Collaboration in Kansas special education classrooms

# Collaboration with professionals increases student success

“Collaboration with general education teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff is necessary to support students’ learning toward measurable outcomes and to facilitate students’ social and emotional well-being across all school environments and instructional settings. Collaboration with individuals or teams requires the use of effective collaboration behaviors (e.g., sharing ideas, active listening, questioning, planning, problem solving, negotiating) to develop and adjust instructional or behavioral plans based on student data, and the coordination of expectations, responsibilities, and resources to maximize student learning.” (McLeskey, J., et al., 2017 *High-leverage practices in special education.* Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children & CEEDAR Center)



What does that look like in Kansas classrooms? Molly Mosher and Rachael Zabokrtsky, teachers at Junction City Middle School support 18 students in their Adaptive Communication and Social Skills classroom and manage 12 paraprofessionals. Here, they share their 10 tips for supporting each other, their staff, and, most importantly, their students and families.

1. Begin conversations, planning and discussions early (before the school year begins)!
2. Establish classroom norms with input from all staff.
3. Seek student-focused, rather than adult-focused, decisions and strategies.
4. Make student independence the goal that guides the team.
5. Present a “joint front.” Both teachers are involved with planning and decision making for all students and seek input from each other when answering questions of parents, classroom staff members or related service providers.
6. Respond to disagreements or challenges with open, honest discussion.
7. Lobby for collaborative plan time and use it!
8. Share resources and seek continued professional development.
9. Commit to spending time outside the regular school day to plan and prepare.
10. Know that it’s ok to say, “I don’t know” and seek answers together.

Notice their photo above. It’s unplanned, but they’ve showed up in their classrooms more than once wearing identical clothing. What’s also unplanned, but not unusual is their smiles. Effective collaboration is the foundation for a culture and climate that supports success for everyone!

Learn more about collaboration as a high-leverage practice [here](https://highleveragepractices.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Collaborationshort.pdf) and on the [TASN ATBS resource page on collaboration](https://ksdetasn.org/atbs/collaboration).

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