional development strategies (Barrett & Newman, 2018; Murphy, 2018; Sun, Penuel, Frank, Gallagher, & Youngs, 2013). Likewise, collaboration is crucial as professionals work with the parents and families of their increasingly diverse student groups (e.g., DeMatthews, 2018). An initial illustration of this point is captured in Putting Ideas into Practice, which explores common family structures and ways educators can ensure they effectively interact with family members, topics addressed in detail in Chapter 11. Collaboration is also part of special education through initial referral and assessment procedures, individualized education program (IEP) development, service delivery approaches, conflict resolution, and parent participation (e.g., Rossetti, Sauer, Bui, & Ou, 2017).

Learn More About

This compelling video clip summarizes the power of collaboration in schools. What do you think are the most important points made?

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85HUMHBXJf4)

Putting Ideas into Practice

Working with Diverse Families

Collaborating with the parents and family members of your students is one of your first responsibilities as a professional educator, and doing this requires an understanding of the diversity and needs they represent (Dor, 2018). In the past the concept of *family* usually implied a mother, father, and children, but now many different family structures have been identified (Sharma, 2013). Although this is not a comprehensive list, some family structures educators should be familiar with include these (Stallworth, 2019):

- *Nuclear families*, consisting of two parents and their children within that relationship
- *Single-parent families,* with one parent and his or her children
- *Blended families*, in which parents have children from other relationships
- *Extended families,* comprising parents, children, and other individuals (e.g., relatives, close friends)
- *Multigenerational families*, in which grandparents, great-grandparents, or other relatives care for children
- *Foster families,* which may follow other family structures but are unique in that they usually are temporary

SOURCE: Stallworth, M. (2019). Different family structures: Relationships-issues-provisions. Monroeville, AL: Author.

As a professional educator, you can enhance your interactions with diverse families by using strategies such as the following (Ray, 2005):

1. Be sure to know the correct surname of every parent, regardless of the family structure.
2. Avoid language that implies that "family" refers only to traditional family structure.
3. Regardless of family structure, offer information to parents or caregivers on their children's strengths and abilities.
4. Avoid making requests that may place parents in an uncomfortable position related to time or money. Some families cannot afford to contribute materials for classrooms, and some parents cannot come to conferences during typical school hours or on a specific day; therefore, options and alternatives should be offered.
5. Remember that projects and activities that presume students are part of a traditional family may not be appropriate. For example, alternatives should be found to creating a family tree and making Mother's Day gifts.
6. In some cases—for example, when grandparents or great-grandparents are raising children—you may need to explain school procedures if these caregivers are unfamiliar with them.

Most important, all educators should reflect on their own beliefs about nontraditional families and set aside any assumptions they may have about them. Being positive with students and families and being alert to and stopping teasing or bullying of students from these families are your responsibilities as a professional educator.

SOURCE: Julie A. Ray (2005) Family-Friendly Teachers: Tips for Working with Diverse Families, Kappa Delta Pi Record, 41:2, 72-76, DOI: 10.1080/00228958.2005.10532048

This book, then, is about effective interactions. It presents the universal concepts, principles, skills, and strategies that all school professionals—regardless of their roles and responsibilities—can use to enhance their shared efforts to educate their students. Although slight variations in practice may occur related to one's specific area of expertise (general education teacher, special educator, speech/language therapist, or administrator), learning about collaboration generally is an area that truly brings educators together.

Collaboration Concepts

The term *collaboration* is something of an educational buzzword. One can easily get the sense that collaboration is viewed as the preferred approach in nearly any school situation. It is touted as the mechanism through which school reform can be accomplished

Figure 1.1 Some of the Many Misunderstandings About Collaboration in Schools

From left: 41/Shutterstock, Ashwin/Shutterstock, kurhan/Shutterstock, vgstudio/Shutterstock, Christian Schwier/Fotolia.com

(Ash & D'Auria, 2013; Bingham & Burch, 2017) and the instrument through which diverse student needs can be met (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2019; Kangas, 2018). Principals are admonished to use a collaborative leadership style (e.g., Berg, 2018), and teachers are encouraged to use collaboration to improve student outcomes (e.g., Ertesvåg, 2014; Ford & Youngs, 2018). Unfortunately, the term *collaboration* often is carelessly used and occasionally misapplied, as suggested in Figure 1.1.

Despite all the current attention on collaboration, so many definitions of the term have been proposed that the result often has been confusion about its character and implementation. In fact, some dictionary definitions of *collaboration* include reference to treason or working together for sinister purposes! In education literature and practice, you may find that *collaboration* either is used as a synonym for related but distinctly different concepts addressed elsewhere in this book—including teaming, consultation, co-teaching, and inclusion—or is not defined at all beyond a sense of working together (e.g., Kampwirth & Powers, 2016; Pugach, Johnson, Drame, & Williamson, 2012). Because we firmly believe that a precise understanding of the term *collaboration* is far more than semantics, we begin by carefully defining it. Knowing what collaboration is and is not and how it applies to school initiatives and other applications can help you articulate your practices, set appropriate expectations for yourself, and positively influence others to interact collaboratively.

Definition

The term *collaboration* is used frequently in casual conversation, but it also has a technical definition that establishes it as a specific professional concept:

> Interpersonal collaboration is a style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal.

Notice that we call collaboration a *style*. In the same way that writers use various styles to convey information to readers so, too, do individuals use interpersonal styles or approaches in their interactions with one another. Some professionals may choose to be directive when they interact, others may choose to be accommodative or facilitative, and still others may choose to be collaborative. At first glance, referring to collaboration as a style may appear to detract from its significance by equating it with something ephemeral

and seemingly lacking in substance. However, using this definition enables you to distinguish the nature of the interpersonal relationship occurring during shared interactions—that is, collaboration—from the activities themselves, such as teaming, problem solving, or co-teaching.

As just implied, because collaboration is a style of interaction, it does exist in isolation. It can occur only when it is used by people who are engaged in a specific process, task, or activity. To clarify this point, consider the following: If colleagues mentioned to you that they were collaborating, would you know what they were doing? Probably not. They could be collaboratively discussing strategies for supporting a student who has just enrolled at the school, sharing the responsibilities for an academic lesson in a co-teaching arrangement, or planning an interdisciplinary unit. What the term *collaboration* conveys is *how* the activity is occurring—that is, the nature of the interpersonal relationship occurring during the interaction and the ways in which individuals are communicating with one another. Think about this in relation to Ms. Williams, Mr. Garcia, and Mrs. Lee from the opening of the chapter. In what activities are they engaged? Are these activities likely candidates for collaboration?

Defining Characteristics of Collaboration

Considered alone, this definition only hints at the subtleties of collaboration. In analyses available in the professional literature (e.g., Cook & Friend, 2010; Friend, 2019; Friend & Barron, 2015), collaboration with colleagues in university and other professional settings, and experience facilitating the collaboration of others, several elements of collaboration have been identified that are referred to as *defining characteristics*, as they more fully explain the basic definition.

COLLABORATION IS VOLUNTARY It is not possible to force people to use a particular style in their interactions with others. States may pass legislation, school districts may adopt policies, and principals may implement programs, but unless school professionals and their colleagues choose to collaborate, they will not do so. Perhaps the best illustration of this notion is the increasingly common mandate that professionals collaborate in designing and implementing programs for students with special needs in general education classes. If you are familiar with a school where this expectation is in place, you probably are also aware that some teachers are unwilling to collaborate, regardless of the mandate. For example, a teacher may spend a significant amount of time complaining about the demands of teaching certain students, apparently unaware that this is time that otherwise could be spent collaboratively designing instruction to foster these students' success. If that individual attends meetings as required but undermines the reading specialist's, EL teacher's, or special educator's efforts to support students, he or she is not collaborating in the sense outlined in this chapter. The professional relationship is constrained, the students are still in the classroom, and the specialist or special educator bears most of the responsibility for making accommodations. Similarly, a specialist or special educator may repeatedly express doubts that student needs can be addressed in a general education setting. If this time were spent designing and carefully implementing strategies for supporting students, the concern could be addressed with data that would support or refute it.

Alternatively, a professional unsure about inclusive practices—whether a special educator, a general educator, a bilingual educator or EL teacher, or another professional—can express anxiety and uncertainty, but that person may also work closely and constructively with others to support students with special needs. In essence, schools and other education agencies can mandate administrative arrangements that require staff to work in close proximity, but only the individuals involved can decide whether a collaborative style will be used in their interactions. A succinct way to remember the voluntariness characteristic of collaboration is this: There is no such thing as collaboration by coercion.

Does this mean that people cannot collaborate if programs are mandated? Not at all. Consider the situation at Jefferson High School, where general education teachers have been notified that each department will have collaborative planning time for the upcoming school year and will be expected to develop common assessments, implement consistent