

**Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District
Board of Education Meeting
MINUTES**

May 13, 2008

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education, the Special Education District Advisory Committee (SEDAC), and the PTA Council held a workshop at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 13, 2008, in the District Administrative Offices: 1651 16th Street, Santa Monica, CA. The Board of Education called the meeting to order at 4:16 p.m. in the Board Room at the District Offices.

I CALL TO ORDER

A. Roll Call – Board of Education

Oscar de la Torre – *excused*
Jose Escarcé
Maria Leon-Vazquez
Ralph Mechur
Kelly Pye
Barry Snell
Kathy Wisnicki – *excused*

B. Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Mr. Snell.

II Informational Workshop

Creating a Culture of Inclusion in Special Education and Beyond

During this workshop, the Board of Education, Special Education DAC, and PTA Council will hear from Nancy Vandell, the San Ramon Valley Council of PTAs Immediate Past President, Founder of its Special Needs Committee and San Ramon Valley Unified School District IEP Systems Project Manager, along with Todd Gary, San Ramon Valley Unified School District Special Needs Liaison. The presentation will include the San Ramon Valley Unified School District's process and philosophy behind developing collaboration and working toward a culture of inclusion within its Special Education Department.

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Public Comment:

- *Claudia Landis, a member of the community, addressed the board regarding Special Education.*

Superintendent Talarico thanked the PTA Council and Special Education DAC for helping to sponsor this workshop. She introduced Todd Gary and Nancy Vandell from the San Ramon Valley Unified School District. Mr. Gary and Ms. Vandell then presented to the board. (The presentations can be found under Attachments at the end of these minutes.)

Ms. Pye supported the idea of a Special Needs Liaison. Mr. Snell asked how long it took to roll out the Special Education Design Team's plan in 2006-07. Mr. Gary said that staff worked during the summer months and hit the ground running in the fall.

Ken Haker, SEDAC Co-Chair, asked how people were elected to the design team. Ms. Vandell replied that the district incorporated parents and individuals who were already involved, as well as a broad stakeholders group. Lee Jones, SEDAC Co-Chair, asked how the various roles of the PTA Special Needs Committee were funded. Ms. Vandell answered

that the committee's budget and costs were not that large. She added that district and PTA resources are combined in some cases, such as the integration of information on both the PTA and district website. She warned against rushing into a solution for Special Education. Ms. Jones asked how SRVUSD ensures transparency. Mr. Gary said SRVUSD has a culture of transparency, and that the district shows parents the Special Ed programs and explains the process in order to create a climate of trust from the beginning.

Ms. Rosenbaum, Past PTA Council President, asked what SMMUSD's immediate next steps should be. Mr. Gary replied that he wished SRVUSD had finished the program development piece of the plan. He added that his district had formed a standing group of stakeholders who examined disability trends and best practices to address these disabilities. Ms. Vandell suggested posting a Frequently Asked Question sheet online regarding disabilities and teaching strategies to help the child. Mr. Gary commented that general ed teachers find such information to be extremely helpful when working with children with special needs.

Ms. Talarico expressed her appreciation for Mr. Gary's comment that all children are special. She mentioned to the board that the existing group who helped select the Special Education audit consultant could be asked to be a part of the design team. Mr. Snell would like to make sure that the makeup of that group represented a broad cross section of stakeholders. Mr. Mechur suggested that the design team consist of more general and special ed teachers and parents. Ms. Leon-Vazquez said the first step should be a commitment from everyone that the district is ready to move in this direction. Ms. Pye suggested working with the Claros Group, as SRVUSD did, to help create a culture of collaboration. Dr. Escarce supported the idea of working with an outside group like Claros. He also suggested that the Superintendent contact SRVUSD's retiring Superintendent, Rob Kessler, regarding helping SMMUSD move forward.

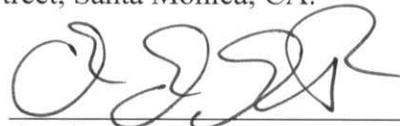
III PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public Comments is the time when members of the audience may address the Board of Education on items not scheduled on the meeting's agenda. All speakers are limited to three (3) minutes. When there is a large number of speakers, the Board may reduce the allotted time to two (2) minutes per speaker. The Brown Act (Government Code) states that Board members may not engage in discussion of issues raised during "III, Public Comments" except to ask clarifying questions, make a brief announcement, make a brief report on his or her own activities, or to refer the matter to staff. This Public Comment section is limited to 20 minutes.

IV ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Ms. Pye, seconded by Mr. Snell, and voted 5/0 (Mr. de la Torre and Dr. Wisnicki were absent) to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m. The next regular Board of Education meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, May 15, 2008, at 5:30 p.m.** in the **Santa Monica City Council Chambers**, 1685 Main Street, Santa Monica, CA.

Approved: 6/5/08



President

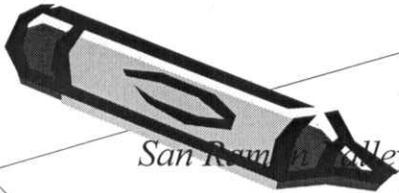


Superintendent

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHED ARE THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS:

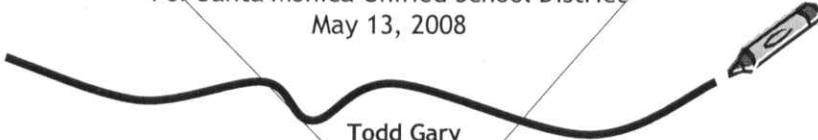
- Presentation: "Special Education Model: A Collaborative Approach"
- Presentation: "Achieving Success in Special Education: A Collaborative Approach"



San Ramon Valley Unified School District
San Ramon Valley Council of PTAs

Special Education Model: A Collaborative Approach

For Santa Monica Unified School District
 May 13, 2008



Todd Gary
 Nancy Vandell

www.srvusd.net
www.srvcouncilpta.org

Presenters

Todd Gary

San Ramon Valley Unified School District
 Special Needs Liaison, 2007 - present
 President: 2003-2005
 Founding Member, Special Needs Committee

(925) 552-5072
 Tgary@srvusd.net

San Ramon Valley Council of PTAs
 Special Needs Comm. Member, 2005 - present

Nancy Vandell

San Ramon Valley Council of PTAs
 VP, Legislative Advocacy, 2007 - present
 President: 2005 - 2007
 Founding Special Needs Chairman: 2002-05
 Special Needs Comm. Member: 2005 - present

(925) 829-2355
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San Ramon Valley Unified School District
 IEP System Project Manager: 2005 - 2007



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SRVUSD Special Education: A
 Collaborative Approach

Agenda

- Workshop Objectives
- SRVUSD Context
- Vision & Culture: Success Through Collaboration
- SRVUSD Model
- Collaborative Discussion



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Workshop Objectives

- Communicate road to current SRVUSD model
- Provide vision and components of SRVUSD's successful model of collaboration



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Context - Demographics

San Ramon Valley Unified School District

32 PTA units - at every regular school

High-performing school district - ranked 1st in the state for unified school districts with enrollments over 12,000 (our enrollment is 26,000)

Fourth lowest (revenue limit) funded unified school district in California out of 362

Affluent, well-educated parents



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Context: 2000 - 2002

- Many unhappy parents
 - Newspaper articles
 - Lawsuits
 - Programs, Autism
- Unit PTA Special Needs Committee
- DAC
- School District Task Force
- No real change



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Context: 2002 - 2005

- Lawsuits continue
- PTA Council Special Needs Committee
 - Collaborative approach
 - Trust built
 - Forum
- Special Education Steering Committee
- Issues continue



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Context: 2005 - 2007

- Steering Committee took on Forum recommendations
 - No real solutions
- Parents continued to complain
- Lawsuit costs spiraled
- Design Team created - fall, 2006
 - Vision



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Todd's Collaboration Presentation



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SRVUSD Model

- Strong PTA Special Needs Committee
- Parent Support Network (Resource Parent Program)
- Special Needs Liaison
- Special Education Design Team



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SRV Council of PTAs Special Needs Committee



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History

- Council Committee formed in Fall of 2002
 - Used lessons learned from unit committee
 - Established goals and organization early
 - Emphasized collaboration with district
 - Met with Superintendent to establish district-level support
 - Included school board member and assistant special education director on the committee
 - Spent significant effort to address school district concerns with committee intentions
 - Fully supported by Council Board



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Mission

In addition to the general purposes of the PTA, the mission of the Special Needs Committee is:

- **To provide information and support** to parents of children with special needs, so that they can help their children maximize their potential.
- **To work as a team** with the school district to assist staff in most effectively helping children with special needs.
- **To provide information** to all parents and community members about children with special needs, so that they can understand and support all children.
- **To help all children understand and appreciate challenges** faced by children with special needs.
- **To work legislatively to secure and retain adequate laws** (and funding for them) for children with special needs.

Tagline: "Fostering collaboration between parents, teachers, the schools, and the community to support children with special needs"

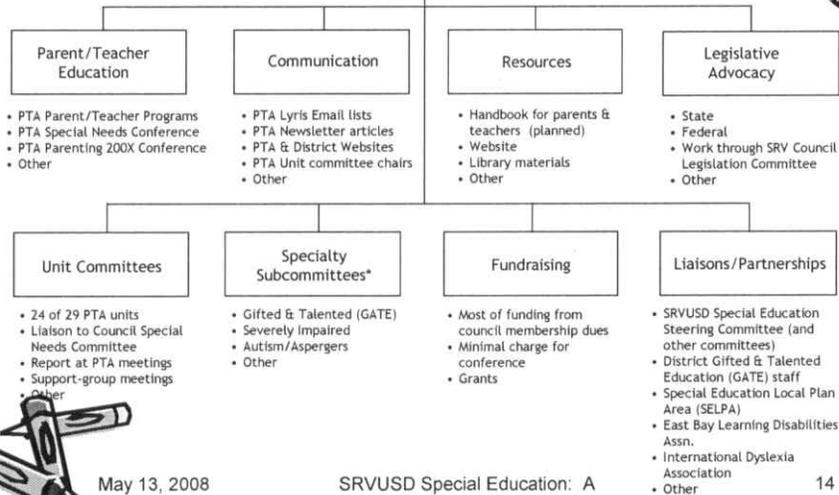


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San Ramon Valley Council of PTAs Roles of the Special Needs Committee



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History

- Over past five years, our committee has
 - Continued to offer evening and day-long programs
 - Expanded unit involvement and representation on Council committee
 - Represented PTA and parents on school district special education steering committee and other District committees responsible for issues resolution
 - Provided support for parents with questions
 - Partnered with school district to restart *Resource-parent* program with SELPA-trained resource parents
 - Received recognition from parents and staff
- Worked on legislative issues affecting Special Education



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Committee Impacts

- Support provided to parents and teachers
 - More knowledge helps them better support children
 - Reduced stigma, sense of isolation
- Trust built with school district
 - Committee leaders influential members of problem-solving teams; asked for input
 - Resource parent program embraced by District
 - Quality programs with expert speakers attract staff as well as parents
 - True partnership among parents and staff



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Committee Impacts

- Legislative advocacy raised awareness of issues at local, state and national levels
 - Partnered with Council Legislative Advocacy Committee, as well as California State PTA and National PTA advocates
- Established reputation for excellence with other organizations
 - Schwab Learning Foundation
 - East Bay Learning Disabilities Association
 - Special Education Local Plan Areas
 - Other PTA councils and units



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Parent Support Network

A parent-to-parent support network
for families of children with special needs

- SELPA-trained
- Committed to collaborative approach
- District-sanctioned
- Philosophy:
 - Parents who are informed, connected and supported by other parents who have “been there”, are better able to meet the challenges that arise, and make better collaborative partners in the special education process.



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Parent Support Network

- Provides:
 - A safe, non-judgmental and confidential outlet for sharing with parents who have gone through similar experiences
 - Connection with a volunteer support parent who has been in a situation very similar to the one the parent now faces
 - Emotional support and understanding for parents when they learn their child has a special need or when difficult situations arise



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Special Needs Liaison

- Supports collaborative and productive partnerships.
- Neutral and confidential.
- Information and advice.
- Education and training.
- Dispute resolution.
- Parent of a child with special needs.



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Special Education Design Team

- 2006-07 School year
- District-sponsored
- Outside professional facilitators
- Broad Spectrum of stakeholders
- Developed common vision and ownership first



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Special Education Design Team

- Process subject matter
 - IEP Process
 - Staff Recruitment and Retention
 - Program development and student placement
- Committed resources (time and staff)
 - Over ten full-day meetings
 - Money for facilitators and staff time



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Special Education Design Team

- Sponsor team
- Peer feedback loops for common ownership
- Well-defined roll-out process
- Result: true collaboration, trust; breakthrough



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Outcomes

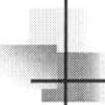
- Drastically-reduced litigation expenses
- More satisfied parent community
- Happier staff
- Sense of excitement and motivation for continued improvement



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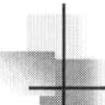
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Achieving Success in Special Education
-- A Collaborative Approach --

Todd B. Gary
Special Needs Liaison
San Ramon Valley Unified School District



Success Through Collaboration

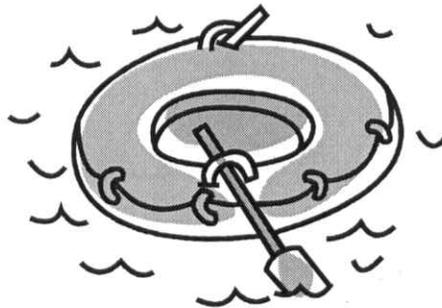
- Collaboration and Negotiation
- Dynamics of Negotiation
- Succeeding Through Collaboration
 - Empowering partners
 - Finding real solutions

Success Through Collaboration

- Requires partnership
- Demands mutuality
- Applies to Families and Staff

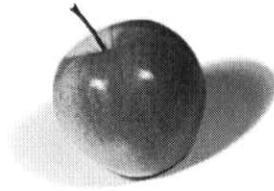


Success: How Do We Get There?



Collaboration vs. Negotiation

- Collaboration
- Negotiation
- Compatibility
 - Collaboration is "Win-Win" negotiation



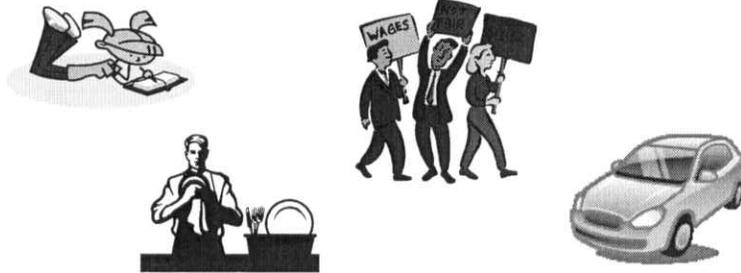
Win-Win Negotiation

- Collaborative toward a common goal
- Most important needs or desires met
- Respectful and supportive
- Relationships preserved
- Creative and productive



Dynamics of Negotiation

- Negotiation
The art of getting your needs or desires met.
- We negotiate constantly



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Dynamics of Negotiation

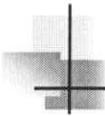
- Negotiation



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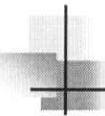
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Dynamics of Negotiation

- Partnerships
 - Positive
 - Creative
 - Productive
 - Negotiated



Dynamics of Negotiation

- Partnerships



DREAMWORKS
SKG

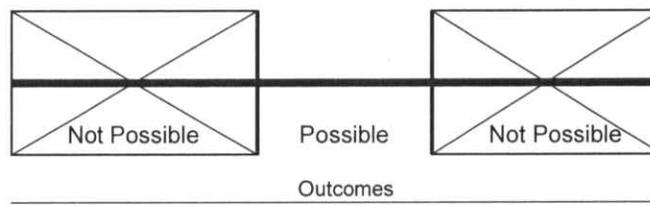


Dynamics of Negotiation

- Boundaries of Negotiation:
 - Determined by outside forces
 - Boundaries of possible results.

Dynamics of Negotiation

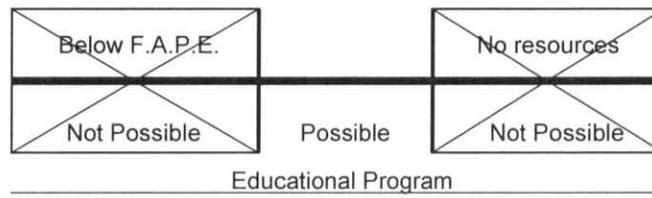
- Continuum of possible outcomes bounded by outside forces



- Boundaries can be determined by market forces or legal frameworks or both.

Special Education Boundaries

- Special Education: legal framework
- Boundaries set by law and economic realities.
 - IDEA: "Free and Appropriate Public Education"
 - Available funding and staff



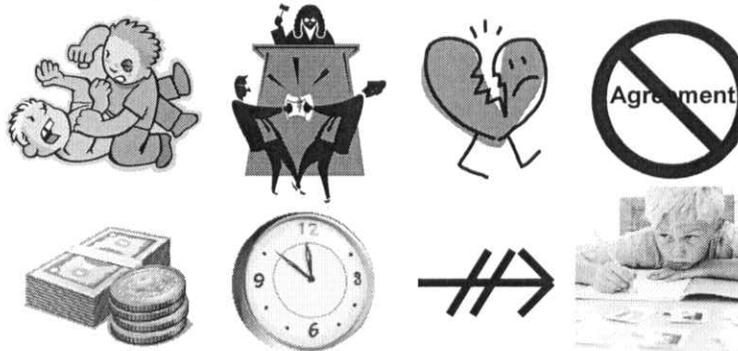
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Negotiating Outside Boundaries

- When we negotiate outside the boundaries of possible results:



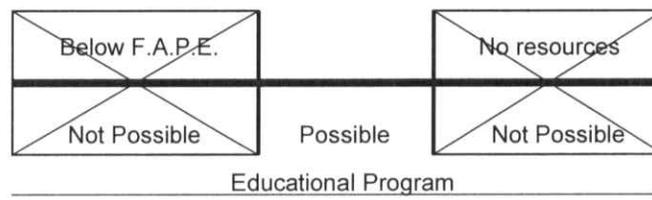
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Negotiating Outside Boundaries

- Why?



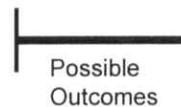
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Succeeding Through Collaboration

- Goal is "win-win" collaboration
- Not zero-sum
- Creative solutions
- Meets most important needs/goals (within boundaries)
- Creates mutual respect
- Builds supportive relationships
- Personally fulfilling
- Motivating



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Succeeding Through Collaboration Empowering Partners

- Individual With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):
 - Parents are full partners



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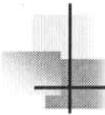
Succeeding Through Collaboration Empowering Partners

- To be full empowered partners, parents and staff must know both entitlements and limits, so they can collaborate within boundaries of possible results.
 - Procedural boundaries
 - Substantive boundaries

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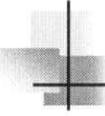
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Succeeding Through Collaboration Empowering Partners

- An Important Substantive Boundary: F.A.P.E.
 - Parent perspective: Maximizing potential
 - IDEA entitlement: Floor of opportunity
 - Free & Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):
 - An Individualized Education Program (IEP)
 - "benefit" from education
 - least restrictive environment (LRE)

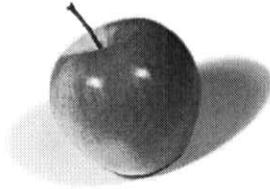


Succeeding Through Collaboration Empowering Partners

- Another Important Substantive Boundary: Resources
- Why not maximize potential?
 - No children are guaranteed maximum benefit
 - Limited Funding
 - Federal Promise – 40% of Mandate
 - Federal Reality – 11 - 18% of Mandate
 - Significant portion of shortfall comes out of general education funds
 - State Budget Situation
 - Available Staff: International shortages

Succeeding Through Collaboration Finding Real Solutions

- Must understand the needs and desires (goals) of yourself and your partner, and communicate your priorities honestly.
 - Necessary to find Win-Win solutions



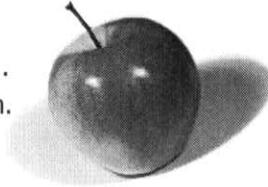
Succeeding Through Collaboration Finding Real Solutions

- Communicate your priorities honestly.
 - Allows others to address most crucial goals first, in case of limited time or tension between goals.
 - If you can't effectively communicate your priorities, you may not get them met.



Succeeding Through Collaboration Finding Real Solutions

- Learn your partner's needs and goals
 - If you don't understand their needs. . .
you can't meet them.
 - If you can't meet their needs. . .
you can't find a real solution.
 - A "solution" that doesn't meet the most important needs
of both partners is not a real solution.

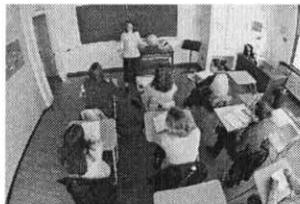
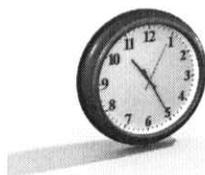
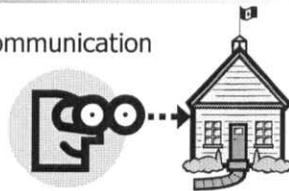


Succeeding Through Collaboration Finding Real Solutions

- Example: Parent-Teacher Communication

- Parent Need:

- Teacher Need:



Succeeding Through Collaboration Finding Real Solutions

- Example: Parent-Teacher Communication

- Non-Solution:



- Non-Solution:

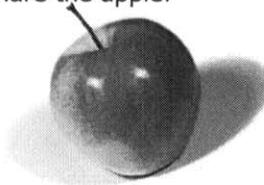


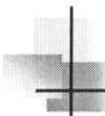
- Real solutions!



Succeeding Through Collaboration Finding Real Solutions

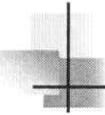
- Actively inquire
- Listen
 - Understanding (verify & validate)
 - Opportunities (to meet needs)
- Find a way to share the apple!





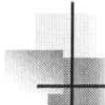
Succeeding Through Collaboration Finding Real Solutions

- A Very Important Side-Note to Collaboration
 - Staff retention
 - Special Ed v. General Ed.
 - Competitive markets and staff shortages
 - Without staff there are no programs
 - When appropriate, help make it personally rewarding: this is truly a "Win-Win!"



Success Through Collaboration

- Philosophy of Collaboration
 - Collaboration is people working together in a cooperative manner toward a common goal or vision. It requires the interaction of viewpoints, resources, and services from different individuals, each representing a distinct area of experience or expertise. Collaboration requires use of effective communication skills, creative problem solving, and mutuality of respect. When people share together, learn together, appreciate different perspectives, and are committed to working together for solutions that best meet the needs of all involved partners, we can truly succeed.



Success Through Collaboration

