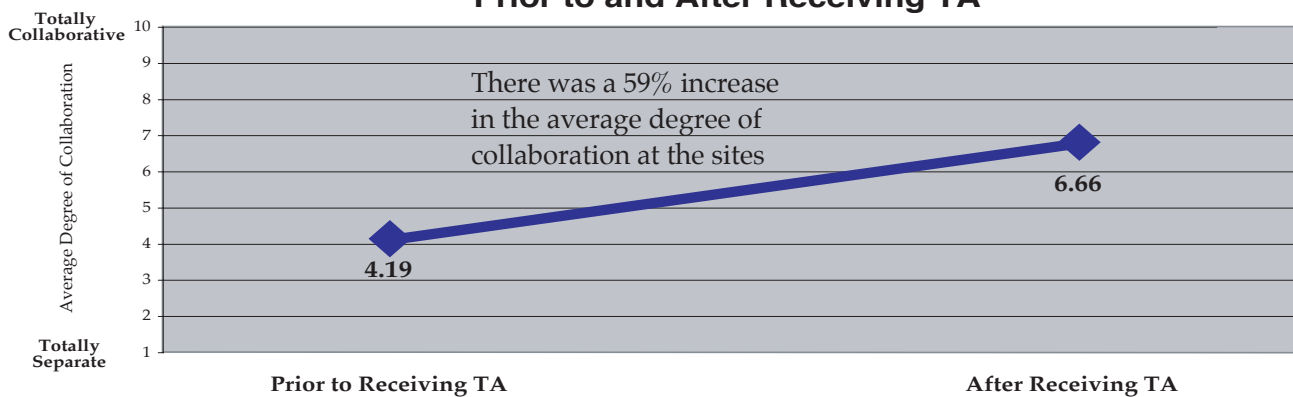


Collaborative Sites Survey Findings

Over the past five years, more than 100 schools, districts, county offices of education, and SELPAs have received CA State Improvement Grant-funded technical assistance (TA) through CalSTAT to foster greater collaboration between special education and general education at their sites. The TA providers are primarily staff from “model sites” with experience operating collaboratively. Recently, a survey was conducted to find out what, if anything, had changed at the sites receiving the TA. Forty-two sites responded. Here’s what we learned from their responses.

Degree of Collaboration Between Special Education and General Education

Average Degree of Collaboration Prior to and After Receiving TA

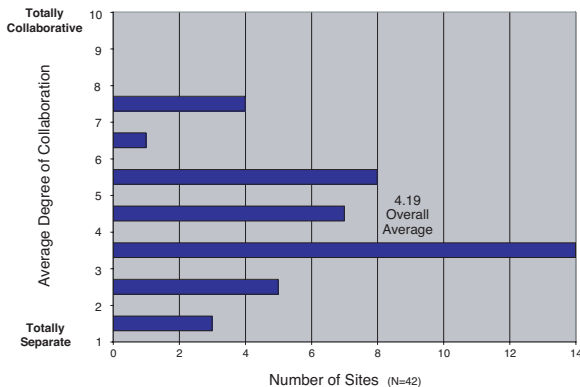


- * Prior to receiving TA, the average degree of collaboration at the sites was 4.19 on a scale from 1-totally separate to 10-totally collaborative.
- * On average, the sites were operating **more separately** than collaboratively.
- * As you can see below, prior to accessing TA, the service delivery approaches of the sites ranged from totally separate to several with fairly high degrees of collaboration.

- * After receiving TA, the average degree of collaboration at the sites was 6.66 on a scale from 1-totally separate to 10-totally collaborative.
- * On average, the sites were operating **more collaboratively** than separately.
- * As you can see below, after accessing TA, the number of sites implementing collaborative approaches to service delivery increased greatly.

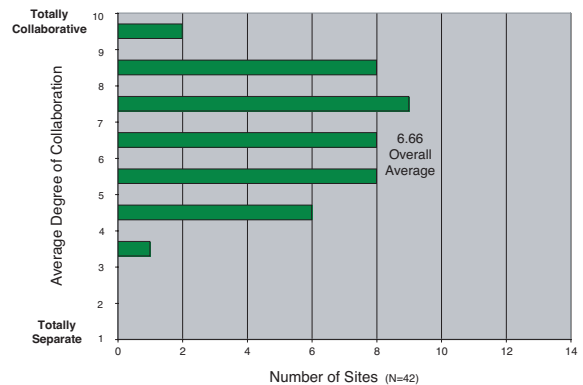
Prior to Receiving TA

Distribution of Average Degree of Collaboration



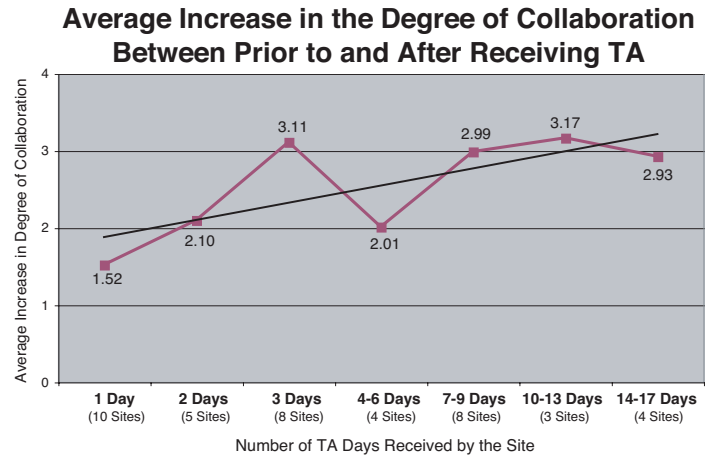
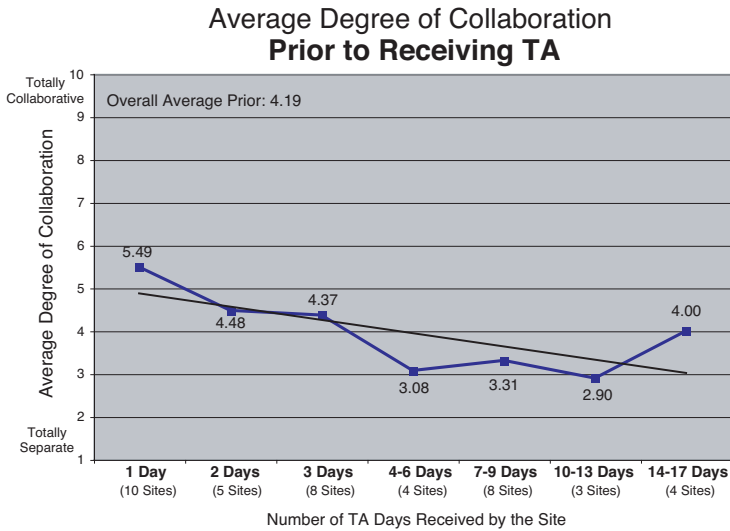
After Receiving TA

Distribution of Average Degree of Collaboration



Over the past five years, the 42 collaborative sites received a total of 222 days of support, which included 122 days of site-based TA and 100 days of site team participation in regional or statewide Collaborative Leadership Institute meetings.

Degree of Collaboration between Special Education and General Education By Number of TA Days Received



- * Sites that started out with lower degrees of collaboration tended to access more TA than those starting at higher degrees of collaboration.
- * The exception was a small group of sites that started at a fairly high degree of collaboration and accessed the highest amounts of TA.

- * Accessing more TA days generally brought greater increases in degree of collaboration.
- * Keep in mind though, the sites that started with lower degrees of collaboration had more room for growth. Essentially, the sites accessed the amount of TA they needed, based on where they started, to bring them up to a fairly high degree of collaboration.

Here's where the sites are headed, and what has emerged, as they move toward greater collaboration:

Future Plans

- Sustaining collaboration through ongoing meetings and conversations
- Expanding collaboration to additional grade levels, school sites, and districts
- Adding staff (literacy specialist, intervention classes)
- Additional training (TA, Leadership Institutes)
- Monitoring of results

Challenges Faced

- Addressing resistance, core attitudes and beliefs around "us" and "them"
- Blending philosophies of Spec Ed (indiv-oriented) and Gen Ed (group-oriented)
- The tendency for teachers to make referrals without trying interventions first
- Administrative concerns around the legality of changing pull-out services
- Time to plan, meet, train, communicate, schedule and handle high caseloads
- Resources (staff and materials) to offer needed intervention services

Facilitating Factors

- Administrative support and leadership that welcomes input from all groups
- Teacher training, visits to other collaborative sites, leadership institutes, and TA
- Open-minded staff, communication, planning time, and new teachers who "get it"
- Sense of urgency related to Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)/API accountability

What the collaborative sites had to say, in their own words:

Future Plans

Continue to develop remedial courses for identified and non-identified students and continue staff development activities in asset development to assist in building relationships with each student. To teach the importance of each student's ability rather than focus on their disability. To provide increased opportunities for team teaching courses.

We are currently putting an evaluation tool in place to determine efficacy of collaborative models. Hire a second literacy specialist to support district-wide literacy efforts.

Continue collaborative efforts. Continue monitoring results. Continue to work with specialists to assist district in working on instructional strategies and curriculum. Having an objective look at where we are. Early intervention. Acknowledge we can do it better; status quo is not okay.

Expanding Learning Center to incorporate more general ed. involvement. Develop district differential grading guidelines. Participation in regional and state Collaborative Leadership Institute. Looking into BEST as school-wide approach to positive behavioral support.

Challenges Faced

Fear of change. Teacher skill level overall and in core academic areas. Administrative buy-in. Willingness to remove labels is not there. Initial budgetary issues seen as an obstacle to moving forward.

We have had issues with the teachers union and the concerns of general ed teachers lacking knowledge of how to effectively work with special education students.

One huge challenge has been credentialing issues in collaboration. Schools have had questions about the role of special educators in the general education classroom.

Allocating time for collaboration and communication.

Scheduling - high caseload and students K-4 in a variety of classrooms. Teacher buy-in. Differing views of collaboration. Negative attitudes.

Educating regular education administrators to think outside the box. They are very concerned about moving away from traditional special education pull-out. I frequently receive calls - "Is this legal?"

Combining resources (fiscal) and still abiding by fiscal requirements for funds.

Time to get special ed requirements done, e.g. time for IEP goals in other areas besides reading. Hard to get SDC kids that can't be in general education covered. Staff time and resources is a struggle.

Facilitating Factors

Probably the single-most important factor has been the support of my superintendent who has told all school sites this will happen.

Focus on literacy utilizing research-based intervention curriculum. Serving students based on need (rather than label). Being a new high school - open minds ready for a fresh start and positive change. Connection with CalSTAT Technical Assistance.

General ed staff more involved in IEP process through legislation. New staff with open attitude; retirement of some more resistant staff. Support from district level administration. Provision of needed in-service opportunity and support staff to general ed. Training of support staff both general ed and special ed together. Poor statewide testing scores - gave a reason to do it differently.

Visiting other schools and spending time developing a plan that honors teachers; obtaining materials that can be used by special and general ed students.

Outside facilitator had no "baggage" or "agenda" to bring to the decision making process.

What the collaborative sites had to say, in their own words:

Changes in Our Service Delivery System

Much more integration working collectively as a team toward progress and monitoring of that progress. We set more measurable goals via the SST process and have helped general ed with more of an objectifiable data-driven approval with scaffolding. Thank you for your assistance. It has strengthened our team.

More team taught courses with resource and regular education teachers in core subject areas. A three-tiered remedial reading program taught by one reading specialist, four resource teachers and two regular education teachers. Collaboration regarding special education student schedules.

Learning Center model has grown to include over 8-10 teachers providing intervention services to referred students. Interventions expanded to include strategic and intensive reading and math intervention. Consultant has also helped our school restructure for small learning communities.

Now all students are assessed school-wide. Non-special ed and special ed students are regrouped for reading depending on assessment results.

At-risk student needs are proactively addressed. General ed teachers experience direct support and consultation from special ed specialists. Gen and spec ed teaching staff utilize multiple measures and analyze student results collaboratively. Gen and spec ed staff are working toward designing curriculum delivery to address specific student needs.

There is a concerted effort to improve instruction in literacy in general, and in effective reading instruction and supports specifically. In addition, earlier identification of students requiring intervention has improved. There are still too few staff people. But district awareness, forced further by NCLB, is at least opening doors.

The most significant result is that the District had 10 SDC classes and 4 County SDC classes during the 2001-2002 school year; while today the District maintains only 3 SDC classes and 1 County class. The District moved toward including previous SDC students in schools in the District with whole school models.

Results

API score has broken through the 700 threshold, special education and behavioral referrals have declined, work has begun on asset development and building virtues, the student community has become more cohesive, and the campus has a better overall feel to it. More students scoring at the above basic and proficient levels on standards tests.

Where schools have adopted a collaborative service delivery model API scores have generally improved, SE referrals have decreased, and student and teacher attitudes have become more positive.

We are only 6 weeks into what we call "Differentiated Instruction Time." Consequently, empirical data is just beginning to be collected. Observational data demonstrated students spend more time actively engaged in reading activities and there is less classroom disruption.

Special ed referrals decreasing. More mainstreaming opportunities available. Increase in inclusion of students with support of additional staff. Increase in parent involvement. Documentation of more interventions being tried. More effort in early intervention; monitoring of rate of referral and which grades.

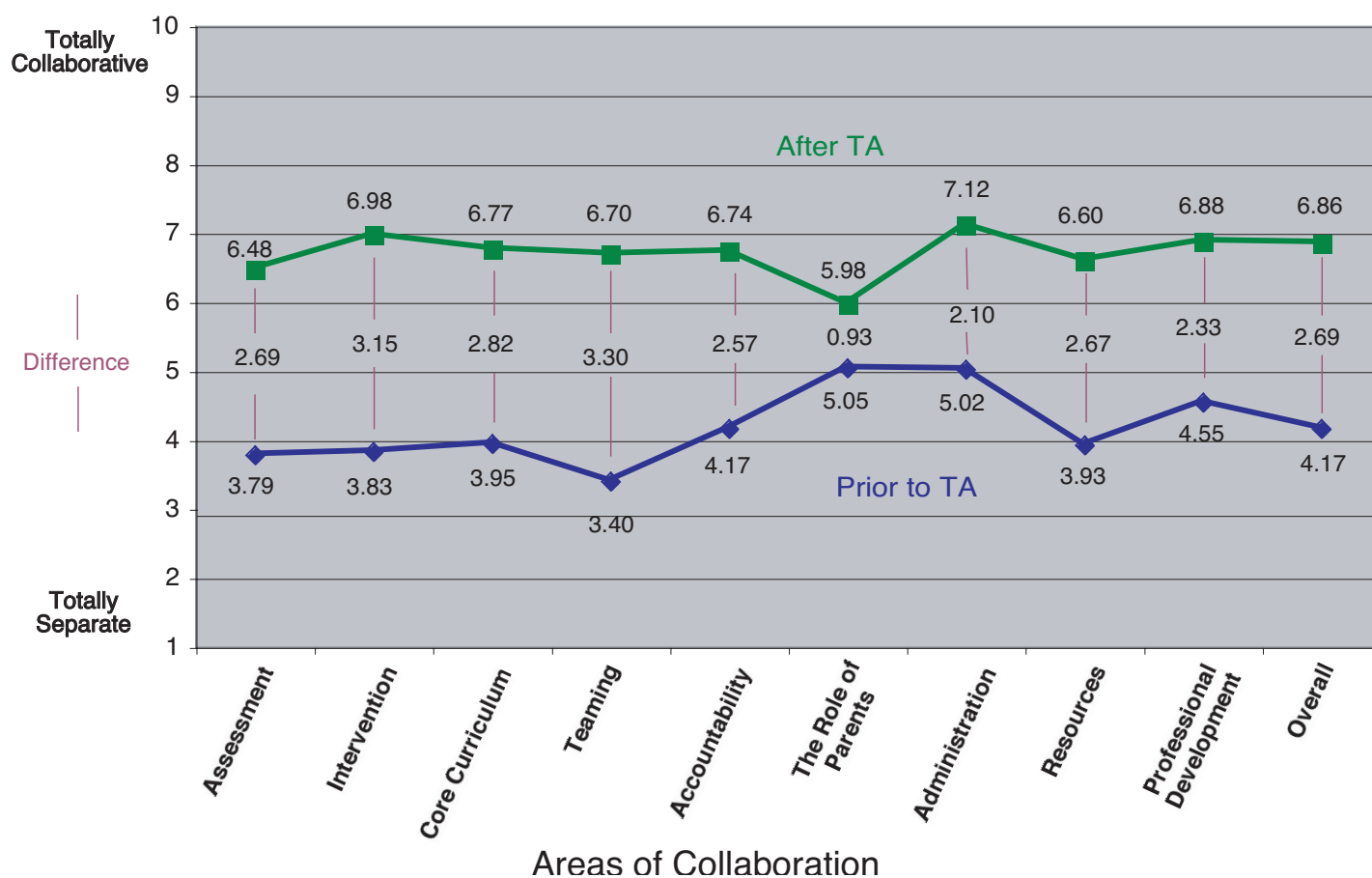
Behavioral referrals more complete. Regular education staff more receptive to accommodations in regular education classrooms.

Students are feeling more successful and API scores went up.

Improved attitudes — other alternatives besides referrals.

Generally, more acceptance of SE students as part of the campus. Special Education referrals have decreased. Resource Specialist caseloads have decreased and those teachers have time to serve more at-risk students earlier.

Average Degree of Collaboration Prior to and After Receiving TA by Area of Collaboration



* The greatest increases were made in the areas of teaming, intervention, and focus on the core curriculum. Assessment, resources, and accountability also showed gains.

* While collaboration with parents was fairly high to begin with, little gain was made, suggesting this as a potential area of focus for future TA.

Service Delivery Prior to TA

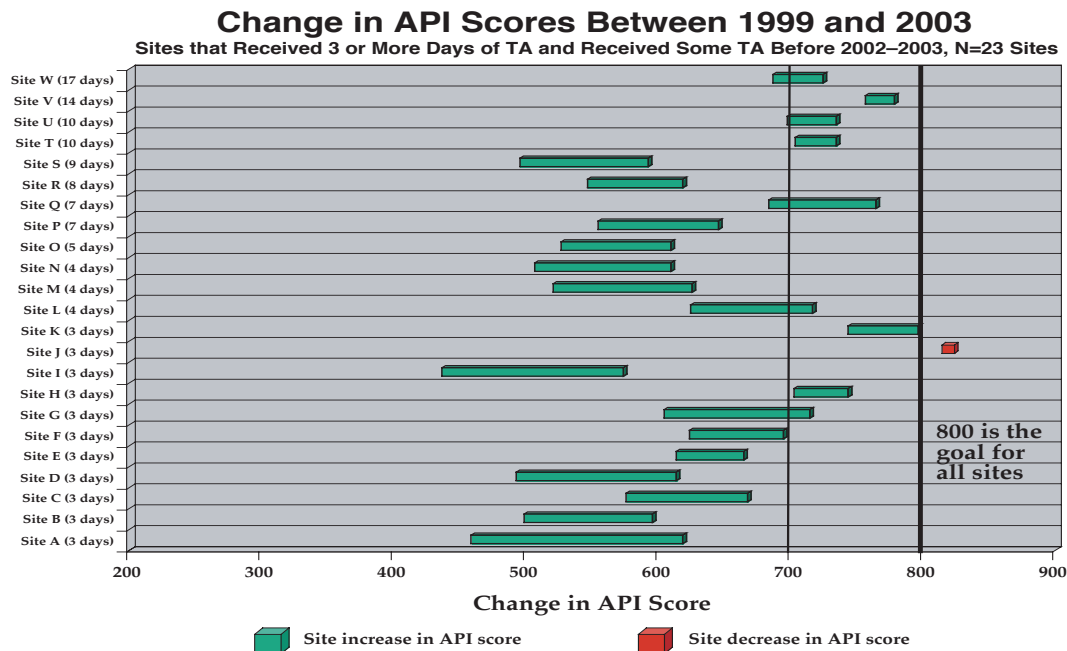
- Pull-out for resource specialist (RSP) services
- Isolated Special Day Classes (SDC)
- SE students seen as separate, treated like guests when they do enter GE classroom
- Little or no collaboration or teaming between SE and GE teachers
- Few pre-referral options, “students needing to fail” before being eligible for support
- Assessment primarily for qualification purposes

Service Delivery After TA

- Much greater inclusion of RSP and SDC students and teachers in the GE classroom
- Students are assessed school-wide bringing earlier identification of at-risk students
- Scaffolding/Differentiated instruction for all students based on assessment
- More pre-referral intervention options
- Continuous monitoring of progress for all students
- Teachers collaborating more and working as a team
- Hiring of additional resource teachers and aides where possible
- Focus on reading and math

Academic Performance Index (API) Increases

- * 68% of all the collaborative sites receiving TA showed growth in their API scores between 1999 and 2003.
- * Of those sites that did not show growth, all but one had received less than 3 days of TA and/or had just begun receiving TA in 2002–2003, and thus had not had time to implement changes and see results.
- * The chart below shows that there was API growth in 96% of the sites that accessed 3+ days of TA and had received some TA before 2002–2003, with an average growth of 81 points toward the goal of 800.



In addition to growth in API scores, which many schools directly attributed to their success in collaborating, sites reported changes in the following areas:

Results

- Decreases in the number of referrals to Special Education.
- Fewer behavioral referrals or disruptions.
- Change from an “us” and “them” mentality to a “we’re all in this together” sense of responsibility for all students, particularly noticeable as an improved attitude among teachers.
- More inclusive school environments, with a noticeable improvement in student attitudes.

This report was developed by Cheryl “Li” Walter, Ph.D., of the CA Institute on Human Services, who is the SIG Evaluator, along with Kelly Riedel, CalSTAT Activities Evaluation Coordinator. Questions should be directed to either of them at (707) 849-2268. A copy of this Collaborative Sites Survey Findings report can be downloaded as a pdf at:

www.calstat.org/TA.html

Funds for this project come exclusively from new federal funds awarded as a State Improvement Grant to California (CFDA 84.323A) as allowed in Part D of Public Law 105-17, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997. These dollars are considered local assistance funds and will assist individuals serving children birth to 22 years of age and their families.

March 2004