Solution Tree | Press

Yes We Can!: General and Special Educators Collaborating in a Professional Learning Community

By Heather Friziellie, Julie A. Schmidt, and Jeanne Spiller

_____

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *Yes We Can!: General and Special Educators Collaborating in a Professional Learning Community* by Heather Friziellie, Julie A. Schmidt, and Jeanne Spiller. *Yes We Can!* communicates how general educators and special educators must collaboratively function if they are to close the achievement gap and maximize all students' learning.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

Chapter 1

Understanding the History and Reality of Special Education

_____

1. Briefly summarize the history and reality of special education that this chapter details. What part of this provided context most alarms or interests you, and why is this the case?

2. In your own words, describe the antiquated discrepancy model and why it is ineffective.

3. Why is it imperative to not separate general education's and special education's responsibilities and to not think of general education and special education as two unconnected systems?

4. What three main recommendations did the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education make in its 2002 report *A New Area: Revitalizing Special Education for Children and Their Families*?

5. What two beliefs about learning must educators and school systems examine in order to promote the cultural shift required to apply the PLC framework?

Chapter 2

Collaborating for *All* Students

_____

1. Consider the potential elementary and secondary team structures described in tables 2.1 (page 18) and 2.6 (page 25). Which of these structures would you most like to see utilized in your school system, and why?

2. Why can master schedules prove helpful at the elementary school level?

3. Come up with a topic of conversation that would be appropriate for either a grade-level team or a building-level leadership team to discuss, and list several questions related to this topic that this team could answer.

4. What responsibilities do problem-solving and intervention teams share?

5. Why should special educators be included on content-alike teams?

6. Consider the collaboration tips provided in this chapter. Which collaborative techniques or opportunities do you feel would work best for your school system, and why do you feel that is the case?

Chapter 3

Developing a Culture of Shared Learning Expectations

_____

1. In the phrase *guaranteed and viable curriculum*, what does *guaranteed* refer to, and what does *viable* signify?

2. What decisions do teacher teams need to reach collaboratively in order for them to cultivate a guaranteed and viable curriculum?

3. What six key indicators of a guaranteed and viable curriculum does Robert Marzano distinguish?

4. Under what conditions are special education services most effective? What schoolwide cultural shifts need to occur in order to create this effectiveness?

5. In order to support all learners, what schoolwide cultural shifts do educators need to make?

Chapter 4

Establishing What All Students Should Learn

_____

1. Define *curriculum chaos*.

2. Why should singleton teachers in small districts take part in virtual collaboration?

3. In your own words, describe the three steps involved in the "Simple as 1, 2, 3" process for prioritizing standards.

4. What impacts can teachers unpacking the standards they teach have on the teachers, their students, and their collaborative teams?

5. How does W. James Popham define a *learning progression*, and what purpose can this progression serve for teachers?

6. Why may students' grit levels play a significant role in their progression toward mastery? Briefly describe how you have seen a student exercise grit in his or her studies.

Chapter 5

Designing Standards-Aligned Instruction for Student Success

_____

1. What detrimental decisions do educators occasionally make when they want their students to feel successful? How have you seen these harmful decisions play out in the classroom, and what steps may you take to correct the effects of those decisions?

2. In your classroom, what steps do you take to engage your students' hearts and minds?

3. What should instruction tailored for students with disabilities involve, and what shouldn't instruction tailored for students with disabilities incorporate?

4. List the five actions teachers must take to tailor instruction for student success.

5. Why does Timothy Shanahan believe that students should encounter challenging texts? What does he consider the key scaffold for student learning?

6. What is the key to avoiding destructive struggles and promoting productive struggles? Name several characteristics of productive struggles and of destructive struggles.

Chapter 6

Determining Criteria for Assessment

_____

1. In your opinion, why has *assessment* become a sensitive word in education?

2. What two factors connect assessments at all levels of the continuum of assessment?

3. According to the authors, what two myths frequently arise around assessment design? In your career, how have you seen one, or both, of these myths arise in assessment development?

4. What is the bottom line in assessment design?

5. What questions must a team consider when designing assessments for students who have a specialized curriculum for their skill sets?

6. What three tips do teacher teams need to keep in mind as they create assessments?

Chapter 7

Planning Goals and Monitoring Progress for All Learners

_____

1. Briefly describe the steps that teacher teams can take to make sure a standards-aligned individualized education program (IEP) is effective across content areas, grade levels, and learner profiles.

2. In what three ways have teams mainly managed to productively handle preassessment? For what purposes would you be most likely to use each of these tactics, and why is that the case?

3. Study the problem-solving discussion guide featured in figure 7.1 (page 91). What can this tool compel educators to do?

4. What four factors should educational team members concentrate on when they discuss students' goal updates?

5. What points must educators keep in mind if they wish to maintain a problem-solving mentality for learners? What is another point you would consider adding to this list? Why would this additional point fit into this list?

Chapter 8

Responding When Students Don't Learn

_____

1. How were the purposes of response to intervention (RTI) misunderstood when the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act was reauthorized?

2. Why is RTI a more effective system for special and general educators to use with their students than the "wait to fail" system?

3. Why will RTI implementation not last long if schools do not fulfill the work of a PLC?

4. What do special education students gain access to if a school realizes both RTI and PLC with fidelity?

5. What shifts in access and practice should teachers make to give struggling learners improved support in their learning? In your school or system, in what ways do special educators and general educators work together to support struggling learners?