

The Collaborative Instruction Model

Infusing Strategic Instruction

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The increasing number of students with mild disabilities in inclusive secondary classrooms is adding significant variance to the overall composition of these classes. Such variance places major instructional demands on classroom teachers who typically work in isolation. One response to these demands has been for special and general education teachers to collaborate and combine their efforts in these classes. Recently, collaboration has been defined in a number of ways and often includes such elements as:

- * Mutual consent on the part of two or more professionals to work together,
- * Mutual commitment for resolution of a shared problem or set of problems as well as establishment of objectives to enable that resolution;
- * Joint development of an intervention and evaluation of that plan (Pryzwansky, 1974)

One specific form of collaboration has emerged involving the special education teacher and the general education teacher teaching as a team in general education classes where students with mild disabilities are enrolled. One promising model for facilitating this team teaching is the Collaborative Instruction Model.

The Collaborative Instruction Model

The Collaborative Instruction Model (CI Model) was recently designed and tested for

use by pairs of secondary teachers (Boudah, Schumaker, & Deshler, in prep). The basic feature of this model is that the instructional environment includes two teachers, one general education teacher and one special education teacher, who work in one classroom to enable students to be more successful learners. Some general statements associated with this model are included in the box below.

This is not "tag team" teaching. The special education teacher is not a "glorified aide."
Both teachers monitor student understanding and concepts presented in class.
The teachers help each other expand and clarify information and concepts.
Either teacher can provide whole group or individualized instruction.
Both teachers are responsible for managing student behavior and evaluating student performance.

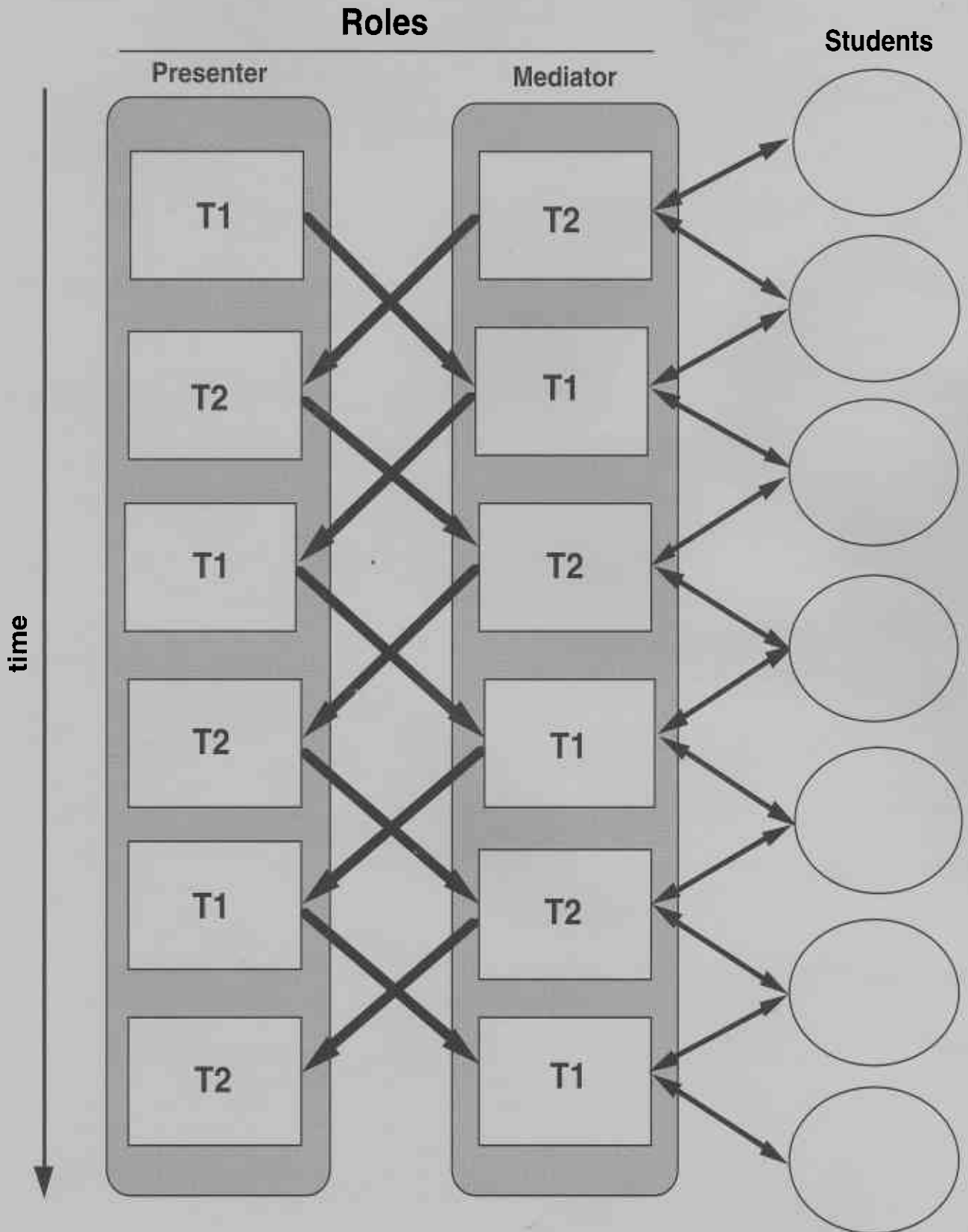
The CI Model reflects the *process* of teacher instructional interactions, the *content* of mediated instruction as teachers interact with students, and the *outcomes* of the process and content for students.

Process. Figure 1 on page 2 depicts two primary roles for teachers within an inclusive classroom during the process of instruction: presenter and mediator. During whole group instruction, the *presenter* presents content information such as facts, rules, concepts, and themes in a subject area such as social studies, math, science, or English. Meanwhile, the *mediator* arbitrates between students and the content material being presented in class. The

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Figure 1: The Collaborative Instruction Model



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crossing arrows between one teacher (T1) and the second teacher (T2) in Figure 1 illustrate an unlimited number of teacher role exchanges during a lesson as their role functions criss-cross in the course of instruction. For instance, in one instructional sequence, T1 may be talking about a specific science concept while T2 is simultaneously summarizing the key points by writing bullet statements on the chalkboard. Later, T2 may talk about another part of the concept while T1 elaborates by providing some specific examples or an analogy. The sequence may finish with T1 and T2 functioning as mediators, one prompting students to summarize a chronology of facts or events while the other interjects by prompting students to predict what would happen if a different order of events had occurred.

At least initially, the general education teacher in a secondary classroom may function more often in the presenter role, and the special education teacher may function more often in the mediator role. This is for obvious reasons. The general education teacher's strength is usually related to the content being presented, and the special education teacher's strength is usually concerned with teaching skills related to learning. Eventually, however, the general education teacher and the special education teacher may function equally as presenter and mediator. Both teachers may also function as presenter or mediator at any given time during a lesson. Thus, through this kind of instructional process, the special education teacher and general education teacher can compliment and support each other, like partners who are dancing together (Adams, Cessna, & Friend, 1992) rather than like two teachers who are taking turns delivering instruction.

In order to "dance," each teacher must have an active base of

knowledge and skills as related to the classroom context, the students in the classroom, and working with an instructional partner. With regard to the classroom context, each teacher must understand the resources available for instruction, know available lesson plans, and attend to the classroom climate (i.e., noise, seating).

Content. As depicted by the two-way arrows, Figure 1 also illustrates the interaction involved in the CI Model between the mediating teacher and students. The mediator infuses strategic instruction into content presentations by modeling, talking about, teaching, and prompting the use, generalization, and maintenance of strategic skills (learning strategies) to help students learn the subject content more successfully. Therefore, while the presenter is presenting

mediate the learning of subject matter content, one goal associated with the CI Model is that students learn to learn more effectively by interacting with expert learners who describe and model the use of strategic skills, then prompt students to practice using these skills in multiple learning contexts. Students can potentially become more independent, confident learners who eventually learn to mediate their own learning of subject matter content by employing the strategic skills they have learned. This, in turn, may result in greater academic success in school and in other learning opportunities outside of school.

Where to Start

In order to deploy the Model in inclusive classes sometimes the special education teachers simply

Mediating Instruction

- Eliciting prior knowledge
- Prompting students to take notes
- Describing learning strategies/devices
- Modeling strategies
- Providing specific feedback
- Prompting individual practice/use of strategies
- Questioning & checking understanding
- Clarifying/elaborating on information
- Bulleting key points or pieces of information
- Paraphrasing
- Teaching with Cue/Do/Review
- Using teaching devices:
 - For Believing: rationales, stories with a point, goal setting, charting
 - For Organizing: study guides; graphic organizers; lesson, chapter, or unit organizers
 - For Understanding: graphics, stories with a point, analogies, examples, imagery, role play, simulations, manipulatives
 - For Remembering: first-letter mnemonic devices, graphics, imagery, elaborations, associations

subject-matter content, the mediator is, in essence, teaching and translating the content of strategic skills. Figure 2 above lists additional instructional actions that can mediate student learning and through which teachers can teach the content of strategic skills.

Outcomes. As a result of the collaborative instructional process and the teaching of strategic skills to

need to start by being *risk-takers*. For some special education teachers, the thought of being in a large class with about thirty students may be frightening. The thought of adjusting to the pacing and curriculum of the regular program, too, may be equally harrowing.

Nevertheless, special educators can potentially benefit from

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participating in the CI Model in a number of ways. In addition to increasing their instructional expertise and facilitating strategic instruction in inclusive classes, special educators stand to gain a sense of comradeship and a greater sense of connectedness to the mainstream of the school.

Clearly, special education teachers should *start small and build success*. Because collaborative teaching is often uncommon and difficult to accomplish, building successful experiences is important. The special educator can strategically build success by targeting selected teachers, targeting selected students, piloting collaboration efforts, and gathering administrative support.

Targeting teachers. Obviously, general education teacher support is crucial. Therefore, those teachers with whom the special educator collaborates must be a select group. The special education teacher might target teachers who may have taught special education at one time in their careers. As a result of such experiences, these teachers are more likely to understand and be sensitive to the needs of special education students. A second group of teachers to target are new teachers who usually welcome the opportunity to receive extra support and coaching. Moreover, they are less likely to be rigidly set in certain classroom routines or attitudes toward learners with disabilities. There may be others to target who are simply the most child-centered (as opposed to content-centered) with regard to their instructional orientation.

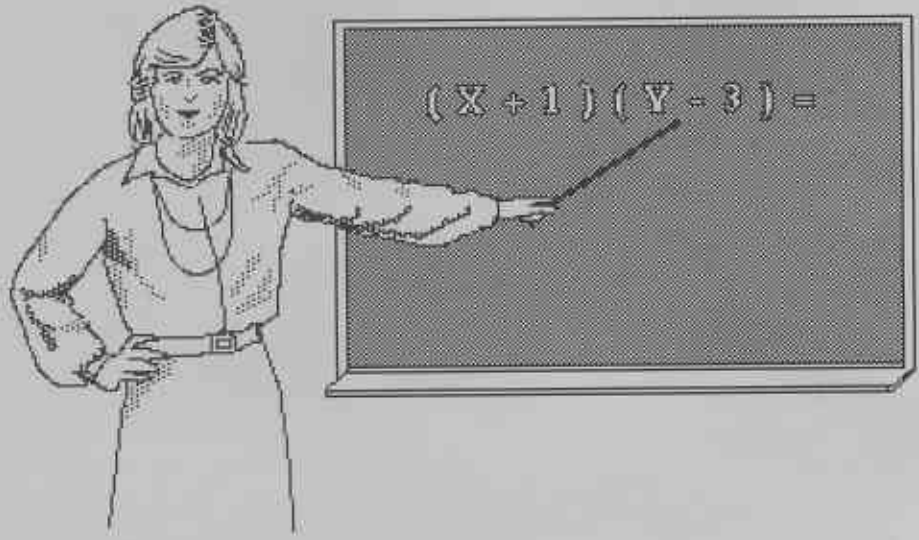
Targeting students. Equally important to selecting the right teachers for collaborative instruction in inclusive classrooms is selecting the right students who can be successful in those general education environments.

Knowledge of individual student characteristics and of the demands of potential inclusive learning environments is essential to make the right "match" for students.

Anything else may be equated with "dumping" in inappropriate and, in essence, "more restrictive" learning environments.

Piloting collaboration efforts. The special educator would do well to pilot one class with one general education teacher for a period of time, perhaps a semester or two, in order to develop a collaborative relationship, as well as plan as a team, engage in collaborative instruction, and evaluate and modify instructional interventions together. Instructional planning as a team is essential to effective collaborative instruction. Not only will instructional planning enable the special education teacher to be more prepared for mediating student learning and presenting content, but during planning time, the special educator also learns the mechanics of the general education classroom, the curriculum, and the general education teacher's style. Shared student evaluation is another essential ingredient for collaborative instruction. It includes an obvious benefit of a shared load in grading papers and in the more important monitoring of the student's daily progress. Another set of trained eyes in a classroom is advantageous, particularly for those "at risk" students who get "lost in the cracks" in large classes. As a result, special education referrals also may be reduced by the on-going prereferral evaluations and interventions that can take place for such students.

Gathering administrative support. Any form of effective collaboration for facilitating inclusion must also start with gaining administrative support. The principal can enable the special educator to arrange student and teacher's schedules in order to facilitate the best instruction and service "matches". Based on my personal experiences (as a general educator and a special educator in collaborative teaching situations) my observations of numerous inclusive classrooms in which teachers were working together, and my current research, I have found that lumping large numbers of students with mild disabilities into "low track" mainstream classes is not an effective practice with regard to providing appropriate opportunities to benefit from instruction. I have also tried scattering students with mild disabilities throughout a number of heterogeneous classes, and found that particular method of inclusion to very ineffective for serving individual needs because the special education teacher becomes "spread too thin." *Clustering* students in smaller numbers into heterogeneous inclusive classes appears to be the most effective means of service delivery. With this method, the special educator still can focus his/her efforts toward collaborative instruction in a few targeted classes and more



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SIM Moves into Regular Education in Wake County

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Wake County Schools (ninety-six schools with a total enrollment of seventy-six thousand students) in North Carolina are moving toward a vision of regular education and special education teachers working together as partners to promote the success of all students. The Strategies Intervention Model (SIM) has emerged as one method for fulfilling this vision. Indeed, last year, the special education and regular education staff development divisions began sharing the support and financing of training in the SIM. This support resulted in the balanced enrollment of regular and special educators in SIM training sessions. In fact, last year marked the first time that regular education teachers comprised the largest group of teachers enrolled in a learning strategies workshop. The continued enthusiastic response from regular educators and the balanced enrollment this year reflects the need for effective approaches like the SIM in mainstream settings.

To help meet the divergent needs of students in regular education settings, Wake County has implemented a collaborative service delivery model, called the Carolina Programmed Alternative Learning for Students (PALS). The objective of PALS is to provide an effective model for meeting the needs of mildly handicapped students in regular education classrooms. In such settings, the special education teacher works as an equal partner with the general education teacher. Together, they adapt or modify curriculum and instruction to promote student success. The special educator's active involvement in the instructional program along with the regular educator is meant to be beneficial for all the students in a class. This arrangement affords assistance for students who do not qualify for special education services yet could benefit from more specific intervention. It also affords assistance for students who qualify for special services.

The unique needs of different regular education teachers have resulted in a variety of instructional models being offered in Wake County for use when implementing the SIM in regular education classes. Through experience and experimentation, these models have been found to be acceptable by both teachers and students. The models described below are certainly not exhaustive or appropriate for every setting; however, they do provide a foundation for implementing SIM in regular education settings.

Parallel Instruction Model

For parallel instruction, collaborating teachers first identify a specific learning strategy that will meet course objectives. The class is then given the pretest for the strategy to determine which students would benefit from the associated instruction. The class is then divided into two groups: one that needs the instruction and one that does not. One of the instructors then teaches the strategy to the targeted group while the other teacher provides a more traditional means of instruction for the other group. Caution should be used with this plan, however, to ensure that the teachers frequently meet to discuss the progress of both groups and that extra effort is made to integrate both groups for some activities throughout the instruction. This practice guarantees monitoring of the strategies learned and generalization of those strategies. If both teachers have been trained to teach the strategy, the teachers can exchange instructional groups on a regular basis. This practice prevents one teacher from being perceived by the students as the "strategic" teacher. The parallel instruction approach reduces the student-teacher ratio and allows teachers to better meet the needs of individual students.



Introductory Model

Another instructional model involves pretesting all the students' use of a strategy and then providing instruction in the strategy through the Verbal Practice Stage for the whole class. Students then are administered the posttest to determine if they have learned to use and generalize the strategy. One of the teachers then continues to provide support and instruction for students who have not mastered the strategy

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through the remainder of the strategic instructional sequence. The other teacher provides enrichment instruction to the group who has mastered the strategy.

Since some students are able to immediately learn a strategy when it is described and modeled for them, this model accommodates the needs of such students and does not require them to do unnecessary practice activities. Enrichment activities related to the use of the strategy can challenge these students to integrate the strategy into their strategic repertoires. Additionally, the students who are in need of the controlled instructional process will have access to the resources necessary to master the strategy. Once again, the time and talents of both special and regular education teachers can be utilized to their full potential.

Double Instruction

In Double Instruction, a learning strategy is first taught to students receiving special education services in the "pull out" special education setting. After the students master the strategy in this setting, the regular and special education resource teacher then collaboratively teach the strategy through the Verbal Practice stage to the entire class in a mainstream class in which the special education students are enrolled. The exceptional students enjoy this method because they have previously mastered the strategy and can even assist the teachers as they present the instruction in the strategy. They typically participate in the class with great confidence and enthusiasm. This instructional model allows students to see that the strategy is of value to both the regular education teacher and pupils.



Integrated Model

In the Integrated Model of instruction, learning strategy instruction is integrated into the regular curriculum and taught in conjunction with the regular curriculum. To implement this model, the special education teacher must become comfortable and familiar with the curriculum at each grade level and provide regular teachers with a graphic depiction of how the objectives related to instruction in each strategy parallel the curriculum objectives specified for each grade level within curriculum guides. Of additional value is a graphic depiction of how the prerequisite skills for each strategy relate to the regular curriculum objectives. Such depictions demonstrate that regular teachers will not be sacrificing instruction related to curricular objectives when teaching the learning strategies. Teachers realize that they are simply accomplishing the same objectives while using an alternative approach to achieve those objectives.

To facilitate their implementation of the Integrated Model, teachers are encouraged to select only one or two learning strategies per year to integrate into their instruction. This allows teachers time to combine their usual instructional activities with the Strategies Instructional Approach. As teachers become more comfortable with the strategy instruction, they tend to move away from the exclusive use of textbooks for achieving objectives and instead teach students how to learn as well as what to learn, thereby strategically teaching students not just teaching curriculum. For example, teachers are using the *Sentence Writing Strategy* instead of readily available grammar textbooks. Teachers become aware that grammar is a small component of the entire writing process, while strategies are more meaningful to the students.

Cooperative Instruction

Some of the regular education teachers involved with learning strategies instruction in Wake County do not have the opportunity to collaboratively teach with a special education teacher. Such a situation can be particularly challenging. Recently, one regular-education middle-school language-arts teacher was

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attempting to teach the *Sentence Writing Strategy* to one hundred twenty students; naturally, the dilemma of paperwork and management issues surfaced. Her commitment to the Strategies Instruction Model drove her to find a solution to the inherent problems rather than make the easier choice of abandoning strategic instruction. Cooperative learning groups were already an integral part of her class and seemed to be an appropriate tool for addressing her concerns. The instructional model she designed proceeds as follows.

First, the teacher teaches the strategy to the class as a whole through the verbal elaboration activity in the Verbal Practice Stage of instruction. Second, cooperative group activities are created for the verbal rehearsal activity and the Controlled Practice Stage, and group and individual feedback are provided by the teacher and peers when necessary. Group and individual progress charts are kept to reflect group as well as individual progress. Individual assessment of each student's progress is completed at each level of practice. Such individual performance of a strategy is monitored closely to ensure that at-risk students are not "lost in the crowd." Such use of cooperative group structures can enhance a teacher's ability to teach a strategy to large numbers of students.

Curriculum Phase-In

In the Curriculum Phase-In Model, teachers sequence instruction in a given strategy across grade levels and the instruction is provided in regular education classes. For example, first-through fifth-grade regular and special education teachers in several Wake County elementary schools received training in the *Sentence Writing Strategy*. They planned together how prerequisites for the strategy would be taught in the first and second grades and how instruction in the strategy would begin in the third grade and continue through the fifth grade (i.e., simple sentences are to be taught in third grade, compound sentences in the fourth grade, and complex sentences in the fifth grade). They implemented the planned instruction for one year and then received training in the *Error Monitoring Strategy* at the beginning of the next school year to further enhance their strategic instruction in the area of written language. The *Error Monitoring Strategy* is now being taught at the end of third grade. As a result of the implementation of this model, several middle-school teachers have enrolled in workshops after "strategic graduates" have participated in their classes. These teachers are impressed with the performance of the graduates and want to learn the "tricks" already mastered by the students.

One advantage of this model is that it makes teachers aware of how to best prepare students to begin their strategic instruction. Another advantage is that students learn the strategies in a developmental fashion and have plenty of time to master parts of a given strategy. In addition, the use of the same terminology and emphasis on learning across the grades promotes student understanding and retention of the terminology and strategic processes.

Additional Ideas

The above descriptions focus on several ways that the SIM can be integrated into the regular education arena. These descriptions are not exhaustive, and other methods can be created according to individual teacher and student needs. For example, special education teachers who are implementing instruction in a learning strategy can host a meeting of the student's regular teachers and parents. During this meeting, students can model the steps of the strategy for teachers and parents and discuss with them how they will generalize the strategy in a variety of settings. The goal associated with this session is the formation of a partnership between special and regular educators and parents toward successful student generalization of the strategy to a variety of settings at school and in the community. Additionally, SIM teachers can consistently promote the idea of learning strategy instruction within the regular education divisions of the central school administration. Regular education teachers are more likely to commit to a program that is supported by their school system's curriculum and instruction department. With the goal of generating support in mind, teachers involved in strategic instruction can invite their school and system administrators to observe their classes. The key to the expansion of SIM instruction relies on teachers' abilities to communicate effectively and ensure that students generalize the effects of this approach beyond the special education setting.

Strategram

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realistically and effectively meet student needs. Administrative support is critical in order to accomplish this arrangement.

Summary

As general and special education teachers continue to respond to the complex demands of meeting the learning needs of students with mild disabilities in inclusive classrooms through their collaborative efforts, the Collaborative Instruction Model is emerging as a potentially useful and realistic approach to responding to such demands. Though the effects of this and other models of collaborative instruction on student performance largely remain unknown at present, some encouraging signs are emerging with regard to successful outcomes. The goal, ultimately, is responsible as well as effective inclusion of students with mild disabilities.

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