



Collaboration

HLP Pillars

HLP 1

Collaborate with professionals to increase student success.

HLP 3

Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services.

Embedded HLPs

HLP 2: Organize and facilitate effective meetings with professionals and families.

Embedded HLPs

HLP 3: Collaborate with Families to Support Student Learning and Secure Needed Services

HLP 3 is a pillar practice and one of the most essential HLPs for educators to master and implement. The relationship between special educators and family members of students with disabilities is a sacred trust and needs to be carefully nourished and protected. Schools have much to learn about students from family members who know them best. Educators collaborate with families, support student learning, and secure needed services. Educators maintain high expectations to collaborate with families in support of individual children's needs, goals, programs, and progress over time and to ensure that families are informed of and understand special education processes and their rights (e.g., evaluation, IEP meetings, procedural safeguards).

This resource is intended to support school leaders looking to embed the HLPs in professional development, implementation, teacher observation, and feedback efforts at their school site.

Teachers Who Effectively Collaborate with Families

Promote Positive Interactions Between Educators & Families

- Communicate with families openly and honestly in a way that is comfortable for both parties.
- Demonstrate a high level of knowledge in the area they are working in, continue to learn and grow as professionals, and communicate high expectations for students and families.
- Treat families with dignity, honor differences, and affirm strengths.
- Provide availability, consistency, and support that exceed minimum expectations.
- Recognize the strengths of every member of the team, share power with families, and focus on working together with families.
- Communicate reliably and act in the best interest of the student, sharing their vision and actions with families.

Use Effective Practices for Communicating with Families

- Communicate in a language and format accessible to the family.
- Use face-to-face interactions in planned, formal, and informal meetings (e.g., open house, community/school events, IEP meetings) to communicate with families.
- Use written and digital communication to share formal and informal information about school activities, parent and student rights and responsibilities, and student educational progress.
- Conduct phone calls and/or virtual meetings to families as needed to build on students' strengths and discuss supports or resources.
- Share information and/or resources with families via course management systems, school websites, and classroom webpages/ blogs.
- Use technology that enhances the quality and quantity of communication with families.

Tips for School Leaders to Support Teachers

- Evaluate teachers' skill and comfort with respect to working with families from various backgrounds.
- Provide instruction around different learning contexts and styles and equip educators with specific practices to use in this space.
- Provide feedback on their performance and corresponding pointers or professional development opportunities on skills/areas to improve.
- Provide opportunities for those who may feel uncomfortable to observe effective models of interactions with students and families from a variety of different backgrounds.
- Provide any necessary training, resources, and other supports for using school websites, course management systems, or other school-wide communication platforms.

Questions to Prompt Discussion, Self-Reflection, and Observer Feedback

- What are strategies you can use to ensure families feel respected and valued by the school team?
- Does your school have a specific strategy or set of tools that is used to guide interactions with family members from all backgrounds?
- How do/can leaders set expectations on how teachers collaborate and communicate with families?
- Why is it important to communicate with families for a variety of purposes and not just for formal reasons?

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