

Collaboration on the Go

Collaboration with ESOL staff may be especially difficult due to varied roles and responsibilities, ESOL and general education teacher workload, itinerant schedules, and other factors. The following suggestions may help teams to work around these potential barriers:

1. Plan frequent, focused meetings, and make sure they stay on track. Assign the most task-oriented person on your team—or the one who has the least patience for small talk—to keep time and keep the discussion moving.
2. Be willing to consider alternative meeting technologies and approaches. Facebook Live, school system WebEx, or other online meeting software can all replicate critical aspects of the face-to-face meeting experience. Be cautious, however, about use of personal email or social media accounts to discuss student data; learn and follow your school system policies in this regard.
3. End each discussion with a recap of key points discussed, action items, and the person or people responsible for each. Sending this summary in writing will help everyone to remain on the same page and make follow-up conversations much easier.

An example may help to illustrate these principles of “collaboration on the go.” Jahnvi’s sixth-grade teachers have identified her for math intervention based on her fluency and problem-solving skills. When informed of this decision, the ESOL teacher asked to be invited to future meetings to provide input on the quality and accessibility of the math intervention program. Jahnvi’s math teacher brought copies of the small-group intervention materials to the next problem-solving team meeting, and the ESOL teacher suggested some accommodations and tweaks to the materials that might make it easier for Jahnvi to access the content. These included extended wait time, native-language glossing with key words in Hindi, oral rephrasing of complex sentences, and a laminated chart with visual reminders for key math vocabulary. When analyzing Jahnvi’s performance data, the ESOL teacher, special educator, and math teacher would all give input over school email to ensure that they had consensus about the data’s validity. Email conversations would end with key points, listed by the special educator, for the group to consider at the next team meeting.