

Welcome to the May Issue of CollabNews

Volume 12, Issue 5

CollabNews is a monthly electronic newsletter for members and associates of the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, a network of special and general education leaders from the nation's urban school districts.

Spring Meeting Wrap-Up

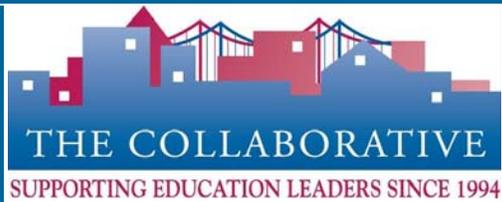
Data-Based Decision Making

The Spring Collaborative meeting in Phoenix was a great success and we appreciate all the feedback our participants provided. We are grateful to the member districts who took the time to present during the concurrent sessions and to our host districts - Deer Valley and Kyrene. Copies of many of the presentations and handouts, including the keynote and plenary sessions are available for download on the [Collaborative website](#).

Unlock the Power of Your Data!

Exciting Initiative with University of Maryland

There was much excitement and interest generated during the stimulating and highly interactive keynote and plenary sessions at our Spring meeting in Phoenix. Attendees were challenged to think about data, and the questions these data can be used to answer, in new ways. Attendees were also informed about an initiative that the Collaborative is launching in partnership with the University of Maryland. The project - "Unlocking the Power of District Data to Improve Outcomes for Students with Disabilities" - is designed to help member districts build their capacity to analyze data using district and state data to evaluate the efficacy of policies and programs designed to improve both academic and functional outcomes of students with disabilities and to guide the refinement of those policies and programs. Over the next two years, 20 Collaborative member school districts will be provided the opportunity become engaged in a community of practice focused on exploring innovative ways to examine and use the extensive data that districts collect and report. Participation in this initiative includes a 2-day hands-on institute at the end of September followed by online discussion forums. Participants will be guided as to how they might refine their questions, most particularly



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answers that will assist with action planning and decision-making. School districts will be selected for direct involvement based upon criteria jointly developed with our University of Maryland partners. These include geographic and district size representation, as well as superintendent-level commitment for the special education leader and the school district's lead data support person to participate in the September institute as well as pre and post institute online forums.

Member districts not selected for direct participation will have multiple opportunities to learn and benefit from the project via CollabNews and other Collaborative publications, presentations at future Collaborative meetings, and online discussions. If you have an interest in your school district participating, contact the Collaborative's Associate Director at rfelton@edc.org to learn about the application process.

Leadership Placement Service

The Collaborative is cognizant of the critical role Special Education leaders play in seeing that students with special needs are afforded the opportunity to succeed in school and how important it is that qualified, knowledgeable and dedicated professionals fill these roles. Thus, the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, together with our partners at [Columbus Educational Services](#), is creating the Special Education Leadership Project. This project is designed to match urban school districts seeking to fill special education leadership positions with qualified and experienced professionals. The project will develop a database of educators interested in seeking leadership positions and will offer urban school districts the opportunity to be provided a number of select candidates for vacant special education leadership positions. Members and Associates who are interested in placing their name into the database may do so by following [this link](#) to the website. Your name and information will not be publicly available for viewing and will be shared with districts seeking to fill leadership positions only with your approval.

New Member District

The Collaborative is pleased to welcome our newest member, Anchorage School District.

Anchorage School District is located in Anchorage, AK and has a total enrollment of over 48,000 students. Our Member contact is Jerry Sjolander, Executive Director, Special Education. Please visit <http://www.asdk12.org/> for more information.

Stimulus Update



There have been many questions regarding the use of AARA/IDEA funds particularly in relation to the Maintenance of Effort provisions of IDEA. The [Wisconsin Department of Education](#) has issued an

excellent [fact sheet](#) that districts across the country may find useful and informative.

Inclusive Schools Network

The Collaborative and the Inclusive Schools Network are proud to host a webinar with Dr. Michael Giangreco on the topic of Paraprofessional Supports in Inclusive Schools.

**Wednesday, May 27, 2009
3:00-4:30 P.M. EDT**

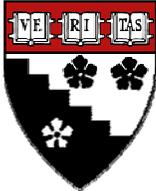


Paraprofessionals have emerged as a key mechanism for supporting students with a range of disabilities in general education classrooms. This webinar will provide an overview of research on the provision of paraprofessional supports in inclusive classrooms, including a look at key national data on the use of paraprofessionals and related special education service delivery. Participants will examine issues such as overreliance on paraprofessionals and will explore a series of alternatives that schools can consider. The session will be interactive, providing opportunities for participants to ask questions and engage in discussion.

[Click Here to Learn More and to Register](#)

Harvard Institute

Improving Outcomes for Young Children with Significant Mental Health Needs



This year's [Institute on Critical Issues in Urban Special Education](#) focuses on identifying and exploring systemic approaches to improving academic and behavioral outcomes for students with serious emotional/behavioral disabilities in kindergarten and elementary grades.

With increased commitment to early intervention, the emphasis on home-based and community-based services, and advances in medical treatment, public schools are educating increased numbers of students with significant mental health needs.

The institute emphasizes school-based and interagency strategies for prevention, intervention, instruction, and support, based on collaboration among families, educators, and community agencies.

[Collaborative Help Desk](#)

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