

WHAT IS EARLY CARE & EDUCATION COLLABORATION?

DEFINITIONS ...

Collaboration is the most intense level of working together. It is a structure and a process for creating **change**.

A collaborative effort is driven by partners who agree to share **information, activities, resources, influence, power and decision-making authority** to achieve common goals – goals that no single partner or program could achieve by acting alone.

From Community Partnerships Working Together, US Dept. of Health & Human Services.

Collaboration is the process by which agencies formally commit themselves on a long-term basis to work together to accomplish a common mission.

Collaboration brings previously separate organizations into a new working structure that requires joint planning, implementation, and evaluation. The partnership also necessitates the sharing of resources, power and authority. It requires organizations to blend their strengths, as well as negotiate their differences, with an underlying attitude of trust.

The goal of this partnership is comprehensive services for families that improve family outcomes.

Texas Head Start-State Collaboration Project, 1992.

COLLABORATION IS ...

- A philosophy & a relationship
- A process – from Isolation to Cooperation to Collaboration
- Working together on common goals with mutual respect & trust – a shared vision & goals
- An agreement to commit resources & effort
- Strong leadership
- A climate supporting change
- Diverse membership
- Flexibility & adaptability
- Outcomes oriented & accountability for achieving results

COLLABORATION IS NOT ...

- Building a bigger, separate program (“*We plan to win that grant & expand our program*”)
- Gaining personal or program recognition (“*If it weren’t for me/my program, there wouldn’t be these services in our community.*”)
- Robbing Peter to pay Paul (“*That program should give us some of their resources.*”)
- Imposing one way of caring for children/doing things (“*Our way is the RIGHT way.*”)
- Making excuses rather than searching for solutions (“*We can’t collaborate because of our regulations.*”)
- Shaping up the “other guys” (“*If THEY change, everything will be fine.*”)

Marzke & Both, 1994, National Center for Service Integration; Molly, Rodriguez & Chance, 1996.

1. **COMPETITION**

Vying, competing or fighting for something. In early care & education programs, this would mean for children/slots/families. Competition is the foundation of our economic and business structures and is rewarded at every point in our culture, e.g., in sports, TV ratings, school performance, funding levels/grant applications, etc.

In our **competitive** moods, we will try to find out who is right and who is wrong. We will determine who is part of the enemy and who is part of the solution. We will choose to exclude people from discussions or even provide misleading or distracting information.

2. **CONSULTATION; COMMUNICATION & NETWORKING**

Loose community linkages where the exchange of information and rapport building takes place. This is often the best we do in the process of planning. Traditional co-location partnerships in early care & education fall into this category. In co-location partnerships, two agencies may share space the same facility, but maintain entirely separate classrooms and programming.

In our **consultative** moods, we put on the face of mutual interest in each other's work. I will ask you what you are doing and may invite you to a planning meeting so you can share your thoughts and experiences with me.

3. **COORDINATION**

Two or more agencies operate autonomously, yet work together to avoid duplication by sharing information and activities. This is almost a neutral point – I will agree not to compete with you. Organizational missions & goals are not taken into account – the basis for coordination is usually between individuals, but may be mandated by a 3rd party. No joint planning is required; interaction & information is on an as needed basis.

Traditional dual enrollment partnerships in early care & education generally fall into this category. In dual enrollment partnerships, children travel from one program to the other, e.g., a child is in a child care center or home in the morning and then goes to an afternoon PreK or Head Start session at a school or another agency. The partners may communicate and share information, but they are not sharing resources or programming.

In our **coordinating** moods, we will acknowledge the benefit to those we both serve of our dual existence. I will even participate in supporting your success, with certain conditions. You will need to be specific in your request for my support.

4. **COOPERATION**

By sharing information and activities, some service integration between two or more entities occurs, but agencies do not lose autonomy. When we are cooperating, we see our common interests and values. Individual relationships are supported by the organizations they represent. Missions & goals of the individual organizations are reviewed for compatibility. Some project-specific planning is required.

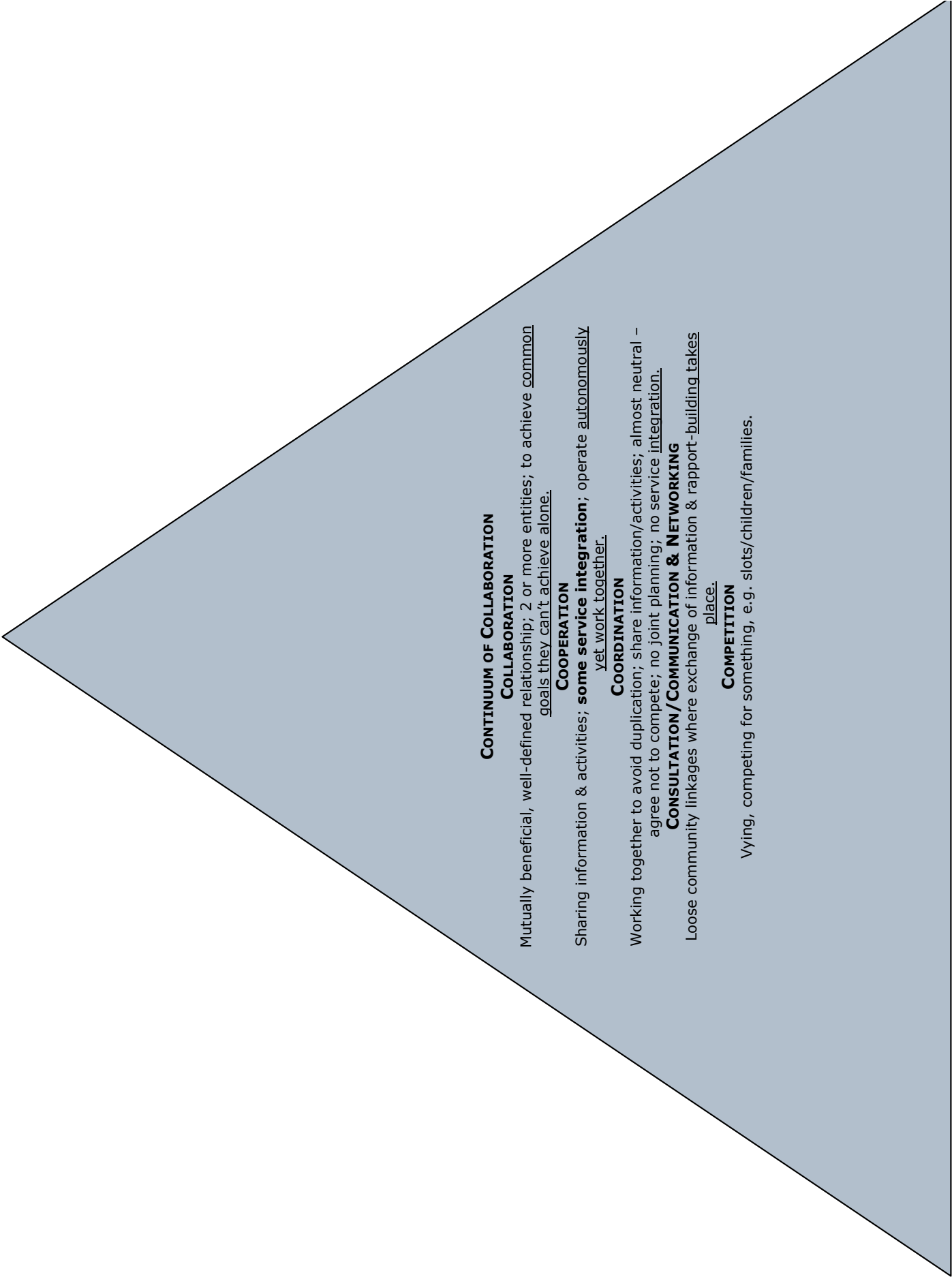
In our **cooperating** moods, we will put things in writing. I will take some shared risks and share in the consequences of those risks. I begin seeing long-term benefits to my support of your work. You have some resources that I do not or you can exert influence in ways that I am prohibited from pursuing, and I can contribute some things that you cannot to our joint efforts.

5. **COLLABORATION**

A mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more entities to achieve common goals that could not be achieved by working alone. When we truly collaborate, we no longer protect our own possessions or turf, but come together to create something different and larger than either or our former parts. Common, new mission and goals are created. More comprehensive planning is required; many levels of communication are created, since clear information is a keystone of success. Control and risk are shared and mutual.

In our **collaborative** moods, our language changes. We become linked together to accomplish a new thing neither of us thought about before we came together and listened to each other. Power is shared, resources are pooled.

Adapted from: the works of Martin Blank, Sharon Kagan, Atelia Melaville & Karen Ray; Barbara Raye, Amherst Wilder Foundation; and, WI Dept. of Public Information & Great Lakes RAP, Collaboration: Because It's Good for Children & Families.



CONTINUUM OF COLLABORATION

COLLABORATION

Mutually beneficial, well-defined relationship; 2 or more entities; to achieve common goals they can't achieve alone.

COOPERATION

Sharing information & activities; **some service integration**; operate autonomously yet work together.

COORDINATION

Working together to avoid duplication; share information/activities; almost neutral – agree not to compete; no joint planning; no service integration.

CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION & NETWORKING

Loose community linkages where exchange of information & rapport-building takes place.

COMPETITION

Vying, competing for something, e.g. slots/children/families.