Life presents many situations for which we do not have all the information and expertise we need to meet the challenges. In today’s increasingly interdependent and specialized world it is unlikely that any one person possesses enough knowledge and ability for every circumstance. So it is reasonable and prudent that we consult, collaborate, and work in teams with others to attain our goals.

Consultation services are routine in fields as varied as business, medicine, law, industry, fashion, construction, decorating, and finance. Consultants may even have their own consultants! Collaboration is emphasized frequently in a wide range of work settings from professions to trades to government to community affairs. Teamwork is regarded as an efficient, productive way of achieving goals. Put all three of these together in a school context, and educators have a powerfully interactive climate in which to address student strengths and needs.

Until recent years productive interactions by adults in school settings were more occasional and happenstance than frequent and planned. Allocation of time for interaction, practical structures for working together, preparation needed for these less familiar roles, and careful assessment of the outcomes have been the exception, not the routine. Increasing complexities of teaching and demands for school improvement and accountability underscore the need for processes and content that help us work together effectively in diverse school contexts.

We begin each of the twelve chapters with a figure that highlights that chapter’s context, process, and content. For example, in Chapter 1 teamwork is the emphasis of the context square. Collaboration is the focus of the process circle. Consultation appears in the content triangle.
Focusing questions guide the reading of each chapter. Opening vignettes set the contextual stage. (See footnote accompanying the first vignette, which applies to all other vignettes as well.) Applications appearing throughout the chapters are for individual reflection and, where apropos, for group discussion. Tables and figures provide organization, visual representations, and practical checklists for implementing the material. Reviews at the chapter ends match the focusing questions to summarize the chapter’s material. A section of To Do and Think About activities allows further exploration and learning by doing and sharing. The materials listed in For Further Reading guide readers to more information about that chapter’s main topics.

FOCUSBING QUESTIONS

1. What perspectives on consultation, collaboration, and teamwork are appropriate for the educational context?
2. What is collaborative school consultation and what is it not?
3. What are the major elements in working together as consultants, collaborators, and active participants in teaching teams?
4. What major differences among educators’ styles and preferences influence interactions in the school context?
5. How do adult differences affect consultation, collaboration, and teamwork?
6. In what ways might adult differences be used constructively to better serve all students’ learning needs?

KEY TERMS

autonomy   consulting teacher   professional development
client cooperation role clarification
collaboration coordination role delineation
communication co-teaching role parity
consultant personality school context
consultation preferences teamwork
consultee preservice teachers

VIGNETTE 1.A

The setting is the faculty room of a typical high school where three faculty members are sharing school news and airing their concerns.¹

English Teacher: I’m getting another special education student next week—with severe learning disabilities this time. I guess this is more fallout from Public Law 94-142 or IDEA 1997 or inclusion, or whatever. So I’ll have this student in my composition and literature classes,
along with the student with behavior disorders I’ve been coping with all semester, and state
assessments, and NCLB, and on and on.

Math Teacher: (grinning) Must be because you’re doing such a great job. (serious tone) But
I know what you mean. Our special ed teachers aren’t taking these kids out of our classes as
much as they did when I first started teaching. But that was before we’d ever heard the word
inclusion or No Child Left Behind.

English Teacher: Well, they say a “consulting teacher” is coming to our next departmental
meeting to talk about our role in helping these students with special needs. I understand we’re
going to be asked to collaborate—whatever that takes—along with all the other things we do,
of course.

Physical Education Teacher/Coach: Hmmmm, don’t those two words cancel each other out?
“Consult” and “collaborate,” that is. I believe you English teachers call that an oxymoron.
Now, I’d be inclined to consult a tax accountant for some expert advice, but isn’t collabora-
tion where everyone works together to accomplish goals? And as for teamwork, I can tell
you what a difficult process that is when you have a group of independent thinkers and free
spirits who like to do things their own way and want to be the star!

English Teacher: Frankly, I’m not interested in word games or coaching problems right now.
I’m more concerned about finding out where the time is going to come from to do one more
thing. And I want to know who will have the bottom-line responsibility for which students,
and when, and where. And how!

Math Teacher: Right. I had some concerns about including all students in my instruction and
testing. I think we need more help to pull it off, and I hope we get it.

Coach: You said it! Sounds like it will be quite a challenge for all of us.

§ We recommend that those using this book with a group read each of the chapter vignettes aloud, with readers
contributing their parts in a conversational tone and manner. In this way the situations will be more likely to
seem relevant and facilitative rather than artificial and contrived.

PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY,
PROFESSIONAL COLLEGIALITY

Teaching is a multidimensional activity. This complex, demanding role has never been easy
and it is becoming more challenging each year. School personnel are bombarded with more
and more responsibilities, and the public is raising expectations for student achievement.
Cosmetic alteration of existing programs and practices will not be enough to address the
complex issues and multiple concerns.

In the past, teachers worked alone in their classrooms for the most part. They marked
attendance forms, took lunch counts, and completed other daily procedures, then closed
their classroom door and taught the required content to their students. They tried to handle
each learning situation with minimal outside help. To ask for assistance would have been
tantamount to showing insecurity or demonstrating incompetence in carrying out their du-
ties. Hardy teachers of eight grades in one-room schoolhouses had managed without help,
hadn’t they?
Even in modern times teachers are somewhat removed from other adults and tend to function autonomously, having little rich, meaningful dialogue with professional colleagues during school. In a poll of over 1,000 teachers conducted by *Learning* magazine and reported by the Education Commission of the United States more than a decade ago, 78 percent of the respondents said that isolation from their colleagues was a major or moderate problem (Turner, 1987). Teachers may go through an entire school day without speaking to other adults in a reflective, planful way (Eisner, 1988). The absence of dialogue with peers is consistently recognized as a problem that contributes to teachers’ feelings of isolation and inhibits their inclination to modify classroom practices (Johnson & Pugach, 1996). Chunking of the typical school day further insulates teachers from sources of ideas beyond their own background of experiences. This is particularly evident at the high school level where teachers might have five classes and several different preparations as they interact with more than 100 students daily (see Figure 1.1).

So even though schools are multidimensional centers of activity and could be described as very social places, the individual teacher may feel stranded on a crowded island devoid of adult interactions and professional stimulation. Nevertheless, while teachers may wish for more small-group meetings on mutual interests, and desire regular grade-level meetings, along with frequent chances to observe other teachers, and richer opportunities for inservice training, many are not prepared for engaging in collaborative efforts. Some comment candidly that they did not choose a teaching career to work all that much with adults. Others feel that teaming up with co-teachers or consulting teachers will be perceived as a sign of professional weakness or lack of confidence in their abilities. Also, too little time is available for the concentrated effort that productive interaction requires, and opportunities are rare for observing educators in other school settings to learn new ideas and revitalize enthusiasm.

When teachers do have time and opportunity to interact with colleagues, it is likely to be during professional development sessions. Unfortunately, these activities often are too highly structured and short-lived to allow meaningful interaction. Many are scheduled at the end of a hectic day, when teachers are tired, wanting to reflect a bit on their teaching day, to set the stage for the next day, and then to turn their attention toward home or community activities. Now and then teachers are visited in their classrooms by supervisors, administrators, student teachers, and sometimes parents. However, these occasions tend to create more feelings of anxiety and defensiveness than support and collegiality.

Some school systems do encourage co-teaching as a way of allowing teachers to support each other and broaden their teaching repertoires. But well-intentioned efforts to co-teach too often result in turn-teaching—“You teach this part of the lesson and then take a break or make the copies for next hour, while I handle the part coming up.”
APPLICATION 1.1

COLLEGIALITY HELPS

Using Figure 1.1 to stir your thinking, recall one or more times when feelings of isolation seemed almost overwhelming, and collegial interaction would have “saved the day.”

Professionals cannot be coerced into being collegial (Wildman & Niles, 1987). Teachers who are accustomed to being in charge and making virtually all the day-to-day decisions in their classrooms cannot be ordered to just go out and collaborate with each other or co-teach to any meaningful degree. Along with incentive and time, they need structure, practice, encouragement, and positive feedback about their effectiveness to perform these sophisticated, demanding functions.

DESCRIBING COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CONSULTATION AND CO-TEACHING

Just what is school consultation? Collaboration in schools? Team teaching or co-teaching? And how can these functions nurture effective partnership among teachers, families, and communities for all students, particularly for those with special learning and behavior needs?

Working definitions of consultation, collaboration, and co-teaching for school settings must be general enough to apply to a wide range of school structures and circumstances, yet flexible enough for useful adaptation to each context of local school needs. Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, unabridged (1976), and Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, 8th edition (1996), include a wealth of synonyms for these terms and many other related words such as communication, cooperation, and coordination. These words complement each other to form a conceptual foundation for consultation, collaboration, and teamwork in schools. Examples of helpfully explanatory words are:

**consult:** Advise, seek advice, confer, confab, huddle, parley, counsel, deliberate, consider, examine, refer to, group, communicate, review, apply for information, take counsel, discuss, seek the opinion of, talk over a situation or subject with someone.

**consultation:** Advisement, care, counsel, conference, or formal deliberation.

**consulting:** Deliberating together, asking advice or opinion of, or conferring.

**consultant:** One who gives professional advice or services in a field of special knowledge and training, or simply one who consults, or consults with, another.

**consultee:** As described in social science literature, the mediator between consultant and client (Tharp, 1975).

**client:** Individual, group, agency, department, community, or sometimes even a nation receiving benefits from the services of a consultant. (Target is occasionally used as a synonym.)
collaborate: Labor together or work jointly (especially in an intellectual endeavor); assist, associate, unite, pool.

teamwork, teaming: A number of persons associated in some joint action when they work cooperatively together. Joining forces or efforts, with each individual contributing a clearly-defined portion of the effort, but also subordinating personal prominence to the efficiency of the whole.

communication: The art of expressing ideas, the act of transmitting, giving, or exchanging information or opinions by writing, speech, or signs.

cooperation: The act of uniting, banding together, combining, concurring, agreeing, consenting, or conjoining; to work or act with others willingly and agreeably for common purpose or benefit.

coordination: Bringing elements into a common action, movement, or condition; synchronizing, attuning, adjusting, combining in harmonious relation.

co-teaching: Two or more teachers planning and implementing instruction, typically in an inclusive classroom setting.

Useful Definitions

In order to fit a variety of school contexts and student needs, the following definitions frame concepts in this book:

Collaborative school consultation is interaction in which school personnel and families confer, consult, and collaborate as a team to identify learning and behavioral needs, and to plan, implement, evaluate, and revise as needed the educational programs that are expected to serve those needs.

The collaborative consultant in schools is defined here as follows:

A collaborative school consultant is a facilitator of effective communication, cooperation, and coordination who confers, consults, and collaborates with other school personnel, support personnel, students, and families on a team that addresses special learning and behavioral needs of students.

All who are involved—consultant(s), consultee, and client, are collaborators working together in a combined effort to address identified needs. For example, in the vignette at the beginning of this chapter, the client is a new student who has a learning disability. The learning disabilities consultant will serve the student indirectly, for the most part, by collaborating with the classroom teacher who will be the consultee and the provider of direct services to the student. Some services might be provided by the learning disabilities consultant to the student, but for the most part the direct service is given primarily by the classroom teacher.

Consultation has become an integral part of helping professions, with each one offering a unique perspective to the process (Bramlett & Murphy, 1998). In every profession it involves sharing of expertise, and those in the consultant role do not hold claim to all the expertise. Competent consultants also listen and learn. They sometimes help consultees discover what they already know. They help others recognize their own talents and trust their own skills.
To collaborate is to labor together. Collaborators do not compromise and cooperate so much as they confer and contribute. Compromise can imply giving up some part of, or conceding, something. Cooperation might be mutually agreeable to all involved, but is not necessarily designed for mutual benefit (Welch, 1998). Collaboration, however, means adding to and making more so that all benefit.

Reports from school districts throughout the United States identify collaboration as a key variable in the successful implementation of inclusive education (Villa & Thousand, 2003, p. 22). In a study of more than 600 educators, collaboration was the only variable predicting positive attitudes toward inclusion among general and special educators (Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996).

In collaboration all are involved as active partners. The differentiated tasks can be allocated among individuals with various skills to contribute. Sometimes collaboration means recognizing differences and finding ways to accommodate those differences. The collaborative process is enriched by diversity among the collaborators—diversity of experience, perspectives, values, abilities, and interests. Individual differences of adults who consult and collaborate are rich ingredients for successful collaborations. The great need to recognize and maximize adult differences and use them constructively in group work will be addressed later in the chapter.

The concept of co-teaching as team partners in school settings is receiving increased attention among school professionals. Teamwork is working for the good of the whole—where individual preferences are subtended or set aside for the larger cause. Many heads and hearts are better than one, and the pooled experience, talent, knowledge, and ideas of a group are even better than the sum of the individual parts. Various forms for team teaching exist and there are many different terms used to describe the process: team teaching, co-teaching, cooperative teaching, and collaborative teaching (Welch, 1998). Welch and Sheridan (1995) suggest that team-taught instruction can be microlevel staff development when each teacher models new skills for the other.

As part of a team, each co-teacher contributes a clearly defined portion of the effort that comes together to create a complete plan of action. Although some would regard consultation and collaboration as confounding terms that should not be used together, the more persuasive argument is that collaboration involves mutual problem-solving with interaction from the consultant. Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, and Nevin (1986) used the terms together to describe an interactive process enabling people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions for problems in which they have mutual interest. Kampwirth (1999) asserts that both terms have evolved sufficiently so that they can indeed be used together.

How Consultation, Collaboration, and Team Teaching Differ

All three processes—consultation, collaboration, and co-teaching, as they occur in the school context, involve interaction among school personnel, families, and students working together to achieve common goals. However, subtle distinctions can be made.

In school consultation, the consultant contributes specialized expertise toward an educational problem, and the consultee delivers direct service utilizing that expertise. Consultants and consultees begin to collaborate when they assume equal ownership of the problem and solutions. Collaboration is a way of working in which power struggles and ineffectual
politeness are perceived as detrimental to team goals. Friend and Cook (1992) distinguish between consultation and collaboration by describing collaborations as styles or approaches to interactions that occur during the consultation process. They propose that a collaborative approach can be used at some stages of consultation and not others, and with some consultees but not others. In their view collaborative consultation must be voluntary, with one professional assisting another to address a problem concerning a third party. They emphasize that successful consultants use different styles of interaction under different circumstances within different situations.

Teamwork fuels group spirit, develops process skills that help teachers interact in more productive ways, and fosters a more intellectual atmosphere (Maeroff, 1993). One of the best examples of teamwork is in a musical ensemble. Whether one is accompanying, performing with a small group, or playing with an orchestra, band, or choir, it is the united effort that creates the musical experience. Musicians of many instruments are not brought together to play the same note. Doing so would make the music only louder, not richer and more harmonious! In similar fashion, co-teachers work in concert, not usually in perfect unison, to create an effective learning experience for all students in the class. Consultation, collaboration, and co-teaching provide consultants, consultees, and teaching partners with the opportunities to engage in a “strengths” type of interaction, with each person using and building on the strengths of the others.

APPLICATION 1.2
IDENTIFYING TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

List all the various responsibilities you can think of that a teacher typically performs during the course of a school year. Use your recollections of student days, college coursework, student teaching, and any teaching experience that you have had. Along with instruction and curriculum preparation, include assessment, management, extracurricular, supervisory, and maintenance responsibilities. Expect to come up with 100 or more!

If you team up with other teachers in various grade levels, content areas, and specialized roles to do this activity, the combined lists could become a colorful and impressive collage of teaching responsibilities. The process itself will be an example of teamwork, with each person adding information from his or her own perspectives and experiences. And so—collaborative consultation!

What Collaborative School Consultation Is

Educators—including special education teachers, classroom teachers, school administrators, related services and support personnel, as well as parents—consult, collaborate and work as team members when they take part in one or more of these:

- Discussing students’ needs.
- Listening to colleagues’ concerns about a teaching situation.
- Helping identify and define educational problems.
- Facilitating problem solving in the school setting.
Promoting classroom alternatives as first interventions for students with special learning and behavior needs.
Serving as a medium for student referrals.
Demonstrating instructional techniques.
Providing direct assistance to classroom teachers who have students with special learning and behavior needs.
Leading or participating in professional development activities.
Assisting teachers in designing and implementing behavior change programs.
Sharing resources, materials, and ideas with colleagues.
Participating in co-teaching or demonstration teaching.
Engaging in assessment and evaluation activities.
Serving on curriculum committees, textbook committees, and school advisory councils.
Following up on educational issues and concerns with colleagues.
Easing colleagues' loads in matters involving students' special needs.
Networking with other professionals and outside agencies.

What Collaborative School Consultation Is Not
School consultation is not therapy, nor is it counseling for the consultee (Brown, Wyne, Blackburn, & Powell, 1979). The focus must be upon educational concerns relevant to the needs of the client, not the problems or needs of the consultee. West and Idol (1987), and Morsink, Thomas and Correa (1991) differentiate consultation from counseling by describing consultation as focused on issues, while counseling is focused on individuals. Conoley and Conoley (1982) caution that the consultant must talk about the client, not the consultee.

The consulting teacher is not the equivalent of a resource teacher with more free time to spend in interaction with general classroom teachers (Huefner, 1988). Furthermore, the consultant role is not always the responsibility of the educational specialist. Collaboration among professional colleagues is not talk or discussion for its own sake. It does not involve taking on the authority of school administrators, and it should not be a substitute for the individual teacher’s accountability (Smith, 1987). It must not be supervisory or judgmental.

Importantly, collaborative school consultation must not be intended as a money-saving mechanism for serving included students. The movie “Educating Peter,” an HBO Academy Award-winning documentary film that aired on television several years ago failed to clarify the array of related services and support personnel that were assembled to design and manage that school situation (CEC Today, 1993, p. 86). So the high cost and total number of personnel who contributed to Peter’s successful inclusion in that general third grade classroom were not apparent to the casual viewer.

APPLICATION 1.3
COLLABORATING TO IDENTIFY TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES
Using the list of teacher responsibilities you compiled in Application 1.2, sort the list under headings for tasks, such as instructional, curricular, managerial, logistical, evaluative, and supportive. Then look at which ones might take place most productively in collaborative contexts. For example, under a responsibility of ordering books and supplies classified as managerial, teams
of teachers might collaborate to pool their library allocations and plan orders of materials that can be shared or used for team teaching. Asterisk (*) those with collaborative potential and add others, such as “organizing cross-grade tutors and study-buddies” or “engaging families in preparing a notebook of community resources.”

ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES IN COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CONSULTATION

When contemplating collaborative consultation roles, educators often express their concerns with these questions:

- Who am I in this role?
- How do I carry out responsibilities of the role?
- How will I know whether or not I am succeeding?
- How can I prepare for such a role?

First, it is necessary for central administrators and policy-makers to justify and authenticate the need for consultative and collaborative roles. Then building level administrators must stress the importance of the consulting role and ensure consultant parity among other teaching staff. A key variable in justifying and authenticating the role is allocating sufficient time and suitable places for interactions to take place.

Teachers will need encouragement to share enthusiastically with consulting teachers the responsibilities for all students. Related services personnel and support personnel will need to be integrated into a school consultation context. Families must receive information about the service roles and be assured that such type of service is appropriate for their child. Students should be an integral part of the interaction and have opportunities to be consultants and consultees as well as clients. Ultimately, communities must support the purposes and anticipate the potential benefits from consultation, collaboration, and co-teaching.

VIGNETTE 1.B

Now consider another event. This one takes place a short time after Vignette 1.A, described earlier. Three special education teachers are talking together in the school district’s conference room before their special education director arrives for a planning meeting.

**Learning Disabilities Teacher:** I understand we’re here to decide how we’re going to inform staff and parents about the consultation and collaboration practices we’ll be implementing soon. But I think we’d better figure out first just what it is we will be doing in these roles.

**Behavioral Disorders Teacher:** Definitely. I have a really basic question. What am I going to do the first week, even the first day, as a consulting teacher? I understand you had some training in collaboration and consulting in your former position out-of-state, but this is new to the rest of us.
Gifted Education Teacher: I agree. I’ve been thinking about all those personal styles, and teaching styles, and subject areas we will be dealing with. Teachers won’t all like or want the same things.

Learning Disabilities Teacher: I doubt this is something we can become experts in very quickly. From what little I’ve had a chance to read about the term collaborative school consultation, the secret for success is good process skills.

Gifted Education Teacher: Yes, but at the same time we have to take into account the materials and methods that each student needs in order to learn. I’m a bit apprehensive about it all, but I’m willing to try it.

Behavioral Disorders Teacher: I guess I am, too. I’ve been thinking for some time now that our current methods of dealing with learning and behavior problems are not as effective and efficient as they should be. I think we must be optimistic about the possible benefits both students and teachers could receive from this method of helping students learn.

Interchangeable Roles and Responsibilities

Consultants become consultees when they seek expertise and information from a classroom teacher, school psychologist, administrator, parent, or resource person in the community. On some occasions a general education teacher is consultant for a special education teacher in order to contribute information about a student’s problems within a classroom context not available to the special education teacher. In another instance, a parent might act as consultant for a situation in which the principal functions as consultee to help a teacher client with a classroom situation.

A student could be consultant to a teacher consultee in a situation where the family is the client because the family situation is accentuating the student’s school problems. The student might contribute to problem identification and interventions, with the teacher providing direct service to parents.

The client of a consultation is typically an individual; however, clients also can be a group or team of individuals, such as a family or a within-class group of students. On occasion the client might even be an entire staff, school system, or community.

Individuals who are consultants (specialists), consultees (mediators), or clients (targets) in one consultative situation may exchange roles under different circumstances. For example, a special education teacher might be a consultant for one situation and consultee in another. The student is typically the client, or target, for the direct and indirect services of consultee and consultant, but in some cases the student could be a consultee or consultant. Consultation may be initiated by a special education teacher, school administrator, supervisor, or support service professional who has determined that a student’s learning or behavior need requires attention from a collaborative team. It also might be initiated by a teacher, parent, or student acting in a consultee role. In either case, both parties—consultant and consultee—share responsibility for working out a plan to help the client (Heron & Harris, 1982.)

Although roles and responsibilities may vary among individuals from situation to situation, with appropriate role delineation a collaborative spirit can prevail. Collaboration to achieve a common goal generally produces more beneficial results than isolated efforts by an individual. The whole of the combined efforts then is greater than the sum of its parts
(Slavin, 1988). It is the basic idea that two heads are better than one, and several heads are better yet. The consultation process channels each individual’s strengths and talents toward serving the client’s needs. (See Figure 1.2, mixing and matching roles among the three columns to fit various school contexts.)

### Initiating Collaborative School Consultation

School improvement issues, social concerns, and economic conditions may have convinced educators that consultation, collaboration, and teamwork are promising practices for helping students with special needs, but conversion of paper plans and philosophies to func-
tioning systems is not simple. Questions in Vignette 1.B above that were put forth in the school district conference room raise practical concerns:

- Where do I begin as a school consultant?
- What do I do the first day on the job? The first week?
- Let me see a sample schedule for the first week. The first month, also.
- Where am I to be headed by the end of the year?

### APPLICATION 1.4
#### CHANGING ROLES

Each one in a group of three educators receives a red or blue or yellow card. Red cards signify consultant roles, blue are consultees, and yellow are clients. Each person takes a plain card that has a designated role on it from the list in Figure 1.2. Those who are blue card consultees think of a situation, and with their assigned roles all three work out the details of who would do what when. Then the colored cards are switched. The new consultee thinks of another situation, and all three work through that one. The last switch of colored cards will be an opportunity to practice a third role. This application illustrates the interchangeability of roles for a variety of situational combinations.

Other questions and concerns that are likely to surface include:

- Will I have the opportunity to work with students at all? That is why I chose teaching as a career.
- Where’s my room? Will I get office space and supplies?
- Will at least a small group of students fit into that space for some group work?
- Will I be regarded as an important part of the teaching staff?
- I think I will need special preparation for consultation, so where do I get it?
- How will I be evaluated in this role, and by whom?
- If consulting ultimately prepares consultees for direct delivery of special education services, am I working myself out of a job?

Those who will be engaging in consultation services primarily as consultees may be thinking:

- Will this process make me look and feel incompetent?
- How much of my ever-dwindling time with all my students be eroded by this method of service?
- When in the world will I find time and space to interact with these folks?

Participants in consultation and collaboration must be able to voice their concerns and feelings of insecurity as they sort out the dynamics of their new roles. School administrators have the responsibility of initiating open, candid expression of concerns and encouraging intensive discussion about the issues.
KEY ELEMENTS IN CONSULTING AND COLLABORATING

Four elements of collaborative school consultation processes are pictured in the clocklike Figure 1.3:

- **Delineation** of roles
- **Framework** for structuring the roles
- **Evaluation** for assessment of outcomes
- **Preparation** for the roles

Within the four categories, twelve key areas need to be addressed. The sequence of the twelve is very important. Note the starting point in Figure 1.3. In many school contexts, educators begin “too late in the day” to implement consultation, collaboration, and teamwork. In other words, the call for commitment—shown at the “five p.m.” position, is not the starting point. If an attempt is made to start there rather than with preparation in the “early morning hours of the clock,” failure of school consultation will be all but assured. Educators in all educational contexts—administrators, teacher educators, teachers, and support staff—must begin very early in the process, with preparation as the first step. This preparation should take place at all levels—preservice, graduate, and inservice.

**Role Delineation**

The starting point for collaborative school consultation is with careful *preparation* for roles. With that point emphatically made, we will, however, discuss role delineation first in order to put the need for that preparation into perspective.

A specific school role such as counselor, general classroom teacher, specialist in learning disabilities, speech pathologist, or facilitator for the gifted program does not designate a particular consultative role. Rather, the consultation role emanates from a situational need. For example, the consultant, consultee, or client role might be assumed by a parent who provides information to the school administrator, or by a learning disabilities teacher who helps the coach assess a student athlete’s learning problem, or by a mentor who provides the gifted program facilitator with material for development of a gifted student’s potential.

The consultee teams up with and collaborates with the consultant to provide direct service to the client. The client role belongs to the one with the identified need or problem. The total concept reflects the contemporary approach to special services where student needs, not student labels, determine the service and delivery method, and an array of services is targeted and made available to address those needs.

**Role Clarification.** The first subpart to be addressed in role delineation is clarification of the role. Until educators become comfortable with the concepts of consultation, collaboration, and educational teams, ambiguous feelings about it all may persist. Teachers and school staff sometimes are not sure why there are consulting teachers or what these people are supposed to be doing. For example, a facilitator in a consulting role for gifted programs in a large urban high school for several years kept hearing variations on the same concern—“Just how do you spend your day with only 30 students on your caseload? After all, they are fast
learners.” So the facilitator developed a job matrix to categorize the planning, implementation, and evaluation aspects and expectations of the role, and shared it with teaching colleagues and administrators (Hay, 1984).

Classroom teachers may even blame their own heavy responsibilities on the seemingly lighter caseloads of consulting teachers. One high school English teacher told a newly-appointed consulting teacher, “If you were back in your classroom teaching English instead of ‘facilitating’ for a few high ability students, my own student numbers wouldn’t be so high.” Paradoxically, consulting teachers often have excessively demanding workloads
when travel time among schools, and preparing or locating special curriculum and materials, are taken into account. If their workload is too great, the effectiveness of their services will be diminished severely because little time and energy will remain for the coordination and communication activities that are integral to consultation success.

Seamless instructional plans for students’ learning and behavioral needs require extensive knowledge of role responsibilities among all involved (Allington & Broikou, 1988). A classroom teacher and a reading specialist may have information to share in addressing a struggling reader’s strengths and deficits, yet may know relatively little about each other’s curriculum, educational priorities, or expectations for the student. They must coordinate their efforts, or those efforts may be counterproductive. In one unfortunate case, a reading specialist was instructing a fifth-grader with reading problems to slow down and read more deliberately, while the learning disabilities specialist was encouraging him to read much more rapidly and was thinking about making a referral for gifted program services. The student, a pleasant and cooperative child, was trying valiantly to please both teachers simultaneously.

Although there has been minimal study of general education teachers’ roles as collaborators with special educators, some research does suggest a gap between teacher perceptions of actual and ideal performance in collaborative roles. Harris and Zetlin (1993) emphasize that collaborative consultation requires people to relinquish their traditional roles in order to share skills and to rotate their assignments in ways that expand educational experiences for both students and the adults involved.

Consultees may question a consultant’s ability to address their unique classroom situation, especially if the consultant is young and inexperienced. As one classroom teacher put it when asked about involving the special education consulting teacher, “I’d never ask for her help. What does she know about a full classroom of students? She’s never dealt with more than five or six at a time, and she never has taught in a regular classroom.”

Role Parity. Along with role ambiguity and misunderstanding, special education consulting teachers may feel an absence of role parity. They may feel as if they do not belong to any one school or faculty. They may feel minimally important to students and the educational system, or cut off and isolated from general classroom teachers because of differing responsibilities, and from special education colleagues because of distance and schedules.

Substitutes might not be provided for consulting teachers when they are absent. In fact, these teachers may be pulled out of their own roles on occasion to substitute for absent classroom teachers, or to perform other tasks that come up suddenly. Consulting teachers have been asked to guide visitors on a school tour, drive the school bus, and perform secretarial tasks. Meanwhile, classroom teachers are not going to wait with open arms for consulting personnel to come and save them. Inevitably, school bells ring, classroom doors open, and the school day commences. Life, and school, will go on every day for students and their teachers with or without support from others. All of this conveys a message of diminished parity for the consulting role and a subtle or not-so-subtle impression of non-importance.

Role confusion and inequality can cause stress and may lead to burnout eventually. Teachers who feel like “second-class” colleagues, not accepted or appreciated as a vital part of the staff, may develop defenses that erode their effectiveness. Some who travel extensively in their cars from school to school have been dubbed “windshield” personnel in some
areas. These problems are accentuated by the misconception that consultants have no ownership in student welfare and development. Ongoing recognition and reinforcement of consulting teacher contributions toward student success are important for credibility of the role and professional morale, and students served indirectly by the consultant tend not to be viewed as “belonging” to the consultant.

**Role Expectations.** Sometimes colleagues have unreasonable expectations for the consultant role, anticipating instant success and miraculous student progress in a very short while. When results with students are slower than the consultees have hoped, or do not happen at all, their attitudes may range from guarded skepticism to open disapproval of the consultation approach.

These educators may expect too much, or too little, from the consulting role. A school consultant cannot be a panacea for every student’s difficulties. Teachers may wish to see results too soon, or neglect to monitor results and then let ineffective service drag on too long. Consultees may exploit consultants by expecting them to “fix” the student, and if this does not happen, then downplay consultation as a flop. Consulting teachers may expect and want to work only with students, not adults. “I was trained to work with kids, and that’s what I enjoy,” confessed one consultant when assigned to an indirect service role. The team approach may be awkward for an educator at first, not only for a consultant, but for the consultee as well. Unrealistic and unreasonable expectations must be set aside in the early planning stages of school consultation methods. Consultants should set reasonable goals for themselves and not try to do too much.

Sometimes the most difficult part of a support role is backing out once the consultee experiences success in meeting the client’s needs (Stainback & Stainback, 1988). It is highly unlikely that effective consultation will mean elimination of the position, as some consulting teachers fear. The more successful that consultation services are, the more teachers and administrators are prone to value them for both their immediate contribution and their long-range positive ripple effects. As one example, students missed in initial referrals could be targeted and benefited by the interaction among classroom teachers and consulting teachers (Dyck & Dettmer, 1989).

The involvement of as many school personnel as possible through needs assessments, interviews, professional development, and both formal and informal communications, will minimize unwarranted expectations for consulting roles. Building successful collaborations with more receptive and cooperative colleagues at first will generate confidence in the consultant and respect for the approach by the reluctant and the resistant.

**Framework**

A framework for school consultation, collaboration, and teamwork calls for structures that provide time and facilities in which to meet, and management of the details so consultation is as convenient and nonintrusive as possible. Structure will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 2, and time and resource management in Chapter 6.

**Structure.** Consultants need a structure within which to carry out their roles and responsibilities. It is one thing to design a hypothetical method of consultation, quite another to design multiple methods for different situations, and an even greater challenge to select and
put into motion the right method for each situation. This is easier if preceded by role clarification and assurance of role parity and appropriate role expectations.

The consultant will want to formulate several methods for consultation and collaboration in a variety of grade levels, subject areas, special needs categories, and school, community, and family contexts. The consultation structure should fit the context of the system. It also should provide a workable model, which will be addressed in Chapter 2. Consultants should design their own consultation method to custom-fit school needs. A poll of teachers asking how they would use a consulting teacher is a good way to begin. Studying and observing team teaching, and collaborative and consultative structures, from other school systems also is helpful.

**Resources.** One of the most overwhelming and frustrating obstacles to school consultation is lack of time for consultation to occur. Scarcity of time is a major deterrent to success of the collaborative consultation process (Idol-Maestas & Ritter, 1985; Johnson, Pugach & Hammitt, 1988; McLoughlin & Kelly, 1982; Speece & Mandell, 1980). Idol (1986) recommends that resource teachers have at least one-third of their school time available for consultations. In an earlier study by Neel (1981), 48 percent of the special education teachers queried reported that they have no time scheduled for consultation and are expected to provide consultation services beyond regularly scheduled teaching hours. Most often they must use their own planning time for consultation, which is not an ideal way to instill positive attitudes toward the consultation approach.

Many special education teachers and classroom teachers have reported that their school day is simply not designed to accommodate collaboration (Idol-Maestas, 1983; Stainback & Stainback, 1988). Even if the consultant can arrange and coordinate a schedule for meeting with consultees and following up on results, it can be next-to-impossible to arrange significant blocks of consultee time for collaboration. Working out such a plan is one of the most formidable tasks facing a consultant, particularly one who also has direct teaching responsibilities at specific times.

Administrators must assume responsibility for allocating time needed by consultants and consultees to collaborate and co-teach. If they lend their authority to this endeavor, school personnel will be more willing to brainstorm ways of getting together. Schenkat (1988) points out that if working conditions in schools could be restructured to allow greater flexibility in scheduling, teachers could find the time to collaborate with colleagues. This would help build bridges between special education and general education, while expanding services to all students who have special needs.

Unfortunately, when consulting teachers first initiate consultation and collaboration, it is very likely that these activities will have to come out of their own time—before school, after school, during lunch hours, perhaps even on weekends. Even so, this temporary accommodation should be replaced as soon as possible with a more formal allocation of time during the school day. This is not only for their well-being, but to emphasize that consultation and collaboration are not simply add-on services to be carried out by a zealous, dedicated few.

When time is arranged for a consultation, facilities must be made available in which to conduct the consultation. The area should be pleasant, quiet, convenient, and relatively private for free exchange of confidences. Such a place is at a premium in a bustling school community.

**Management.** There is a risk of letting fiscal issues, rather than student needs, dictate the service delivery method. The caseload issue must be addressed carefully. Assigning large case-
loads to consulting teachers may save money in the short run, but could cost more eventually if student performance does not improve or if teachers burn out as a result (Huefner, 1988). Problems related to caseload are complex. For example, the average time needed to complete one Individual Education Program (IEP) has been assessed as 6.5 hours (Heron & Kimball, 1988; Price & Goodman, 1980). A consulting teacher with an overwhelming caseload of students and time-consuming responsibilities such as development of IEPs will have little or no time to consult and collaborate. Although direct service can be a strategy for easing into indirect service, the load must be manageable. If a consulting teacher’s caseload is too great, direct service is inadequate, possibilities for indirect services are minimal, and the program is self-defeating.

One model, the Resource/Consulting Teacher Program (Idol-Maestas, 1983), which will be discussed further in Chapter 2, incorporates 20 to 40 percent of the consulting teacher’s school day into consultation-related activities. These include discussing educational problems, presenting ideas for use in regular classrooms, inservice, observation, performing curriculum-based assessment, demonstrating instructional techniques (Wiederholt, Hammill, & Brown, 1983), and coordinating the program.

A consultant must be very organized and efficient. Greenburg (1987) notes a number of studies indicating that while resource teachers may be committed to direct service as their major activity, considerable portions of their time are required for record-keeping, paperwork, and teacher consultant responsibilities (Evans, 1980; McGlothlin, 1981; Miller & Sabatino, 1978). Consulting teachers manage and monitor consultee use of materials as varied as books, tests, kits, tapes, films, and media equipment. They help teachers develop systems of observation, monitoring, and assessment, along with performing these activities themselves. Their paperwork, scheduling, and communication systems must be efficient and effective. Techniques for managing these activities will be presented in Chapter 6.

Recommended caseload numbers vary depending on school context, travel time required, grade level, exceptionalities and special needs served, and structure of the consulting method. The numbers must be kept manageable to fulfill the intent and promise of consultation and collaboration. The key lies in documenting carefully all consultation activities and making note also of those which should have happened but did not, due to time constraints. Consultants must negotiate with their administrators for reasonable caseload assignments and blocks of time in which to consult, collaborate, and co-teach.

Evaluation and Support

The third of four key elements in school consultation features evaluation and support. Educators will need to document the effectiveness of consultation and collaboration in order to ensure continuing support for this kind of educational service. School personnel are understandably skeptical of indirect service if it does not demonstrate its usefulness. They may be involved initially because they are told to, or because they have been talked into giving it a try, but their interest will wane if positive results are not forthcoming.

Assessment. Assessment is vital to the success of collaborative school consultation. School personnel will be more accepting of this service delivery if its effectiveness can be demonstrated through appropriate interpretation of valid data. In keeping with the philosophy of collaboration, evaluation of the consultation should be designed cooperatively by personnel from varying roles.
Very few evaluation measures have been readily available in the published research on education-based consultation (Tindal & Taylor-Pendergast, 1989); a few of these are rating scales of judgments that represent a variety of skills and activities, and estimates of engaged time that note the activities required or demanded. Administrators, advisory council members, and policy-makers will need to study carefully the few procedures that are available for assessment, and beyond that, use their skills to design more helpful and practical assessment techniques that fit their school context and consultant role responsibilities.

Not only should processes and content be evaluated, but the context of the school setting as well. For example, a consultant may have excellent communication skills and a wealth of content with which to consult and collaborate, but if no time is provided for interaction, there will be few positive results. Consultants will want to evaluate every stage of the process to keep heading in the right direction. (Assessment will be addressed further in Chapter 6.)

Evaluation should include a variety of data-collection methods to provide the kinds of information needed by target groups. Consultation and collaboration practices must not be judged inadequate for the wrong reasons or under erroneous assumptions. If time has not been allocated for the interactions, if staff have not had preparation and encouragement, and if administrator support is lacking, those elements should be targeted for improvement before consultation service is faulted.

Acceptance. Participation in collaborative programs must be voluntary for all involved in order for the programs to be accepted (Friend & Cook, 1990). Administrator acceptance and encouragement will help to a great extent. Broadcasting successes and promoting the benefits of consultations and collaborations that have taken place may get a collaborative consultation bandwagon rolling and the most influential of the reluctants on board. Most important, however, is involving people right from the start in needs assessments, planning efforts, evaluations, inservice presentations, and personal contacts to instill ownership and even arouse a little curiosity. Techniques and incentives for promoting acceptance of consultation, collaboration, and teamwork through professional development will be discussed in Chapter 10.

Commitment. Consultation signals change. Collaboration requires practice. Co-teaching means sharing the ownership. These realities make involvement by school personnel more difficult, and attainment of their commitment more challenging. Consultation in the minds of many general educators remains associated with exclusive special education programs and assistance in mainstreamed classes. If teachers resent having more responsibility for special education students, they may blame school consultation and consultants for this situation. Consultees and support personnel need to develop a plan and a vision to share responsibilities for educating students who have special needs. Most of all, they need significant administrator support and encouragement for doing so. (This issue will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 10.) Those who consult must seize every opportunity to cultivate commitment by all for making it work.

Preparation

Now we return to the initial phase of the process. (See again Figure 1.3 on p. 15.) Preparation programs for mastering the skills of school consultation and collaboration are a necessity. Opportunities and incentives must be provided for three populations:
Preservice students, who should prepare to be consultees and potential consultants.

Graduate students in degree programs, who should develop skills in consulting and in preparing others to be consultants and consultees.

Inservice teachers, who should prepare for roles as consultees and advocates for integrating consultation and collaboration into their school contexts.

Skills of the consultant and consultee are enhanced through professional development, coaching and feedback in process and content skill areas.

Preservice Preparation. Teacher preparation programs do not often include consulting processes such as group problem solving, communication skills, and conflict resolution. Not so many years ago, studies revealed that collaborative consultation preparation for preservice teachers in college and university programs was the exception rather than the rule (Lilly & Givens-Ogle, 1981). Some progress has been made since that time, but much more is needed. Friend and Cook (1990) stress that preservice teachers need an understanding of the conditions for collaboration, and this is not typically a part of teacher education program curricula. They will need knowledge about and skills for sharing resources, sharing participation, and sharing accountability. Otherwise, they are being set up to fail, particularly in schools implementing collaborative practices.

Another much neglected area in preservice teacher preparation is family involvement. Novice teachers should have experiences in relating to families as valuable team members while they are still formulating their teaching philosophies and strategies (Kerns, 1992). Phillips, Allred, Brulle, and Shank (1990) propose that collaboration and consultation skills can be cultivated by teacher educators at the preservice level. They recommend that teacher preparation programs provide introductory education courses in which general and special education preservice teachers participate jointly in practicum experiences that serve a diverse range of children’s needs. However, this approach requires concerted effort by college and university personnel, many of whom have not prepared themselves to engage in collaboration and consultation functions, let alone to facilitate development of these behaviors in their students.

Some veteran educators may be nervous about having novice teachers address consultation practices before they have experienced real-world teaching. Nevertheless, the seeds of awareness can and should be planted early to bear fruit later in important ways. After all, for most new teachers there is not much time for experience to be acquired between that last day of their teacher education program and the first day of stepping into the classroom virtually alone as an autonomous professional with their assigned students.

Graduate Certification and Degree Programs. If teachers are not trained in consultation, they will tend to shy away from pertinent feedback and provide only broad generalizations or retreat into paperwork associated with the role (Gersten, Darch, Davis, & George, 1991). Kauffman (1994) stresses that special education teachers who are being prepared to consult and collaborate with general educators must have special instructional and behavior management expertise or their input will have little meaning beyond that of the general educators.

The number of preparation programs for consulting teachers is increasing (Dickens & Jones, 1990; Gersten, Darch, Davis, & George, 1991; Thurston & Kimsey, 1989), but universities have far to go to meet the needs. Some states require development of consultation
skills for teacher certification. Inclusion of this training in standards for accreditation of teacher education programs would be one way to encourage more emphasis on collaborative school consultation and collaboration at the graduate and preservice levels. School administrators should recruit those who welcome the opportunity to work with adults as well as students in school settings.

Each training program will be unique; however, a basic program for collaboration should include:

- Delineating their roles
- Creating a framework that allows them to fulfill their roles
- Evaluating their effectiveness
- Helping prepare colleagues for collaborative consultation even as they expand their own proficiencies

Preparation programs must provide experiences well beyond the “mentioning” mode of training that offers only superficial exposure to a large amount of information and minimal or no practice with complex ideas and behaviors. Course syllabi should include not only the conventional learning strategies of lecture, reading, and discussion, but a strong focus on experiential content. Small-group activities, simulations and role-plays, interviewing, assessments, videotaped consultation practice, reaction and reflection papers, resource searches, and practice with the tools and strategies of technology will help educators to be more comfortable and capable in interactive school roles.

**Professional Development.** Friend and Cook (1990) assert that teachers are being set up to fail when they enter the profession with content expertise and method but without skills for working effectively with colleagues. The lack of preparation for consultation is compounded by a dearth of empirical studies that might provide evidence for or against various components of consultation training. However, movements such as school restructuring and school improvement have stimulated some efforts such as those reported by Rule, Fodor-Davis, Morgan, Salzberg, and Chen (1990). In their study, Rule and colleagues identified the need for administrative support, technical assistance, and follow-up assistance, as well as the inservice training. Through inservice and other professional development activities, consultation and collaboration programs can be tailored to each school context.

**INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AMONG ADULTS IN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS**

A patchwork quilt is made up of various colors, textures, sizes, and designs. If every piece were identical, the quilt would be drab and dull. Interesting, lively patchworks are those in which each piece contributes its uniqueness to the overall collage of colors and textures. Even if a few of the colors or textures clash, when assembled into an overall design the result is a vibrant, colorful structure to brighten any setting.

In much the same way schools are patchworks of attitudes, personalities, values, preferences, and interests. Each individual in the school setting is different, with every one contributing uniqueness to invigorate the whole. People may differ markedly and sometimes even take serious issue with one another, but the contributions of variety can be quite remarkable.
Educators attend to individual differences and preferences among students when planning for their learning needs, but too often overlook the beauty and value of patchwork quilt-type differences among the adults with whom they work. Constructive use of individual differences among school personnel is extremely important within the collaborative school environment.

It is easy in the busy and public but relatively autonomous school setting to overlook the impact that differing professional values, teaching styles, and personal interests of colleagues have on working together. Unfortunately, study of adult differences and attention to constructive use of those differences is, for the most part, neglected in teacher preparation programs. Yet the school arena sparkles with variability among individuals of all ages.

VIGNETTE 1.C

(Comments at various times of the school day in hallways and gathering areas):

“I was eager to try that teaching strategy in our school. Why don’t other people on the faculty want to give it a shot? It’s been working so well with the faculty across town. . . .”

“Here we go again. Another change to spin us around for our latest ride on the school improvement merry-go-round. . . .”

“Why are some people so negative toward new ideas before they even try them or give them a chance? . . .”

“We just never see eye-to-eye on anything in our department. It’s really frustrating. . . .”

“Seems like we do the same old thing, with people falling in line like sheep to stay together. Why not strike out for new ground? I say, let’s take some risks and do something different for a change. . . .”

“I just can’t figure out where that parent is coming from. . . .”

“Another meeting? They drag on and on, and we have nothing to show for all the time and effort we wasted. . . .”

“What a frantic mess that conference was! Not enough time even to figure out what the problem is, much less arrive at some sensible solutions. . . .”

“Wasn’t that a great meeting? We’re off to a good start. Now our next step should be. . . .”

Valuing Differences among Adults

Much of the seemingly random variation in human behavior is actually quite orderly and consistent, because it is based on the way people prefer to use their perception and judgment (Keirsey & Bates, 1978; Lawrence, 1993). If one person views the world and reacts to it in ways unlike another, it is because that person processes information differently. Different viewpoints contribute diverse insights which help broaden understanding of problems and generate promising alternatives for problem solutions.

It is easy and convenient, but myopic, to endorse only one way of doing something—one’s own—while wondering why everyone else is not clever enough and agreeable enough to concur and fall into step. However, a situation perceived one way by one educator might be looked upon quite differently by another.
APPLICATION 1.5
PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

The leader prepares several puzzles ahead of time. Pictures of adults interacting, schoolroom pictures, or pictures of children working or playing, are effective. There should be one puzzle for each 5 or 6 people and the size should be 8½ × 11 or larger. A light-colored, 1-inch “frame” around each picture should be left intact, and the rest of each picture cut into enough large pieces so every participant can have at least 2 or 3 pieces. After dividing into groups of 5 or 6 people, one person is designated responsibility for the frame. Every participant (including the frame-holder) takes several pieces of the disassembled puzzle. (The puzzle pieces should be large enough that several words can be written on them with a dark felt pen.) The group engages in discussion about their similar and different characteristics and preferences. The person with the frame writes characteristics around the frame that everyone in the group shares—for example, “We are all female,” or “We all don’t have a cat.” Next, each person writes on each one of his or her pieces a different personal characteristic that belongs to no one else in the group—for example, “I was born in a taxicab en route to the hospital,” or “Brussels sprouts is my favorite vegetable,” or “I have a tattoo.”

The group then assembles the puzzle, talks about it, and shares the information with all other groups. When displayed with an interaction-focused title, the assembled and glued puzzles make an effective bulletin board display or a two-sided mobile. All could be arranged into a group mobile and hung from the ceiling or doorway. (Occasionally puzzles may be handed out that are missing a piece or two. This metaphorically illustrates the “missing element” in a group that decreases their effectiveness.)

Thinking Together in Different Ways

In order to serve students best, educators do not need to think alike—they need to think together. The process of thinking together divergently is not an oxymoron—it can be very productive. Understanding and valuing the uniquenesses of adults in their orientations toward the world, and their styles and preferences for processing information, are key factors in the success of collegial relationships. Educators who make conscientious efforts to respect the individualism and independence of their students need to respect and protect these rights for their colleagues and the parents of their students as well.

One of the most overlooked but crucial factors in teacher preparation is the ability to relate constructively to others, including colleagues, by responding to them and their preferences and needs with emotional maturity (Jersild, 1955). Hunter (1985) urged teachers to move toward dialectical thinking. This would not mean abandoning one’s own position, but building correction into one’s own viewpoints by taking the opposing view momentarily. Hunter urged all to “come out of armed camps . . . where we’re not collaborating, so that ‘I understand why you think it’s right for your students to line up while I think it’s better for them to come in casually’” (Hunter, 1985, p. 3). She stressed that when educators show respect for others’ points of view, they model the cooperation students need for their lives and work in the future.

Today’s students will be leaders in a shrinking global community. It is vital that educators prepare them to function successfully in diverse, multicultural societies. The most ef-
Effective way of doing this is to model such skills every day in the school setting with their colleagues and their students’ families. Collaborative consultation and co-teaching roles are natural and appropriate vehicles for modeling constructive use of individual differences among people of all ages.

**Recognizing Individual Preferences and Styles**

During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s numerous methodologies and instruments were developed to help people understand human behavior and improve human relationships. A number of these instruments have been used in such diverse social service areas as education, counseling (for marriage and family, personal, and career needs), religion, business and industry, and others.

Assessment of individual differences can take place with one or more instruments among a wide range of existing tools and techniques, including Gregorc’s instrument for profiling learning style (Gregorc & Ward, 1977), aptitude-treatment interaction theories relating individual differences to instructional method, Kolb cognitive style concepts (Kolb, 1976), the McCarthy (1990) 4MAT system, the Dunn and Dunn learning style assessment (Dunn & Dunn, 1978), and the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, 1962) to name only a few of the more prominent examples. Each of these systems has been used in a variety of contexts to increase awareness and understanding of human preferences that influence behavior. To balance the zeal of those who support each system, there are others who caution against overgeneralizing and oversimplifying complex human attributes through techniques such as self-report assessment and dichotomous interpretations—for example, concrete/abstract, morning/evening, extrovert/introvert, or impulsive/reflective comparisons. Nevertheless, Carl Jung, eminent Swiss psychologist on whose work the well-known Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is based, professed in a convincing way that people differ in fundamental ways even though all have the same instincts driving them from within (Jung, 1923).

Personality distinguishes an individual and characterizes him or her in relationships with others. It results from inner forces acting upon and being acted upon by outer forces (Hall & Lindzey, 1978). Any one of a person’s individual instincts is not more important than any one of another person’s instincts. What is important is the person’s own preferences for personal functioning. These individual preferences provide the “patchwork quilt” of human interaction that can be so constructive and facilitative for teamwork and group problem solving. For example, a person who looks for action and variety, shares experiences readily, prefers to work with others, and tends to get impatient with slow, tedious jobs, is indicating preferences that are quite different from one who prefers working alone, laboring long and hard on one thing, and seeking abundant quiet time for reflection. As another example, an individual who is interested in facts, works steadily and patiently, and enjoys being realistic and practical, contrasts helpfully with one who prefers to generate multiple possibilities, attends to the whole aspect of a situation, and anticipates what will be said or done.

Yet again, a person who needs logical reasons, holds firmly to convictions, and contributes intellectually while trying to be fair and impartial has different type preferences from one who relates freely to most people, likes to agree with others, and cultivates enthusiasm within the group. Finally, an individual who likes to have things decided and settled, functions purposefully, and seeks to make conditions as they “should be,” does not have the same type preferences as one who has a more live-and-let-live attitude, leaving things open and flexible with attitudes of adaptability and tolerance.
Every person is equipped with a broad spectrum of attributes and could use them as needed, but typically prefers to focus intensively upon one or the other at a time. Murphy (1987) explains this point by using the example of color. Just as red cannot be blue, one cannot prefer both polarities simultaneously. One might prefer having a red car, but could live with a blue one if circumstances necessitated having it. If a person prefers to apply experiences to problems, that person cannot also prefer to apply imagination to those problems. But he or she can call forth imagination if need be, and may benefit from practicing the process of imagining or supposing in order to use that approach more productively.

Remarkably, one’s less preferred functions can contribute to productivity and self-satisfaction because they provide balance and completeness. They are the well-springs of enthusiasm and energy. Being a person’s most childlike and primitive functions, least-preferred functions can be quite helpful by creating a certain awkwardness and unrest that cultivates innovation. However, people do call upon their preferred functions when ease, comfort, and efficiency are most important.

Self-Study of Preferred Styles and Functions

Until individuals engage in self-study, they are prone to view others through the biased and distorted lenses of their own unrecognized needs, fears, desires, anxieties, and sometimes hostile impulses (Jersild, 1955). School consultants should reflect on their own values and preferences before attempting to work intensively with other people’s preferences (Brown, Wyne, Blackburn, & Powell, 1979).

When educators do reflect, they make comments such as these:

“I have lots of skills, but I don’t seem to get them put together to do what I want.”
“I am fed up with these reports that have to be done on such short notice. If data are turned in hastily and carelessly, what is their value?”
“I worked really hard on that project, and then everybody else seemed to forget that the ideas were mine when it came time to give out recognition.”
“Should I state my views, or wait and see what everyone else thinks and then fall in line?”
“It seems like all I do with this faculty is put out fires.”
“If I didn’t show up tomorrow, I’m not sure any of my colleagues would notice or care, so long as there is a substitute teacher here to corral the kids.”

Self-study can be undertaken through a variety of methods and settings, including group work, role playing, reading, conferences and workshops. Personality, temperament, and learning style tools such as those named earlier in this chapter are useful when discussed in staff development sessions or department meetings with small-group activities that highlight the rich variety inherent in human nature. Of course, no single journal article, book, conference, or training package will provide sufficient material to fully understand the sophistication and complexity of individual differences.

As stated earlier, oversimplification and overgeneralization of complex constructs such as personality must be avoided. Conclusions should not become labels. Rigid interpretations must give way to open mindedness and respect. With these cautions, teachers can
CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF ADULT DIFFERENCES IN CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION

Teachers often differ dramatically in their preferences. A collaborative school consultation might involve one teacher who pays close attention to detail, examining every test score and asking questions about particular assignments, and another who scarcely looks at the test scores, preferring instead to solicit verbal, generalized assessment of the student’s capabilities from other professionals. A study by Lawrence and DeNovellis (1974) revealed that teachers with different preferences tend to behave differently in the classroom.

Later, Carlyn (1977) studied the relationship between personality characteristics and teaching preferences of prospective teachers. Some are more interested in administrative functions and others have a strong need for independence and creativity. Some prefer planning school programs, while others enjoy working with small groups of students. Some people like action and variety more than quiet and reflection. Some like to work with others in groups, whereas others prefer to work alone or with one person. Some people get impatient with slow jobs and complicated procedures. Others can work on one thing for a long time, and they resent interruptions. Carlyn concluded in her study that teachers of different personality type preferences also preferred different kinds of teaching situations. These
kinds of preferences and values help explain why some teachers will experiment with modifications and materials, while others resist or just never seem to get around to doing it.

When a group of educators with different type preferences collaborate, they have the opportunity to contribute a variety of strengths within the interaction. Those who like to bring up new possibilities and suggest ingenious ways of approaching problems will benefit from having other people supply pertinent facts and keep track of essential details. When some are finding flaws and holding to an existing policy, others contribute by selling the idea, conciliating, and arousing enthusiasm (Myers, 1980b).

APPLICATION 1.6
SHARING A PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

In a small group of 5 or 6 people, describe an experience from your teaching or schooling in which you put forth significant effort, but ended up feeling unappreciated, unreinforced, and perhaps a bit of a failure in that instance. After all in the group have shared a personal example (with each having the privilege of passing up the opportunity if they prefer not to share), discuss how members of the group felt about each other’s disappointing professional experience, and demonstrate caring for their disappointment, especially if it was not something that would have bothered you all that much.

Opposite types may or may not attract, but they definitely need to be available in order to attain maximum team productivity. However, managing differences elegantly is a tremendous challenge for a consultant or consulting teacher. As stated earlier, the primary goal in consulting, collaborating, and working as a team is not to think alike, but to think together. Each person’s individual preferences and values are important to the effectiveness of interaction. Differences in schools and classrooms are not just disagreements between adult and child, or teacher and student, or administrator and teacher or paraeducator and consulting teacher. They reflect differing orientations to the world, individual learning styles, personal values, and individual work habits. These differences, when understood and appreciated, can be constructive for serving student needs.

USING ADULT DIFFERENCES TO FACILITATE TEAM INTERACTION

Good teamwork calls for the recognition and use of certain valuable differences among all members of the team (Kummerow & McAllister, 1988; Myers, 1974). The most effective teams do not agree all the time, but they use individual differences constructively (Kummerow & McAllister, 1988; Truesdell, 1983). Individuals have far more potential than they use at any one time, and the power of this potential in team settings is exponential.

Some researchers and practitioners focus on the need for collaborators to view problems from mutual perspectives and shared frames of reference using a common language.
(Friend & Cook, 1990; Lopez, Dalal, & Yoshida, 1993). These mind sets are without doubt important for rapport-building and initiating exploration of a problem or need. However, greatest team success will come from division of labor and efforts toward mutual respect of members’ differences, from openness to the contributions of others no matter how they differ, and from facilitative communication that respects and accommodates a variety of verbal and nonverbal styles.

Needing to view matters through a shared lens, yet doing so with different eye structures, may be a conundrum but nevertheless a useful one. As Lopez et al. (1993) note, consultants and consultees must understand how divergent points of view may predispose them to see problems in conflicting ways. What needs to be said beyond that, is that the divergency is an asset in problem solving and not a liability, when utilized by skilled collaborators. Educators can learn a great deal from talking with colleagues with whom they differ both theoretically and methodologically (Gallessich, 1973). With a common vocabulary and a framework of respect for individuality, teamwork can be much more productive.

**Differences When Communicating**

Many communication problems among team members are due to individual differences. A statement that seems clear and reasonable to one person may sound meaningless or preposterous to another (Myers, 1974). One may want an explicit statement of the problem before considering possible solutions. Another member of the team might want at least the prospect of an interesting possibility before buckling down to facts. Yet another may demand a beginning, a logically arranged sequence of points, and an end (especially an end, Myers cautions). Still another will really listen only if the discussion starts with a concern for people and any direct effects of the issue on people. Myers stresses, “It is human nature not to listen attentively if one has the impression that what is being said is going to be irrelevant or unimportant” (Myers, 1974, p. 4). Communication is such a critical part of successful consultation and collaboration that it will be the focus of concern in Chapter 4.

**Differences When Problem Solving**

Individual differences play a significant role in the development and efficient use of problem-solving skills. Some individuals are very accurate in problem identification, and others may need very little time to come up with possible solutions. One person may focus more on the problem and the facts, while another focuses on process and the meaning behind the facts. If an individual needs to solve a problem alone, he or she must manage multiple perspectives, but problem-solving by a well-mixed team of individuals enables most perspectives to be represented efficiently. The adage “many heads are better than one” applies here. With pooled experiences, interests, and abilities, problem solving is enriched.

No specific preference is predictive of success in communication or problem solving within the group, and research shows that teams with a complete representation of types outperform virtually any single-type or similar-type team (Blaylock, 1983). The likelihood of having such team versatility is better than might be expected, for a single group composed of several individuals will contain many, if not most, preference types.
APPLICATION 1.7
USING INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES CONSTRUCTIVELY

Choose a favorite lesson or subject area and imagine that you and a consultee will be team-teaching this material. How would you go about this? Although it would be important to know something about your co-teacher’s style and preferences, are there things you should study about yourself first before embarking on this collaborative endeavor? How can you share that information pleasantly and agreeably with your colleague, and then learn comparable information about that person, in order to team co-plan and co-teach more effectively?

APPLICATION 1.8
PREFERRED RECOGNITION AND REWARD

Form groups of four to six and discuss ways in which you would like to be recognized, and perhaps rewarded, reinforced, or even praised, for something you did that required effort and skill. Then talk over with the group the variations in outcomes that different individuals prefer. How might this affect a work context such as the school and the teaching profession? How could you provide reinforcement to people who have different preferences from yours?

It is inappropriate and unjust to assume too much from analysis of individual differences. No generalization should be applied to a single case, for any case could be an anom-
aly. As an example, Hammer (1985) stresses that a book (Moby Dick, for example) can be read in different ways by different people. One reader may have an eye toward the narrative as a thrilling sea adventure, while another may appreciate the symbolism of the whale. The danger is in assuming what pleases others and how it pleases, to the point of denying opportunities for other experiences. Teachers who assume that “her type does not like to read,” may stop offering her books. If a teacher believes that a student will not enjoy a particular kind of learning experience, he may be denying the student necessary opportunities to develop (Hammer, 1985). These lessons were learned “the hard way” in uses and misuses of learning styles theory by others before us and should not have to be repeated and relearned.

All good teaching methods have value for some students at certain times and in particular places. By the same token, each method will be received differently by each student (Murphy, 1987). Valuing individual differences will require more than merely tolerating them. It means accepting the fact that people are different and the world is the better for the diversity (Murphy, 1987). Teacher preparation programs must be more enterprising and effective in preparing graduates to have a superlative ability for understanding individual differences among educator-colleagues as well as students. Much more research is needed on the constructive use of individual differences, especially in the area of school consultation, collaboration, and working in professional teams.

APPLICATION 1.9
WHAT IS YOUR PREFERENCE?

Group participants into triads or quads. Allow three minutes to discuss each of these preference sets. Ask:

Would you rather vacation in the Bahamas, or in Alaska, and why?
Would you rather work in elementary school or secondary school, and why?
Would you prefer to explore deep ocean or deep space, and why?
Would you rather win a new car or a new, installed kitchen, and why?

Then with the whole group share some interesting and unusual things you learned about each other.

TIPS FOR WORKING TOGETHER IN SCHOOLS

1. Value, really value, and not just give token approval or lip service to consultation and collaboration as tools for improving long-range planning and coordination among educators.
2. Do not wait to be approached for consultation, collaboration, and teamwork.
3. Try not to press for one’s own solutions to school needs, educators’ needs, or student needs. Strive instead for collaborative efforts to problem-solve together.
4. Refrain from assuming that colleagues are waiting around to be “saved.”
5. Call on building administrators when you are in the building, leaving brief notes that you stopped by, if they are unavailable.
6. Do not share problems or concerns with classroom teachers unless they can have significant input or you have a suggestion for them that might help.
7. Carry your share of the load in contributing to work schedules, school social functions, faculty meetings, and other professional obligations and courtesies.
8. Attend extra-curricular functions of assigned schools as much as possible, and offer to help out if feasible.
9. Have lunch, workroom breaks, and informal visits with building staff often.
10. Attend monthly grade level/departmental meetings to interact with colleagues and to learn of their needs and concerns.
11. Ask for help when you are facing a problem, because it has a humanizing, rapport-building effect.
12. Visit every teacher in the building regularly.
13. Leave the door open, both figuratively and literally, for future partnerships and collaborations.
14. Don’t be seen or perceived in your area(s) as doing little or nothing.
15. Know when to stay in the consultation, and recognize situations in which it is time to wrap it up.
16. “Dress for success” in each setting, matching your level of dress with the context in order to establish parity.
17. Listen to the other person’s point of view. Seek to understand the person’s ideas and meaning.
18. Encourage each member of a collaborative group to share knowledge and perceptions about an issue, in order to establish a solid framework in which to discuss the issue.
19. Take the time to assess preferences of consultees before deciding upon a consultation method.
20. Encourage input from as many sources as possible when deliberating upon a difficult problem, in order to take advantage of many styles, preferences, and cultural perspectives.
21. Appreciate perceptions and preferences different from one’s own by engaging in a dialectical conversation. Do not feel that it is necessary to change your position, or to convert the other person to your position.
22. When students with special needs are included in general education classrooms, share with receiving teachers any helpful information about the students’ learning styles and preferences. But take care not to stereotype students or alter teacher expectations inappropriately.
23. Everyone is not an expert at everything. Find ways to acknowledge and use suggestions from others.
24. Respect the rights of others to hold different beliefs. While one may not agree with others, one must assume they are acting in ways they believe appropriate.
25. Really care about other persons’ feelings and ideas, and show it through actions.
CHAPTER REVIEW

1. Consultation, collaboration, and co-teaching involve sharing expertise and concerns, laboring together, and planning and working together as a team to identify students’ special needs and implement programs that facilitate learning and achievement.

2. Collaborative consultation in school contexts can be described as interaction in which school personnel and parents confer and collaborate as a team within the school context to identify learning and behavioral needs, and to plan, implement, and evaluate educational programs for serving those needs. The school consultant is a facilitator of effective communication, cooperation, and coordination who confers and collaborates with other school personnel and parents in a team effort to serve the special learning and behavioral needs of students.

3. Key elements in school consultation and collaboration are role delineation, a framework for these activities, evaluation and support of the efforts, and preparation for consultation and collaboration. A consultant, consultee (or mediator), and client (or target) in one school-related situation may function in any of the other capacities under different circumstances. Several questions reflect the immediate concerns of consultants and consulting teachers: What do I do? How do I begin? What is my schedule for a week? How will I know I am succeeding? How can I prepare for this kind of role?

4. Most educators are attuned to the need for responding to individual differences of their students; however, little attention has been given to individual differences among school personnel and ways in which those differences affect the school context and professional interactions.

5. Adult differences affect professional interactions in communicating, identifying problems, generating solutions to problems, and evaluating performance.

6. Problems caused by disharmony between opposite types can be lessened when the basis of the disagreement is understood. Adult differences can be used to advantage in teamwork and problem solving. When all preferences are available through contribution of varying preferences among team members, all facets of a problem can be studied and a wide range of options generated.

TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

1. Using material in this chapter, a dictionary, interviews, recollections from teaching experiences, discussion with colleagues or classmates, and any other pertinent references, formulate a description and philosophy about collaborative school consultation which reflects your viewpoint at this time.

2. Interview three school professionals (elementary, middle school, and high school levels if possible) and two parents to find out their views of collaborative school consultation and teamwork among school educators. You can approach this in one of two ways—by giving interviewees definitions if they ask “What do you mean?” Or you can encourage them to share their own perceptions of the terms to define them in their own way. Compare the interview results, and make inferences. Note any indication of willingness to collaborate or glimmer of budding interest in consultation, and determine how these positive signs might be followed up productively.

3. Make strips of the three parts of Figure 1.2 on cardboard, and insert the three cut strips into slits in a cardboard frame, creating a three-part sliding scale for a mix-and-match of roles to facilitate discussion.

4. Discuss ways provocative issues related to individual preferences and styles might be explored without endangering professional collegiality and school spirit.
5. Visit with colleagues or classmates about open-ended topics such as:
   - What do I think is good and what is not good about being a teacher?
   - What changes do I hope will take place in education in the next ten years, and how will I need to change if they do happen?
   - What are my best attributes as a teacher?

   - What teaching strengths do I value in others?
   - (If group members know each other well enough)—What teaching strengths within this group do I value most?

6. What questions or concerns about collaborative consultation are uppermost in your mind now?

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**FOR FURTHER READING**


