



COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

Session **F**

Effective Communication for Collaborative Teams



Effective Communication for Collaborative Teams

PURPOSE



In this session, the facilitator guides collaborative teachers through activities to improve communication and conflict management skills. Participants will learn strategies to help them:

- Identify areas of conflict that can interfere with collaborative teaching
- Develop an awareness and understanding of effective communication skills for collaboration
- Identify and develop ways to improve communication between collaborative partners

Activities



This 2-hour session includes five activities:

Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)

Introductory Activity: **Communication Breakdown** (20 minutes)–Participants reflect on a communication breakdown they experienced and discuss the impact of communication problems on relationships.

Activity 1: **Conflict Management Profile** (35 minutes)–Participants identify and share their own conflict management styles. Collaborative partners will learn about each other’s conflict management styles and how these styles might affect communication.

Activity 2: **Communication and Conflict–Challenges and Strategies** (20 minutes)–Participants will examine conflict situations that can arise in collaborative teaching. Partners will match communication strategies that can help resolve specific conflicts.

Activity Directions

Welcome and Introductions

Total time: 10 minutes

Welcome all participants. Introduce yourself and your role. Briefly review the purpose and objectives of the session. Review the sign-in process, session materials, bathroom locations, and the timelines.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY: Communication Breakdown!

Total time: 20 minutes



Materials:

- Sticky notes
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Handout 1: *Communication and Conflict*

Activity steps:

1

10 min

Ask participants to stand, hold up their right hand, make eye contact with someone they don't know, and point to that person. The person will be their partner for the activity. Ask participants to take their sticky note pad and a pen or pencil and sit with their partner. With smaller groups where everyone knows each other, ask participants to choose someone that they don't work with often.

Ask participants to think of a time in the past when one of the events listed on the chart paper occurred:

- Your expectation(s) were not met.
- You misunderstood another or they misunderstood you.
- You avoided a situation.



Ask them to think of a personal or professional experience. "Why did this occur? Why were your expectations unmet? Why were you misunderstood? Why did you avoid the situation?"

Share the personal example you prepared with the group. Describe why the situation occurred and write it on a sticky note. Post your sticky note on the blank chart paper with the event and the reason. Briefly review the directions again with the whole group:

- Ask each person to think about a situation they have experienced and record reasons why they think the situation occurred, one per sticky note.
- Give partners four minutes (two minutes each) to discuss their responses with each other, and then ask them to post their sticky notes on the chart.
- While participants are posting sticky notes, silently read, categorize, and cluster similar responses.

Examples of reasons for miscommunication may include:

- Was afraid of change
- Didn't ask for clarification
- Made assumptions
- Misinterpreted
- Didn't listen closely enough
- Didn't want to find a solution
- Felt the effort was a waste of time
- Wanted to avoid conflict
- Lacked confidence or knowledge
- Thought someone else would do it
- Heard selectively

2

10 min

Review and summarize the sticky note categories and responses with the whole group. Ask the group:



“Do all or most of these responses reflect challenges related to communication between two people?”

Can communication challenges occur both in and out of the classroom?”



Discussion points:

Refer participants to Handout 1: *Communication and Conflict* and provide your version of the following comments:

Conflict can occur in any relationship. Conflict doesn't mean that the relationship is bad, but we do need to know how to deal with it. Some conflicts will disappear on their own, but some can build and become very destructive. It is important to know how you, as partners, deal with conflict and how you can keep conflicts from affecting your work together for students. Today's session will provide an opportunity to use communication strategies to resolve conflicts.

Some thoughts on communication:

- Fear of change can be a cause and a result of poor communication between people.
- Communication problems are part of human nature – we ALL experience them at one time or another!

Communication and Conflict

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Some thoughts on communication:

- Fear of change can be a cause and a result of poor communication between people.
- Communication problems are part of human nature – we ALL experience them at one time or another!
- Poor communication can often lead to conflict between people.
- Effective communication strategies are essential tools for your collaborative teaching work.

Some thoughts on conflict:

- Conflict is neither good nor bad.
- Conflict can help build relationships.
- Conflict can alter our perceptions and beliefs.
- Conflict can help us understand other points of view.
- Conflict can make us stretch.
- Conflict can be a tool for change.
- Conflict can destroy relationships if not properly addressed.

Check out the references on Handout 9 for more information about effective communication and dealing with conflict in schools.

