

# ED290233 1987-00-00 Collaborative Schools. ERIC Digest Series, Number 22.

ERIC Development Team

[www.eric.ed.gov](http://www.eric.ed.gov)

---

## Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

[Collaborative Schools. ERIC Digest Series, Number 22.....](#) 1



---

**ERIC Identifier:** ED290233

**Publication Date:** 1987-00-00

**Author:** Scott, James J. - Smith, Stuart C.

**Source:** ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management Eugene OR.

## Collaborative Schools. ERIC Digest Series, Number 22.

THIS DIGEST WAS CREATED BY ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC

TEXT: A growing number of educators are focusing their efforts on improving the work environment of teaching. In place of the typical school's norms and practices that isolate teachers from one another, some schools are initiating new norms and practices that encourage teachers to cooperate with one another and with administrators on school improvement. The primary goal of these "collaborative schools" is effective teaching and learning; other objectives are that teachers will be accorded respect as professionals and that staff harmony will increase.

### WHAT IS THE COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL?

The collaborative school is one in which administrators and teachers routinely work

together to promote effective teaching and learning. What Judith Warren Little (1982) calls the "critical practices of adaptability" characterize the collaborative school:

1. "Teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practices" (as opposed to simply gossiping about other teachers, administrators, and students).
2. "Teachers are frequently observed and provided with useful (if potentially frightening) critiques of their teaching."
3. "Teachers plan, design, research, evaluate, and prepare teaching materials together."
4. "Teachers teach each other the practice of teaching."

#### WHY HAVE EDUCATORS BECOME INTERESTED IN COLLABORATION?

In most professions, practitioners work together for their mutual benefit--in a law firm, for example, junior partners take advantage of the expertise of senior partners, and senior partners look to the junior partners for fresh new ideas. In contrast, most teachers work in isolation, neither helping nor being helped by their colleagues. As John I. Goodlad (1984) says, "The classroom cells in which teachers spend much of their time appear... symbolic of their relative isolation from one another and from sources of ideas beyond their own background experience." In a sense, each teacher must "reinvent the lightbulb" on his or her own.

Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that educational leaders are calling for closer professional interaction among teachers and between teachers and administrators--in other words, a greater degree of collaboration in the schools.

#### HOW CAN PRINCIPALS PROMOTE COLLABORATION IN THEIR SCHOOLS?

Principals can promote collaboration by such simple expedients as involving faculty members in setting the agenda for faculty meetings, giving faculty committees a meaningful role in matters of curriculum and instruction, and helping teachers to coordinate their schedules so that they have time to observe each other teach and provide each other with feedback on their observations.

Although formal structures and strategies can facilitate collaboration, collaboration ultimately depends on the development of norms of cooperation among the school's personnel. In this area the principal can lead by example. When teachers see the principal actively seeking their help and helping them to improve in their profession, they are likely to work with one another to improve their teaching.

#### HOW IMPORTANT IS THE PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP?

Because the principal plays such a crucial role in promoting norms of collaboration, he or she must actually exercise stronger leadership than would be necessary where norms of isolation prevail. A number of studies have shown that principals in collaborative schools are more actively involved in observing and evaluating teachers and in working with teachers on curriculum and scheduling than are principals in schools where teachers traditionally are isolated in their classrooms.

#### WHAT ROLE CAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS PLAY?

School boards and district administrators can encourage collaboration by providing individual schools with the resources in time and money needed for collaborative activities. For example, the Pittsburgh Public Schools pay for replacement teachers so that teachers in the system can take several weeks away from their classroom activities to attend the Schenley High School Teaching Center where they improve their teaching skills in a collegial setting (Davis 1986).

District officials cannot expect to successfully impose collaboration on a school. By its very nature collaboration is a school-site reform that depends for its success on the willing participation of personnel within the school. Collaboration is likely to work only when the principal and a significant number of teachers at a school become convinced that it will actually lead to improved teaching and learning.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ashton, Patricia T., and Rodman B. Webb. *MAKING A DIFFERENCE: TEACHERS' SENSE OF EFFICACY AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT*. New York: Longman, 1986.

Bird, Tom, and Judith Warren Little. "How Schools Organize the Teaching Occupation." *THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL JOURNAL* 86 (1986): 493-511. EJ 337 995.

Davis, Lawrence E. "A Recipe for the Development of an Effective Teaching Clinic." Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, San Francisco, CA, March 1, 1986. ED 275 028.

Furtwengler, Willis J. "Reaching Success through Involvement--Implementation Strategy for Creating and Maintaining Effective Schools." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA, April 17, 1986. ED 274 085.

Goodlad, John I. *A PLACE CALLED SCHOOL: PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984.

Lieberman, Ann, and Lynne Miller. *TEACHERS, THEIR WORLD, AND THEIR WORK: IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1984. ED 250 285.

Little, Judith Warren. "Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation: Workplace Conditions of School Success." AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL 19 (1982): 325-340. EJ 275 511.

Rosenholtz, Susan J. TEACHERS' WORKPLACE: A STUDY OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS. New York: Longman, forthcoming.

Schmuck, Richard A., and others. HANDBOOK OF ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOLS. 3rd ed. Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1985.

Smith, Stuart C., and James J. Scott. THE COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL: A WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION. Eugene, Oregon: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management; and Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, forthcoming.

-----

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under OERI contract. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.

—  
**Title:** Collaborative Schools. ERIC Digest Series, Number 22.

**Note:** Printed on colored paper.

**Document Type:** Information Analyses---ERIC Information Analysis Products (IAPs) (071); Information Analyses---ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text (073);

**Target Audience:** Administrators, Practitioners

**Available From:** Publications, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street, Eugene, OR 97403 (free).

**Descriptors:** Administrative Organization, Educational Cooperation, Educational Environment, Elementary Secondary Education, Instructional Improvement, Instructional Leadership, Interprofessional Relationship, Participative Decision Making, Principals, School Based Management, School Effectiveness, Teacher Administrator Relationship, Teacher Participation, Teaching Conditions, Teamwork

**Identifiers:** Collaborative Learning, ERIC Digests

####



[\[Return to ERIC Digest Search Page\]](#)