

Supporting Graduation Success: Special Education and General Education Collaboration



THE CHALLENGE

A high school diploma is a critical stepping stone for success after graduation. However, **nearly 30%** of students with disabilities in California leave high school each year without earning one. In 2021, only 69% of students with disabilities across the seven districts in the SIL Graduation Network earned a high school diploma.

THE SOLUTION

Seven districts joined SIL's Graduation Network as part of California's Compliance and Improvement Monitoring (CIM) process. Together, they set an ambitious goal: to increase the percentage of students with disabilities graduating with a diploma by 10% within two years.

Many network teams noted a lack of productive collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers as a limiting factor. Clarifying the process for initiating and maintaining positive collaboration, coupled with the use of a collaboration protocol, was tested in the network and proved to be successful.

THE IMPACT

The SIL Graduation Network collectively increased graduation rates for students with disabilities by **10% in the first year**, exceeding the original goal.



"When general education and special education teachers collaborated in PLCs and committed themselves to a shared belief in student potential, we saw systems of support strengthen. General curriculum became more accessible to students with different learning needs and our graduation rates increased."

Dakota Cates

*Program Specialist,
Snowline Joint Unified School District*



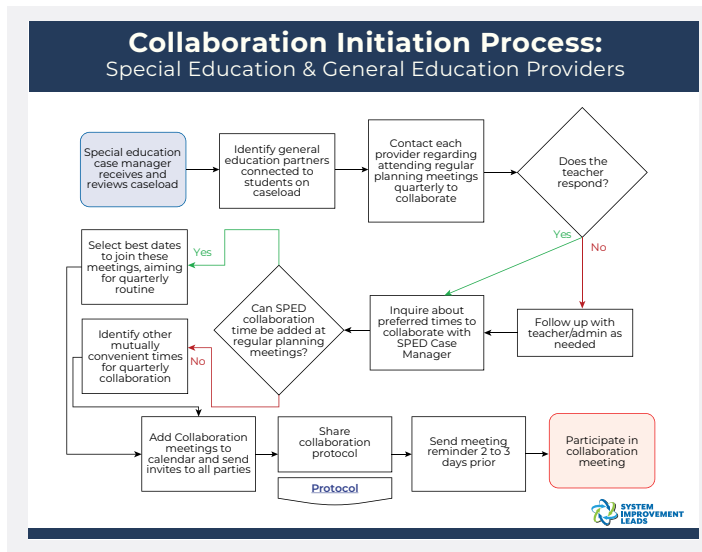
SPECIAL EDUCATION AND GENERAL EDUCATION COLLABORATION: IMPLEMENTATION TOOL

- Use the [Special Education and General Education Collaboration Initiation Process](#) as a starting point for establishing collaborative relationships.
- Take note of any steps that were missed, difficult to follow through on, or irrelevant based on context.
- Make any required changes to the process based on your unique context and experience.
- Hold collaboration meeting using the [Collaboration Protocol](#).
- Follow through on agreed upon next steps and parking lot items noted in the protocol.

Tips:

- Adjust the frequency of meetings and the protocol areas as needed for your context.
- Establish collaboration routines early in the school year.
- Use the norms to maintain a positive and productive atmosphere.

1



- [Special Education and General Education Collaboration Initiation Process](#)
- [Collaboration Protocol](#)

2

Collaboration Protocol For General Education and Special Education Teachers

Offered Norms
Step up, Step back
Remain student focused
Respect input of all members

Topic	Guiding questions	Meeting Notes
Review Goals and Accommodations	Review IEP goals, focusing on goals most relevant Review Accommodations	
Student Successes	What's a recent win for this student in your class? Was there a lesson or activity that went particularly well? Why do you think it was successful?	
Student Opportunities	How often has the student advocated for and accessed their accommodations? For students in SDC: How can we create opportunities for including this student in your class?	
Collaborative Opportunities	How has it been implementing accommodations? Do we need to co-create any new supports or materials? For students in SDC: What accommodations would be necessary for this student to participate successfully in your class?	
Upcoming IEP	Review upcoming IEPs for shared student when appropriate	