Conversations with Practitioners

SUPPORTING STATE-LEVEL COLLABORATION AMONG GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATORS

CENTER ON INSTRUCTION

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SUPPORTING STATE-LEVEL COLLABORATION AMONG GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATORS

Sarojani S. Mohammed, Christy S. Murray, Meghan A. Coleman,
Greg Roberts, Catherine N. Grim
The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk
at The University of Texas at Austin

CENTER ON INSTRUCTION

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PREFACE

Since 2007, the Center on Instruction (COI), eight states, and seven Regional Comprehensive Centers (RCCs) have collaborated on a project designed to learn how state departments of education, along with their RCCs, are supporting a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework.

The group began in 2008[1] by developing guidance and recommendations for those embarking on large-scale implementation or support of RTI and writing a report, *Conversations with Practitioners: Current Practice in Statewide RTI Implementation*[2].

On the recommendation of the working group, COI created a second, related RTI resource called *RTI CTRL: Response to Intervention Classification Tool and Resource Locator*[3]. This web-based tool contains an RTI self-assessment for states and a resource filter for locating RTI-focused resources.

While the main focus of this work has been successful implementation or support of RTI at the state level, a critical theme resonated consistently throughout all of the group's conversations and writings: the importance of *collaboration between general and special educators*.

In January 2010, project participants[4] were joined by additional state and RCC representatives in a virtual meeting to explore collaboration theory and research, the relevance of collaboration to the work of state departments of education, and recommendations for fostering effective collaboration between general and special education. The work of the 29 participants—representing Regional Comprehensive Centers, Regional Resource Centers, states, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Center on Instruction—culminated in the development of a third document, essentially rounding out a trio of resources.

The present document, *Conversations with Practitioners: Supporting State-Level Collaboration among General and Special Educators,* is that third resource. The three documents owe a great debt of time and effort to the

[1] Meeting information available at: http://centeroninstruction.org/state-rti-implementation-meeting

[2] Document available at: http://centeroninstruction.org/conversations-with-practitioners-current-practice-in-statewide-rti-implementation---recommendations-and-frequently-asked-questions

[3] Tool available at: http://centeroninstruction.org/rti-ctrl-response-to-intervention-classification-tool-and-resource-locator

[4] A list of participants and readings from the January 2010 meeting can be found in Appendix A and on Handout 5 in Appendix B in this document.

ambitious, resourceful educators, technical assistance providers, and state administrators who recognized the importance of general and special education collaboration.

Any errors within are the authors' own.

INTRODUCTION

Many states have identified collaboration between general education and special education departments as crucial to the successful implementation of a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. Equally, the joint ownership of the RTI framework by all involved contributes to successful implementation. Regional Comprehensive Centers (RCCs) are therefore asked frequently to work with general and special education departments at the state level to help support healthy collaboration.

In the past (and sometimes still today), RTI has been viewed as either an exclusively general education or exclusively special education initiative or responsibility, which has hindered successful implementation. This "siloing" of divisions within a state department of education has been seen as a major barrier to successful RTI implementation (Mohammed, Roberts, Murray, & Vaughn, 2009).

In 2010, the Center on Instruction (COI) convened representatives from Regional Comprehensive Centers, Regional Resource Centers, and state departments of education to investigate what is known about supporting collaboration and how RCCs and states can use that knowledge. Participants discussed seven supports for collaboration and developed seven recommendations for fostering collaboration.

This document summarizes that meeting's conversation, including how to determine appropriate

About this document

This booklet has three main parts:

- *What is collaboration?*
- *Recommendations for supporting state-level collaboration*
- *Building capacity for collaboration*

Part one ***compares collaboration to other forms of active partnership*** *(cooperation and coordination) and encourages readers to consider which type of partnership is most appropriate for their situation.*

Part two ***describes seven recommendations*** *for fostering collaboration at the state level and illustrates them with examples of "collaboration in action." The recommendations are grounded in research-identified supports and are translated into actions that state departments can implement.*

Part three ***offers suggestions and tools*** *(in the form of handouts) to extend collaborative work within state departments of education.*

depths of partnership, and outlines the recommendations and examples generated. It aims to:

- increase the depth of RCC and state representatives' knowledge about collaboration (and how it differs from cooperation and coordination) and
- provide RCCs and states with practical guidance for fostering collaboration at the state level.

WHAT IS COLLABORATION?

The frequently used term *collaboration* has various meanings and applications according to the contexts and fields in which it is used. Gray and Wood (1991) define collaboration as "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" (p. 4). Others define it as a "mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals" (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001, p. 4).

Most agree that collaboration is a complex process but is only one of several approaches to working with others to achieve common goals.

Cooperation, coordination, and collaboration

Educators often use the words *collaboration, cooperation,* and *coordination* interchangeably without consideration of their subtle, but important, differences. Each term suggests a different level or depth in the relationship between or among partnering groups. Two important concepts about selecting the type of partnership needed to accomplish a goal are:

- cooperation and coordination are necessary for collaboration, but not enough to achieve it, and
- although collaboration is considered the most complex partnership option, other, less complex types of partnering may be sufficient to achieve the task at hand.

When partners *cooperate*, they provide information to each other as needed. They make decisions independently. They do not share goals, resources, or responsibilities (Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, & Tollefson, 2006; Mattessich & Monsey, 1992). For example, people at one state department of education might ask colleagues at another to explain how they address a common problem, and to share descriptions of their experiences and processes, as well as key materials.

When they *coordinate*, partners communicate frequently, establish compatible goals, and leverage resources together. They make some decisions together and occasionally share resources. While their goals might be

compatible, responsibilities for implementation remain separate (Frey et al., 2006; Mattessich & Monsey, 1992).

For example, departments within a state education agency (SEA) might create a coordination council, meeting regularly (e.g., quarterly) to offer updates, share helpful resources, encourage problem-solving, and reduce duplication of effort.

When partners *collaborate*, they interact frequently with the explicit goal of sharing decision-making to achieve mutual goals. They pool resources and share responsibilities. They brace the collaboration by establishing a common framework, a common language for communication, well-defined relationships, and mutual trust among members (Ehren, Laster, & Watts-Taffe, n.d.; Frey et al., 2006; Mattessich & Monsey, 1992).

For example, representatives from three departments of an SEA might work together to co-author a document that has policy implications for all three departments. Developing this guidance requires mutual decision-making, resources, goals, language, and trust among collaborative members.

Partnership in practice

The following behaviors illustrate the three kinds of partnership:

Cooperation

Effectively communicate and:

- *reach out in a helpful way,*
- *actively respond in a helpful way,*
- *assist and share, and*
- *follow through.*

Coordination

Effectively communicate, cooperate, and:

- *build intentional relationships,*
- *plan efforts and create synergy,*
- *produce action and collectively implement plans, and*
- *collectively review and report results.*

Collaboration

Effectively communicate, cooperate, coordinate, and:

- *equally and jointly work together intentionally and spontaneously,*
- *have intertwined layers of peer interaction,*
- *have opportunities for continuous dialogue and deliberation,*
- *provide information supported by facts, data, and scientifically based research,*
- *objectively inquire and critique, leading to new understandings and solutions,*
- *strategically plan and measure expected outcomes, progress, and results at the highest professional levels and within relevant legal requirements.*

Adapted from Hale & Rodin (in press)

Although collaboration is usually the most *complex* kind of partnership, it is not always the best partnership for every situation. Cooperative, coordinated, and collaborative partnerships have their own purposes, advantages, and disadvantages. In some circumstances, cooperating or coordinating with others will be more appropriate and useful than collaborating; and in every case, collaborating will involve beginning with and moving through initial stages of cooperating and coordinating (see Frey et al., 2006, and Biscoe, 2009, for more information on the development stages of collaboration).

Consideration of several factors can help when selecting a partnership mode: (a) the ultimate goal of the group(s), (b) the amount of resources each group can allocate, and (c) the amount of risk each is willing to assume. Figure 1 shows the benefits and costs of each partnership type.

Figure 1: Comparing cooperation, coordination, and collaboration

Pros	Cons
Cooperation	
• Requires little additional planning time • Requires little risk or restructuring of current roles	• Lack of input from other professionals • Duplication or contradictory actions and/or projects may occur
Coordination	
• Members communicate to reduce duplication or contradictory practices • Members share resources and goals	• Lack of shared decision making may result in low buy-in to the initiative • Decisions may not be relevant, feasible, or desirable for all
Collaboration	
• Shared decision making may lead to more buy-in to the initiative • Multiple perspectives may result in more effective implementation if roles and responsibilities are clear	• Requires additional time to build trust and to plan activities • Requires restructuring current roles or creating new ones • Decisions and actions may not be timely • Multiple perspectives may result in ineffective implementation (e.g., if accountability for implementation is unclear or diffuse/unfocused, projects can stall)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING STATE-LEVEL COLLABORATION

In many cases, states will benefit from truly collaborative relationships between general and special education departments for the purpose of achieving specific goals. Such collaborations will likely engender new working procedures, protocols, and perhaps even shifts in culture. Here, we offer recommendations developed by Regional Comprehensive Centers and participating state departments of education at the Center on Instruction's January 2010 virtual working meeting.

These recommendations draw on the supporting literature on which the meeting participants based their work. COI reviewed numerous articles on collaboration and identified seven key supports for collaboration (Arthaud, Aram, Breck, Doelling, & Bushrow, 2007; Bean, Grumet, & Bulazo, 1999; Cook & Friend, 1995; Ehren et al., n.d.; Mattessich, 2005; National Network of Eisenhower Regional Consortia and Clearinghouse, 2004; Schulte & Osborne, 2003; Sharpe & Hawes, 2003; Strieter & Blalock, 2006: Stuart & Rinaldi, 2009; Welch & Tulbert, 2000). The seven supports provided essential guidance during the conversation that produced the recommendations in this section.

Table 1 identifies these seven commonly cited supports, a description of each, and an implementation example from the literature.

Table 1: Collaboration supports

Support	COI interpretation	Implementation example
Shared goals and vision	Understanding and accepting the purpose of the collaboration	• Develop a common vision (Strieter & Blalock, 2006)
Membership	Ensuring that the collaborative consists of those affected by or involved in implementing the effort	• Identify all stakeholders and introduce the collaborative to them (National Network of Eisenhower Regional Consortia and Clearinghouse, 2004)
Systemic support	Identifying existing systemic procedures and resources that can support the collaborative	• Seek administrative support (e.g., time, funds, staff, materials) for the collaboration (Mattessich et al., 2001; Sharpe & Hawes, 2003)
Communication and respect	Understanding all participants' roles and strengths	• Create shared language for communication (Ehren et al., n.d.) • Develop communication skills (Bean et al., 1999) • Establish and nurture trusting relationships (Strieter & Blalock, 2006)
Process	Developing flexible and responsive procedures that guide the collaborative work, ensuring that participants share a stake in both process and outcome	• Define process and plan of work (Strieter & Blalock, 2006) • Use evaluation results to modify, expand, or end the collaboration to maximize success and sustainability; alter course as needed (Strieter & Blalock, 2006) • Select leadership that is fair, organized, and possesses process skills (Mattessich et al., 2001)
Accountability	Ensuring that the outcomes of the collaborative process are achieved and valued	• Demonstrate the impact of activities and services (National Network of Eisenhower Regional Consortia and Clearinghouse, 2004)
Understanding local context	Recognizing unique aspects of the context in which the collaboration is taking place	• Know the stakeholders and tailor collaborative procedures, communication patterns, and activities accordingly (National Network of Eisenhower Regional Consortia and Clearinghouse, 2004)

About the recommendations

These recommendations proceed from lessons learned by SEAs that had already chosen collaboration as the best partnership model. While the group discussed collaboration specifically between general and special education, these recommendations likely have strong implications for collaborative efforts between other SEA departments (e.g., Title I, English language learners) and other stakeholder groups outside of the SEA (e.g., higher education, parent groups). Each recommendation is followed by an implementation example (*Collaboration in Action*) provided by the RCCs and states during the January 2010 working meeting.

Recommendation 1

Emphasize shared goals and vision.

When embarking on a collaborative partnership, it is valuable, sometimes necessary, to develop shared goals and outline the potential contributions of and the benefits to each participant. Meetings are more productive when clear goals and expectations are developed and identified jointly by members of the collaborative partnership early on.

Collaboration in action. Shared goals can be emphasized in many ways—for example, using a *terms of reference*[5] process and document (like an internal memorandum of understanding) to keep sight of goals and progress and to remind each member of his or her investment in the group's work. It is helpful to conduct a crosswalk with new group members to illustrate goals shared across departments or divisions within a state, district, or school.

[5] See Handout 3 in Appendix B for the key components of terms of reference.

Recommendation 2

Promote stakeholder engagement through appreciation of unique contributions.

Inviting stakeholders to collaborate is a common first step, but each participant should be engaged in a meaningful way. In the case of collaboration between general and special education departments, the goal might be *improved outcomes for all students*, but each stakeholder will bring different perspectives, knowledge, and skills to the group. This diversity should be valued, and each stakeholder should be clear on his or her unique contribution to achieving the goals of the collaboration.

Collaboration in action. In one state, a crosswalk was offered during a human resources training session for all state education personnel. Each person became familiar with the goals of the state's implementation of RTI. The crosswalk also showed how each person fit into the department's larger plan for education and outlined the expectations of themselves and their divisions. Such training can outline how to measure progress toward the goal and illustrate how each person's work contributes to the goal.

Recommendation 3

Promote systemic support.

Collaboration takes a great deal of time. But as it develops, collaboration can eventually become a part of the culture in a state, district, or school. Participants can support the integration of collaboration into work life by thinking explicitly about how they and their departments provide tools, time, people, and support to the collaborative effort. As resources accumulate, a culture of commitment to the ultimate goals grows, systemic support takes root, and a healthy collaborative culture emerges.

Collaboration in action. One RCC helping an SEA foster collaboration between its general and special education divisions used asset mapping to illustrate which resources (such as staff members, materials, funding, support, and technical assistance) were already being used collaboratively and which were still available.

Recommendation 4

Promote communication and respect.

Successful collaboration requires participants to develop specific skills for communicating, decision-making, negotiating, and conflict resolution. These considerations should come into play early in the collaboration. Professional development activities can strengthen skills that engender trust, respect, and awareness of differing points of view, while establishing a common language and a "way of working" together.

Collaboration in action. In one state, the general education department, while appreciative of financial resources contributed to the collaborative effort by the special education department, was unaware of additional assets available to them in the form of knowledge and expertise. The RCC facilitated a meeting to foster communication and identify all resources and benefits within the collaboration. After this meeting, the stakeholders mutually recognized the contributions of their peers and also understood the importance of acknowledging all of the contributions stakeholders can make to any collaborative effort.

Recommendation 5

Stay on task.

Collaboration is not an initiative in and of itself. It is a strategy or tool to accomplish well-defined goals. Participants should design a collaboration with flexible, responsive procedures that reduce the risk of overshadowing the present tasks and intended outcomes.

Collaboration in action. Technical assistance providers often embed collaborative strategies into their ongoing assistance to states. One RCC found it beneficial to provide support as an outside facilitator to coordinate and lead meetings among various departments within the SEA—establishing meeting times and locations, preparing materials, etc. The presence of a facilitator increased the equality among stakeholders, allowing everyone to contribute and spend more time on the true goals of the collaboration, rather than logistics and procedures.

Recommendation 6

Celebrate and promote success.

Find and feature schools and districts (or groups within the state department) where collaboration works effectively. Frame these groups as model sites or otherwise showcase them to demonstrate to new or skeptical participants that success is possible.

Collaboration in action. Many RCCs have assisted states with identifying and promoting RTI model sites by showcasing them through webinars or regional meetings. The SEA or RCC can request that model sites highlight different aspects of their collaboration, ensuring that the message is consistent with the state's vision.

Recommendation 7

Tailor your process for building collaboration.

Collaboration cannot be forced. But sometimes states want concrete ways to support and foster collaboration so that it achieves agreed-upon goals. States should be mindful of local contexts and cultures. In states where districts have local control, a "bottom-up" process may be wise. In other states, a "top-down" approach might be more appropriate. Other factors such as geography, demographics, or even existing initiatives and relationships may influence the formation of a collaborative relationship. Often, more challenging and complex goals (like implementing RTI) require both top-down and bottom-up approaches. In such cases, each approach must inform and integrate with the other.

Collaboration in action. In one state, collaboration has been a grassroots effort; district-level general education and special education departments collaboratively developed RTI-focused professional development. As the state recognized its own desire to foster collaboration, it wrote a state-level RTI guidance document with descriptions of the ongoing collaborative efforts of districts.

In another state, collaboration to achieve common goals occurred among the departments of assessment, Title I, and instruction before the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law was put into effect. This made it easy for these departments to collaborate later on their NCLB plans.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR COLLABORATION

This final section offers ideas for how technical assistance providers and state education staff members can develop their own capacity to collaborate and help others address challenging and shared education goals through ongoing collaborative work.

By focusing on collaboration between general and special education as a vehicle for implementing various large-scale efforts and initiatives, this document *outlines available research on supporting collaborative efforts and provides recommendations and implementation examples* based on "lessons learned" about state collaborative initiatives from those working in the field. This knowledge can:

- enable RCCs to work more effectively with states seeking assistance with collaborative efforts and
- support states as they work to accomplish goals, solve problems, and support ongoing programs, policies, or practices that benefit from collaboration between various departments or stakeholders.

The handouts (see Appendix B) can facilitate the use and dissemination of knowledge and can be used in various ways and for diverse purposes according to the needs of the collaboration and its members and stakeholders. For example:

- Figure 1 (included in Appendix B as Handout 1) can be used during planning meetings to initiate discussion about the current level of partnership and to analyze whether that partnership is meeting the group's needs.
- Table 1 (included in Appendix B as Handout 2) can be used as a basis for determining which supports for collaboration are already in place (or will be easy to identify) for an ongoing collaborative effort and which will be more challenging to put in place.
- Handout 3 lists the key components of a terms of reference process or document and maps them to the seven suports for collaboration identified by COI. This handout can be used as a guide for creating terms of reference or an action plan to ensure that a collaboration is adequately supported and that the group monitors and evaluates its progress relative to the seven supports.

- Handout 4 can be used to review the seven supports for collaboration and to discuss how they align with the working group recommendations.

CONCLUSION

The authors hope that Regional Comprehensive Centers and state departments of education will consider the ideas and resources in this document to build collaborative relationships that advance the ambitious, related goals of both general and special education initiatives. In addition to the resources listed in the References section, the authors encourage educators to explore how others have created and nourished their collaborative relationships.

The authors also encourage those engaging in collaborative relationships to examine their own objective(s) before assuming that collaboration is the right mode of partnership for the occasion. Collaboration for its own sake is neither efficient nor useful and may lead to more challenges than solutions.

"Good collaboration amplifies strength, but poor collaboration is worse than no collaboration at all" (Collins, 2009, p. xi).

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*Denotes articles that were included as part of the reading list for the January 2010 virtual working meeting.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS AT JANUARY 2010 VIRTUAL MEETING

Virtual Working Meeting
Fostering Collaboration Between General and Special Educators Within an RTI Framework
Thursday, January 14, 2010

Regional Comprehensive Centers and Regional Resource Centers

Dee Braley
Special Education Specialist
Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center

Silvia DeRuvo
Special Education Specialist
California Comprehensive Center

Patricia Fleming
Technical Assistance Coordinator
Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center

Darla Griffin
Consultant/Liaison
Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center and Southeast Regional Resource Center

Rita Hale
Research Associate
Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center

Sarah Hall
Technical Assistance Coordinator
Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center

Anna Koelln
Senior Program Associate
Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center

Karen Mikkelsen
Senior Program Associate
New England Comprehensive Center and Northeast Regional Resource Center

Marion Miller
Program Associate
California Comprehensive Center

Ada Muoneke
Program Associate
Southeast Comprehensive Center and Texas Comprehensive Center

Katherine Prudhomme
Senior Program Associate
California Comprehensive Center

James Ruff
Senior Research Associate
Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center

Rachel Trimble
Senior Program Associate
Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center

Lynette Thompson
Senior Program Advisor
Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center

State Departments of Education

Petra Brittner
Director, Response to Intervention
Texas Education Agency

Meredith Cathcart
Special Education Consultant
California Department of Education

Sharon Johnson
Reading/Language Arts Administrator
California Department of Education

Nancy Thomas Price
Response to Intervention Coordinator
Idaho State Department

Edie Ring
Consultant
Wyoming Department of Education

Rhonda Smith
Division Director
Mississippi Department of Education

Linda Wyatt
Consultant
California Department of Education

U.S. Department of Education

Ingrid Oxaal
Association Division Director
Research to Practice Division
Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education

Center on Instruction

Angela Penfold
Director
Center on Instruction

Ruth Dober
Deputy Director of Communications
Center on Instruction

Greg Roberts
Director
Special Education Strand

Christy Murray
Deputy Director
Special Education Strand

Saro Mohammed
Senior Program Coordinator
Special Education Strand

Meghan Coleman
Project Coordinator
Special Education Strand

Catherine Grim
Research Assistant
Special Education Strand

APPENDIX B: HANDOUTS

See pages 15 and 16 for ideas on how to use these handouts in your meetings with partners and collaborators.

Handout 1:

Comparing cooperation, coordination, and collaboration

	Pros	Cons	
Increasing resources, ownership, and potential impact	**Cooperation**		Increasing time, risk, and potential effort
	• Requires little additional planning time • Requires little risk or restructuring of current roles	• Lack of input from other professionals • Duplication or contradictory actions and/or projects may occur	
	Coordination		
	• Members communicate to reduce duplication or contradictory practices • Members share resources and goals	• Lack of shared decision making may result in low buy-in to the initiative • Decisions may not be relevant, feasible, or desirable for all	
	Collaboration		
	• Shared decision making may lead to more buy-in to the initiative • Multiple perspectives may result in more effective implementation if roles and responsibilities are clear	• Requires additional time to build trust and to plan activities • Requires restructuring current roles or creating new ones • Decisions and actions may not be timely • Multiple perspectives may result in ineffective implementation (e.g., if accountability for implementation is unclear or diffuse/unfocused, projects can stall)	

Source: Mohammed, S. S., Murray, C. S., Coleman, M. A., Roberts, G., & Grim, C. N. (2011). *Conversations with practitioners: Supporting state-level collaboration among general and special educators.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

Handout 2:

Collaboration supports

Support	COI interpretation	Implementation example
Shared goals and vision	Understanding and accepting the purpose of the collaboration	• Develop a common vision (Strieter & Blalock, 2006)
Membership	Ensuring that the collaborative consists of those affected by or involved in implementing the effort	• Identify all stakeholders and introduce the collaborative to them (National Network of Eisenhower Regional Consortia and Clearinghouse, 2004)
Systemic support	Identifying existing systemic procedures and resources that can support the collaborative	• Seek administrative support (e.g., time, funds, staff, materials) for the collaboration (Mattessich et al., 2001; Sharpe & Hawes, 2003)
Communication and respect	Understanding all participants' roles and strengths	• Create shared language for communication (Ehren et al., n.d.) • Develop communication skills (Bean et al., 1999) • Establish and nurture trusting relationships (Strieter & Blalock, 2006)
Process	Developing flexible and responsive procedures that guide the collaborative work, ensuring that participants share a stake in both process and outcome	• Define process and plan of work (Strieter & Blalock, 2006) • Use evaluation results to modify, expand, or end the collaboration to maximize success and sustainability; alter course as needed (Strieter & Blalock, 2006) • Select leadership that is fair, organized, and possesses process skills (Mattessich et al., 2001)
Accountability	Ensuring that the outcomes of the collaborative process are achieved and valued	• Demonstrate the impact of activities and services (National Network of Eisenhower Regional Consortia and Clearinghouse, 2004)
Understanding local context	Recognizing unique aspects of the context in which the collaboration is taking place	• Know the stakeholders and tailor collaborative procedures, communication patterns, and activities accordingly (National Network of Eisenhower Regional Consortia and Clearinghouse, 2004)

Source: Mohammed, S. S., Murray, C. S., Coleman, M. A., Roberts, G., & Grim, C. N. (2011). *Conversations with practitioners: Supporting state-level collaboration among general and special educators.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

Handout 3:

Key components of terms of reference

Terms of reference component	Related support
• Vision for the work together • Scope and objectives • Expected outcomes and deliverables	Shared goals and vision
• Boundaries (what it is and is not, when we are done) • Limitations	Understanding local context
• Authority, accountability, and reporting requirements – Linking Communication Protocols for Alignment (with whom do we communicate, how, how often, and for what purpose)	Accountability
• Roles and functions of individuals (who participates in what ways) – Leadership – Term – Membership – Orientation for new members	Membership
• Resources available to the project	Systemic support
• Decision-making process	Process
• Values and ways of work	Communication and respect
• Implementation plans	Shared goals and vision

Adapted from: Blase, K. A., & Metz, A. (2009). *Terms of reference: A tool and process for clarity and communication.* PowerPoint slides presented at a regional implementation team meeting at the Minnesota Department of Education, Minneapolis, MN.

Source: Mohammed, S. S., Murray, C. S., Coleman, M. A., Roberts, G., & Grim, C. N. (2011). *Conversations with practitioners: Supporting state-level collaboration among general and special educators.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

Handout 4:

State/RCC recommendations and related supports for collaboration

Recommendation	Examples: Collaboration in action	Relevant support
Emphasize shared goals and vision. When embarking on a collaborative partnership, it is valuable, sometimes necessary, to develop shared goals and outline the potential contributions of and the benefits to each participant. Meetings are more productive when clear goals and expectations are developed and identified jointly by members of the collaborative early on.	Shared goals can be emphasized in many ways—for example, using a *terms of reference*[6] process and document (like an internal memorandum of understanding) to keep sight of goals and progress and to remind each member of his or her investment in the group's work. It is helpful to conduct a crosswalk with new group members to illustrate goals shared across departments or divisions within a state, district, or school.	Shared goals and vision
Promote stakeholder engagement through appreciation of unique contributions. Inviting stakeholders to collaborate is a common first step, but each participant should be engaged in a meaningful way. In the case of collaboration between general and special education departments, the goal might be *improved outcomes for all students*, but each stakeholder will bring different perspectives, knowledge, and skills to the group. This diversity should be valued, and each stakeholder should be clear on his or her unique contribution to achieving the goals of the collaboration.	In one state, a crosswalk was offered during a human resources training session for all state education personnel. Each person became familiar with the goals of the state's implementation of RTI. The crosswalk also showed how each person fit into the department's larger plan for education and outlined the expectations of themselves and their divisions. Such training can outline how to measure progress toward the goal and illustrate how each person's work contributes to the goal.	Membership

Source: Mohammed, S. S., Murray, C. S., Coleman, M. A., Roberts, G., & Grim, C. N. (2011). *Conversations with practitioners: Supporting state-level collaboration among general and special educators.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

[6] See Handout 3 in Appendix B for the key components of terms of reference.

Handout 4:

State/RCC recommendations and related supports for collaboration (continued)

Recommendation	Examples: Collaboration in action	Relevant support
Promote systemic support. Collaboration takes a great deal of time. But as it develops, collaboration can eventually become a part of the culture in a state, district, or school. Participants can support the integration of collaboration into work life by thinking explicitly about how they and their departments provide tools, time, people, and support to the collaborative effort. As resources accumulate, a culture of commitment to the ultimate goals grows, systemic support takes root, and a healthy collaborative culture emerges.	One RCC helping an SEA foster collaboration between its general and special education divisions used asset mapping to illustrate which resources (such as staff members, materials, funding, support, and technical assistance) were already being used collaboratively and which were still available.	Systemic support
Promote communication and respect. Successful collaboration requires participants to develop specific skills for communicating, decision-making, negotiating, and conflict resolution. These considerations should come into play early in the collaboration. Professional development activities can strengthen skills that engender trust, respect, and awareness of differing points of view, while establishing a common language and a "way of working" together.	In one state, the general education department, while appreciative of financial resources contributed to the collaborative effort by the special education department, was unaware of additional assets available to them in the form of knowledge and expertise. The RCC facilitated a meeting to foster communication and identify all resources and benefits within the collaboration. After this meeting, the stakeholders mutually recognized the contributions of their peers and also understood the importance of acknowledging all of the contributions stakeholders can make to any collaborative effort.	Communication and respect

Source: Mohammed, S. S., Murray, C. S., Coleman, M. A., Roberts, G., & Grim, C. N. (2011). *Conversations with practitioners: Supporting state-level collaboration among general and special educators.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

Handout 4:

State/RCC recommendations and related supports for collaboration (continued)

Recommendation	Examples: Collaboration in action	Relevant support
Stay on task. Collaboration is not an initiative in and of itself. It is a strategy or tool to accomplish well-defined goals. Participants should design a collaboration with flexible, responsive procedures that reduce the risk of overshadowing the present tasks and intended outcomes.	Technical assistance providers often embed collaborative strategies into their ongoing assistance to states. One RCC found it beneficial to provide support as an outside facilitator to coordinate and lead meetings among various departments within the SEA—establishing meeting times and locations, preparing materials, etc. The presence of a facilitator increased the equality among stakeholders, allowing everyone to contribute and spend more time on the true goals of the collaboration, rather than logistics and procedures.	Process
Celebrate and promote success. Find and feature schools and districts (or groups within the state department) where collaboration works effectively. Frame these groups as model sites or otherwise showcase them to demonstrate to new or skeptical participants that success is possible.	Many RCCs have assisted states with identifying and promoting RTI model sites by showcasing them through webinars or regional meetings. The SEA or RCC can request that model sites highlight different aspects of their collaboration, ensuring that the message is consistent with the state's vision.	Accountability

Source: Mohammed, S. S., Murray, C. S., Coleman, M. A., Roberts, G., & Grim, C. N. (2011). *Conversations with practitioners: Supporting state-level collaboration among general and special educators.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

Handout 4:

State/RCC recommendations and related supports for collaboration (continued)

Recommendation	Examples: Collaboration in action	Relevant support
Tailor your process for building collaboration. Collaboration cannot be forced. But sometimes states want concrete ways to support and foster collaboration so that it achieves agreed-upon goals. States should be mindful of local contexts and cultures. In states where districts have local control, a "bottom-up" process may be wise. In other states, a "top-down" approach might be more appropriate. Other factors such as geography, demographics, or even existing initiatives and relationships may influence the formation of a collaborative relationship. Often, more challenging and complex goals (like implementing RTI) require both top-down and bottom-up approaches. In such cases, each approach must inform and integrate with the other.	In one state, collaboration has been a grassroots effort; district-level general education and special education departments collaboratively developed RTI-focused professional development. As the state recognized its own desire to foster collaboration, it wrote a state-level RTI guidance document with descriptions of the ongoing collaborative efforts of districts. In another state, collaboration to achieve common goals occurred among the departments of assessment, Title I, and instruction before the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law was put into effect. This made it easy for these departments to collaborate later on their NCLB plans.	Understanding local context

Source: Mohammed, S. S., Murray, C. S., Coleman, M. A., Roberts, G., & Grim, C. N. (2011). *Conversations with practitioners: Supporting state-level collaboration among general and special educators.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

Handout 5:

Center on Instruction working group's reading list

Arthaud, T. J., Aram, R. J., Breck, S. E., Doelling, J. E., & Bushrow, K. M. (2007). Developing collaboration skills in pre-service teachers: A partnership between general and special education. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 30*(1), 1–12.

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National Network of Eisenhower Regional Consortia and Clearinghouse. (2004). *What experience has taught us about collaboration. Facilitating mathematics and science reform: Lessons learned series.* Retrieved from http://www.sedl.org/pubs/ms91/experience_collaboration.pdf

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Sharpe, M. N., & Hawes, M. E. (2003). *Collaboration between general and special education: Making it work. Issue brief.* Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED481548)

Welch, M., & Tulbert, B. (2000). Practitioners' perspectives of collaboration: A social validation of factor analysis. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 11,* 357–378.

Source: Mohammed, S. S., Murray, C. S., Coleman, M. A., Roberts, G., & Grim, C. N. (2011). *Conversations with practitioners: Supporting state-level collaboration among general and special educators.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

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