

Collaborating with Related Service Providers

Aligning Instruction and Services to Support Student Success

Purpose & Overview

This guide supports educators in effectively collaborating with related service providers, such as speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and school counselors. These professionals provide specialized services that support students' academic, behavioral, communication, and functional needs.

Collaboration is essential to ensure that strategies and supports are consistent across settings, not limited to isolated service sessions. When teachers and service providers work together, students benefit from reinforced skills, aligned goals, and more meaningful progress.

The purpose of this guide is to help teachers:

- understand the role of related service providers
 - integrate strategies into daily instruction
 - communicate effectively with team members
 - create consistency across all learning environments
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Instructional Outcomes

Teachers will be able to:

- identify the roles of related service providers
 - apply strategies recommended by specialists in the classroom
 - communicate and collaborate effectively with team members
 - support consistency between services and instruction
 - align classroom practices with IEP goals
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Understanding Related Services

Related services are supports provided to help students benefit from their educational program. These services are typically outlined in the IEP and may include:

- speech and language services
- occupational therapy (OT)
- physical therapy (PT)
- counseling or social-emotional support

Each provider focuses on specific skill areas, but these skills must also be supported within the classroom environment.

Why Collaboration Matters

When collaboration is strong:

- strategies are reinforced throughout the day
- students practice skills in real contexts
- instruction is more consistent and effective
- communication between team members improves

Without collaboration, supports may be isolated, inconsistent, or less effective.

Collaboration in Practice

<i>Provider</i>	<i>Focus Area</i>	<i>Classroom Connection</i>	<i>Example</i>
<i>Speech Therapist</i>	Communication and language	Supports participation and expression	Teacher uses sentence frames during discussions
<i>Occupational Therapist</i>	Fine motor and sensory skills	Supports writing and regulation	Teacher provides alternative writing tools or seating
<i>Physical Therapist</i>	Mobility and physical access	Supports movement and positioning	Teacher allows flexible movement or adjusted seating
<i>Counselor</i>	Social-emotional skills	Supports behavior and coping	Teacher reinforces coping strategies during class

Real Classroom Scenarios

Scenario 1: *Speech Support Not Reinforced*

A student works on communication skills in speech sessions but does not participate in class discussions.

Teacher Action:

Use sentence starters and provide structured opportunities for the student to respond.

Result:

Student begins to use communication strategies across settings.

Scenario 2: *OT Strategies Not Applied*

A student struggles with writing, but classroom tasks do not reflect OT recommendations.

Teacher Action:

Provide alternative tools (e.g., pencil grips, typing options) and adjust task expectations.

Result:

Student completes work with greater success and less frustration.

Scenario 3: *Lack of Communication Between Staff*

A teacher is unsure how to support a student's sensory needs.

Teacher Action:

Consult with the OT and implement suggested strategies such as movement breaks or seating adjustments.

Result:

Student demonstrates improved focus and engagement.

Effective Collaboration Strategies

Teachers can strengthen collaboration by:

- communicating regularly with service providers
 - asking for clarification on strategies and goals
 - incorporating recommended supports into daily instruction
 - sharing observations about student progress
 - aligning classroom practices with IEP goals
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Integrating Strategies into Daily Instruction

To make collaboration effective, teachers should:

- embed strategies naturally into lessons
 - use consistent language and supports
 - reinforce skills taught during service sessions
 - provide opportunities for students to practice skills throughout the day
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Teacher Reflection

Teachers may consider:

- Do I understand the goals of each service provider?
 - Am I consistently using recommended strategies in the classroom?
 - Is communication with providers ongoing and clear?
 - Are supports aligned across all settings?
 - Is collaboration improving student outcomes?
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Connection to Student Success

Strong collaboration supports:

- improved skill development
- increased consistency across environments
- stronger communication and teamwork
- better progress toward IEP goals

Closing Reflection

Collaboration with related service providers is essential for creating a cohesive and supportive learning environment. When teachers and specialists work together and apply strategies consistently, students are better able to develop skills, access instruction, and succeed across all settings.