



# Welcome to CollabNews

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## About Us



The [Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative](#) is a network of special and general education leaders working together to improve outcomes for students with disabilities in the nation's urban schools.

## FALL MEMBER MEETING: SIZE-ALIKE MEETINGS

**Fall Size-Alike Meetings**  
**Thursday, November 6**



The Size-Alike Meetings provide an opportunity for representatives from our large, medium, and small school districts to meet in size-alike groups and participate in a facilitated conversation regarding a topic or issue of current concern to special education leaders in urban school districts.

The focus of this session in Houston will be the report from the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities - [Decreasing Dropout Rates for Minority Male Youth with Disabilities from Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Backgrounds](#). The report examines the problem of high school dropout rates among American Indian, Africa American, and Latino males.

We hope you will join us on Thursday morning, November 6, for this interesting and important conversation!

## FALL MEMBER MEETING - HOST DISTRICT

### Designing Learning Environments for All Students: Increasing Access Through Technology

We are excited to travel to Houston, TX for our Fall 2014 Member Meeting. Welcoming us to Houston from our host district, Houston Independent School District (HISD), are Assistant Superintendent Ms. Sowmya Kumar and Chief Academic Officer Dr. Daniel Gohl.



As Assistant Superintendent for the Office of Special Education Services in HISD, Sowmya Kumar oversees programs and services for approximately 17,000 students with disabilities, and dyslexia and Section 504 services. With over 35 years of experience in special education, Sowmya's focus during her four and a half year tenure in HISD has been on setting up systems that increase effectiveness and efficiency in order to systematically improve student outcomes. As a result, HISD has seen a steady increase in student performance, more inclusive services for students with disabilities, significant increase in the timeliness with which evaluations are conducted for eligibility, increased graduation rates, and decreased dropout rates.



Daniel Gohl is an accomplished educator who has experience in district and charter schools, the role of technology in education, STEM program design, and school leadership. He is currently the Chief Academic Officer for the HISD in Houston, TX. Previously he served as Deputy Chief of Innovation for the New Jersey Department Education, Executive Officer for Innovation and Change for Newark Public Schools in Newark, NJ and Director of Secondary School Transformation in the District of Columbia Public Schools. He has received awards for teaching and school leadership, served on national committees on technology utilization and laboratory design for schools, and served as President of Ontic Education.

## BLENDED LEARNING

### The Learning Accelerator

In preparation for the Collaborative's Fall Member Meeting, we will be sharing resources that focus on designing personalized learning environments, particularly those that increase access to the curriculum through technology.

This month we are highlighting [The Learning Accelerator](#). The Learning Accelerator is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to accelerate the implementation of high-quality blended learning in school districts across America. The term [blended learning](#) is generally applied to the practice of using both online and in-person learning experiences when teaching students.

## POSITION AVAILABLE

### Director of Student Support Services Deer Valley Unified School District

Deer Valley Unified District, a K-12 district with approximately 34,000 students, invites [applications](#) for the position of Director of Student Support Services ([job description](#)) for the 2015-2016 school year. Deer Valley is an A-rated school district in Phoenix, Arizona and is committed to providing extraordinary learning opportunities through innovative, nationally-recognized services delivered in inclusive, student-centered environments. Students in the district attend their neighborhood school within the least restrictive environment with expectations for high achievement as this is the goal for every student.

## UPCOMING WEBINAR

### Restorative Justice Practice in Special Education: Resolving Conflict and Promoting Equity for Students with Disabilities



The [National Center on Dispute Resolution in Special Education](#) (CADRE) is sponsoring a webinar on [Restorative Justice Practice in Special Education](#) on **November 6, 2014 from 2:30 pm-3:45 pm (EST)**. This webinar will start with a brief overview of the history and use of restorative justice practices to resolve conflict. It will be followed by a description of the use of restorative practices in public education, with a spotlight on promising initiatives around the nation. Specific focus will be placed on the use of restorative practices for students with disabilities and their families -- both as an alternative to exclusionary discipline, and as a tool for re-integration into the school setting.

## NEW IRIS CENTER RESOURCE

The [IRIS Center](#) has announced the posting of a new IRIS Information Brief: [Comparison of the Diagnostic Criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder Across DSM-5, DSM-IV-TR, and the Individuals with Disabilities Act Definition of Autism](#).

This resource compares the diagnostic criteria of the DSM-5 to those of the DSM-IV-TR, and to the definition of autism found in the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

This Information Brief also includes a summary of research findings regarding changes in the number of individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders when the DSM-5 criteria were used, compared to those same numbers under the DSM-IV-TR.

## NEW MEMBER DISTRICTS

### Garland Independent School District & Stoneham Public Schools



The Urban Collaborative is delighted to welcome two new school districts!

Garland Independent School District is located in Garland, TX and serves approximately 57,500 students. Ms. Nidia Parra, Director of Special Education, is the member. Joining her are associate members Ms. Sara Roland, Special Education Coordinator, and Ms. Cheryl Flinn, Special Education Coordinator. To learn more about the Garland Independent School District, please [visit their website](#).

The Stoneham Public Schools is located in Stoneham, MA and serves approximately 2,500 students. Ms. Martha Bakken, Student Services Director, is the member. To learn more about the Stoneham Public Schools, please [visit their website](#).

We look forward to meeting them at our Fall Member Meeting in Houston!

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