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Transcript of NCSET Conference Call Presentation

Applied Collaboration

presented by:

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MS. HAWES: My name is Maureen Hawes. I am a project coordinator at the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota and I am going to be facilitating our discussion today. Today we are going to be talking about Applied Collaboration, which is a Staff Development Training Model. What we are going to be doing is talking about this model and how we roll it out in the state of Minnesota, and then specifically we're going to be talking about the teacher training and the administrative training.

Before we get started I just wanted to give everybody a reminder that in order to reduce any background noise, individuals on speaker phones can press mute while they are listening, if they are not talking. This will help cut any background noise.

I have with me Barbara Jo Stahl from the Minnesota Department of Education. She is a CSPD representative there. I also have Jean Davis who is the Applied Collaboration State Training Coordinator and Scott Johnson who is one of our lead trainers in the state and each of them will be discussing a separate piece of the model.

What we are going to do is provide an overview of the model for about 45 minutes or so and then we'll take questions at the end. I just ask that if you do have any questions if you could just state your name and where you are calling from and that will be great, so we know who we are talking with. So I think I'll go ahead and have Barb start. Barb, -- Please, go ahead.

MS. STAHL: Thanks Maureen. Greetings to all of you. Thanks for calling in. We are going to be talking about something that we have had in Minnesota for the last 12 years in a variety of forms, and its intent is around Applied Collaboration with a focus of improving access to general education for students with disabilities. With the current focus on both No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and IDEA, this collaborative model allows us to really take a hard look at the general education cur-

riculum and determine how a student with disabilities can be successful in that arena. The model pairs a special education teacher who has knowledge of the IEP with a general education teacher who has knowledge of the curriculum to create some strategies and also some plans, so that there is an increase in access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities. The focus of this joint venture is the general education and special education teachers working together to increase the success of students with IEPs in their general education classroom.

If you really want to create a collaborative relationship and support more general education and special education, really work to benefit students with disabilities in the general education classroom you have to have administrative support. So, another guiding principle is that there is an increase in administrative understanding of the leadership and practices that boost the educational benefits for students with disabilities and we truly believe that this doesn't just happen without paying attention to it. So, in addition to offering training to teams of general education and special education teachers, we provide an Administrative-Leadership component which provides the framework for supporting collaborative relationships between teachers and within schools.

The components of Applied Collaboration are focused on research-based collaboration strategies for teams of general education and special education teachers. So, we bring those two peoples who normally will be working together because they share common students and we focus our efforts around the research-based strategies that would be most beneficial to work in curriculum areas.

We have two strands of training for teachers in this program, a collaborative strand, which gives teachers the skills and tools necessary to create and maintain collaborative relationships and an instructional strand, which

provides these collaborative teams with instructional strategies that are utilized in the classroom and increase the success of all students.

In other words, the training model has all the components for creating a culture where both the general education and special ed teachers, and administrators come together and develop some plan, so that they can benefit from this collaborative relationship between the general and special ed teacher. When we take a look at the emphasis special education is focused on, it's obviously on increasing access to general education but it's focused on individual skills attainment or individual strategies that need to be employed in order to increase the access to education, that's necessary for kids with disabilities. It's been successful--we focus on learning styles, individualized instruction and specialized instruction.

In order to do this we have a statewide training model which we have taken to scale throughout the state. We have regionally based facilitators for educational reform. We provide 100 trainings of Applied Collaboration or instructional strategies workshops throughout the state. We have been working in conjunction with the state improvement grant and have a piece of this and then also, as most states are doing, we are intimately involved in the planning for NCLB. This training looks as a piece that would benefit many areas with the new piece of legislation.

Our region 11 is our metropolitan region, which is Minneapolis, Saint Paul and the Seven County Metro Area, and then the rest of the regions, one through nine are Greater Minnesota and we attempt to flow special education funds through some regional coordinators to support these workshops. We have around 14 Applied Collaboration training teams. These are folks that are people who have worked together, they have tried the information in their classrooms and they are also excellent trainers.

Once again, the Applied Collaboration training model is a pyramid with the top of it being the administrative vision and administrative leadership workshop that allows collaboration to be supported and nurtured in the educational environment. Then we have training in either collaborative strategies or instructional strategies for teacher teams. We have just introduced within the last two years the opportunity for paraprofessionals to attend the workshops with team members, but the key and the focus of this is, to have a general educator and a special educator who come together to plan to increase the success of kids with disabilities in that general educational curriculum.

So I am going to pass it off to Jean Davis and she is

going to be sharing with you a few of the more specifics on how this actually rolls out, what the team trainings look like and how would all work. Without Jean, all of the 100 statewide training sessions wouldn't occur smoothly and successfully, so I am going to turn over to Jean.

MS. DAVIS: Hi, I am going to talk a little bit about the training of the trainers. How we came up with our teams of teachers. They applied, filled on an application, talked about what kinds of collaborative work they had already done in their classrooms, the kinds of strategies they used, their experience as trainers. We have reviewed those applications, talked with each of those teams and made a decision on whether or not to include them as part of our training cadre of trainers.

Every year we get those people together for four days to do staff development for them, to make sure that they are aware of the latest legislative changes in our state, particularly new strategies that are evolving and have met with success and just to keep them on road that we feel confident that they will provide good training. We give them training skills and lots of materials for them to keep improving their skills and part of the fun of doing that is having them say that it's the greatest training even for them to come and get the staff development training. So we feel like we really keep them up-to-date with the latest changes so that they are providing good information for teams of teachers.

And the way we have rolled out the training through those regions that Barb was talking about that I coordinate the training. Schools have contacted us and we provide the trainers for them. They go out and provide one day of training. The training again has either the collaborative strategy strand or the instructional strand. A lot of schools will use the collaborative strand as they begin to look at collaboration. It's really the beginning of collaboration, how the general ed and special ed teachers come together and begin to work together. And that session we always believe or I should say it's both sessions have plenty of work time.

Teachers have told us that the most -- one of the most valuable parts of our training is that we present information and then they are actively involved either with a lesson plan or a piece of their curriculum and with their IEPs. They have the opportunity to learn strategies and apply them to a lesson and IEP, which often isn't afforded in the schools if they don't have the time to plan together. This is a great opportunity for them to just really sit and think about the students that they have in their classrooms and the kinds of accommodations that they might need to make for those students.

We talk a lot about specially designed instruction and helping teachers understand how students qualify for specially designed instruction and exactly what that means for teachers and who is responsible for the specially designed instruction. So, a piece of our training also is, deciding or really looking at your roles and responsibilities, having people sit down and talk about -- what do you think I should be doing, whether you are going to do and how do we meet the needs of all the students in our classrooms, which I think is a real valuable part of our training. Our training is based on a five-step process of collaboration where teachers are negotiating together to talk about these students. The five steps is a model designed so that we are looking at what is that that we really want students to learn and what are the intended outcomes and the student's task.

Secondly, the teams will talk then about the learning needs of the students and the resources that they have available to meet those needs. They look at their assessment tools that will measure their acquisition of the intended learner outcome and then based on those student needs they discussed adapting the curriculum or the methodology or the delivery techniques and then, monitor and provide ongoing feedback for the students. This step is using pre-established assessment tools to measure each student's acquisition of the intended knowledge, skills, and concept and that's a big part of our training. It's having those people work through those five steps and along the way we give them guidance and work time with each step so they understand how their work set.

The second strand of training is the instructional strategies. Often schools will look at this if they have done some collaboration in the past-- our trainings are non-sequential. We talked to them about where are you in the collaborative planning process and what they are building in their school and then they make that decision while we need to have teachers start at the beginning and just learn how to talk with one another to plan or while we've kind of done that little bit and we are ready to look at some instructional strategies. So that -- the other strand of teacher training is the instructional strategy strand in which we provide 10 different research based strategies that we work through with the teachers and talk about again using that five-step process, looking at the strategies, how can we make accommodations and increase that access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities.

All of the strategies are research supported teaching strategies and, again in that training we leave a lot of time for the teachers to have work time together to look at their IEPs and their lesson plans and what they

thought. That's an important part of the training as we asked people to come as teams and we asked them to bring a part of their curriculum or a lesson plan or something and from the general education perspective and then also we ask the special ed teachers to bring an IEP, so that they can be talking about a particular student if they would like or a number of students in their classroom and to do some real applied training and work together.

I think that covers what I was going to talk about and Scott Johnson, who I work with closely and has been involved in this process from the beginning, is going to talk about the administrative training.

MR. JOHNSON: Thanks Jean. I will talk a little bit about the administrative strand of training and having listened to Barb and Jean, I will try to build some bridges between what they have said and how they have stepped into the need for administrative training and then Barb is going to talk briefly about the paraprofessional piece. I will then come back and bridge into new research on how this system supports NCLB.

To begin with, as Barb indicated, we have been at the process for roughly 12 years and like any new initiative, we learned and we have struggled and some things gone better than we expected, but one of our early recognitions was that if in fact this training was like to be successful for teachers we needed to begin with attaining administrative support.

There was an abundance of research and our own experiences told us that if in fact these teachers came on board with a collaborative vision and then went back into their buildings or districts and didn't feel that they had the support necessary, it was all for naught. So, through the give and take and our own understanding of this, we put together a strand of administrative training as Barb indicated earlier. Administrative vision is really at the top of our pyramid.

What we currently provide is a day and half session for leadership teams where we bring in teams consisting of superintendents, principals, special ed directors, coordinators, and technicians within the building/district. We also invite lead teachers - people who can influence systemic change within their buildings. During this time we start up with an evening of looking at research, a lot of it coming out of the early 70s with the change model of the University of Texas. We look at what we know about change and the barriers that we encounter within our systems when trying to implement change.

What we do with the teacher training, we also do with the administrative training. That is, we ask people to reflect not only on the research, but also how that

research plays out within their own buildings and within their own districts. We also rest on some of the research coming out of Illinois with Rick DuFour on creating collaborative cultures and Michael Fallen who has looked at change -- trying to get these administrators and lead teachers to an understanding of the change process and also a rationale for change.

Critically important to this leadership training strand is that special ed and general ed administrators come together just as they do in the teacher training. They need to be on board and have the similar discussions. We bring these administrators together and look at the characteristics of effective change and then ask them to go about the process of creating a vision for change within their building. This change specific to the needs of special education students encountering general ed curriculum.

We are also going to be looking at identifying changes for successful collaboration. What we have found out through our practice is that many people support the idea of collaboration, they just don't have the time or the tools to implement. We pull in not only the research, but also very qualified people to present and to provide time for prospective collaborative teams to discuss topics related to effective collaboration. At the end of the training session we create an action plan. Unfortunately, we have all experienced going to trainings where action plan are created but never acted upon. At our training, we really support the idea that the action plan is in fact a plan that needs to be implemented. So we go through an examination of who is in fact going to be responsible for implementing this plan when participants get back to their settings. We adhere to staff development guidelines that indicate we should not host one-day workshops. We contended our trainings are not one-day workshops. We provide the needed information and the workshop (staff development) continues once they leave our setting and go back to their buildings and districts. I'll pass it on to Barb, now, who will talk briefly about paraprofessionals and how they fit into this model.

MS. STAHL: Thanks Scott. Paraprofessionals, for all of us in the states, are increasingly becoming a group that we feel are meant be part of quality staff development activities. We provide the opportunity based on the team's need to invite the paraprofessionals that work with the students with disabilities to the training sessions. It increases the paraprofessional's information about the competencies in the service delivery. It also increase the paraprofessional's involvement in team building and collaboration activities. We feel that this

is important because, often times, it is the para who has the most direct instruction time with a student.

We also give them the opportunity to learn the research-based instructional strategies and for those team that have chosen to bring paraprofessionals into this training of the general ed and special ed teachers together it has allowed them to further define the roles and responsibilities as the teachers being the instructional leaders and the paraprofessionals as the supports but gives the paraprofessionals the instructional skills necessary to be successful working with students with disabilities. We think that for many areas both IDEA and NCLB, that this model would support meeting some of those requirements of NCLB.

We have this discussion quite frequently amongst our group that Applied Collaboration really does seem to align so much with what we are hearing. IDEA talks about access to general education; Applied Collaboration is all about providing access to general education for students with disabilities, recognizing that as general educators and special educators come together, they can fully recognize what barriers exist.

With more recent NCLB, there is renewed emphasis on meeting the needs of each child. And as I expect many of you know, special education is being called to task on this. We want to make sure, as does NCLB, that we provide each child with access to the same expectations, to the same standards, to the same rigor that we expect of students without disabilities. Applied Collaboration endorses the belief that a high quality education is, in fact, a right, not a privilege -- a right for each child regardless of whether or not they have been determined to have a disability.

NCLB also talks about accountability. As Maureen will talk about with you briefly, we are also looking at accountability for students with disabilities. There is accountability for our staff to deliver high quality instructions to students regardless of whether or not that student has a disability.

Applied Collaboration has, from its start, advocated for increased competencies that would maximally allow students with disabilities access to general education including standards. We work with teachers to recognize their responsibility for the education of all learners. Using research based strategies and practitioner-trainers who do this on a daily basis within their classrooms; we have looked to increase student learning.

MS. HAWES: I am just going to talk briefly on the components of the evaluation that we have done for our training model. As we have mentioned, this has been evolving over the past 10-12 years or so, but recently

with a new Projects of National Significant grant that we received about three years ago, we have included an evaluation that looks at how effective the training is for teachers as well as students.

The Institute on Community Integration developed a project evaluation to take a look at the training model. This evaluation consists of three key components. First, we did a content analysis of individualized education plans of students whose teachers had gone through this training. The content analysis looked at topics such as increased representation of standards and references to the general education curriculum within that IEP, and also accommodations and modifications that were included in IEPs. We also surveyed general and special education teachers that went through the training as well as administrators that participated in the Administrative-Leadership retreats. Finally, we held focus group with those different groups to gather some information on how the training was actually being implemented in the classroom.

In addition to those pieces, we also have an evaluation piece that's included in the state improvement grant and with that we are evaluating the trainings that our teacher-training teams actually go out and do in buildings and districts. So, those are the basic pieces that we are looking at with our evaluation. We have done a formative evaluation, and we, and a result, have changed and modified the training according to the information that we received back from the evaluation, and basically we feel like the training is solid and is a benefit to teachers and the students in the classroom. That is just a quick overview of our evaluation process for the training model.

MS. DAVIS: I would like to add some of comments that we have gotten from teachers. One special ed director said, "This is an opportunity to have others share my point of view and put staff in the frame of mind to facilitate change." A general education teacher said, "The power of knowledge is incredible. It is impossible not to have this training affect my strategies, ideas and philosophy." And a special education teacher said, "This training is a way of rejuvenating our energies by getting us direction and doing what is specific here." And I think all of those were very powerful and comments that we must often get from teachers is that it made a significant change in the way they look at all of the students in their classes and accept the responsibility for all students, and I think that has been the greatest impact that I have noticed from evaluations and the comments from teachers.

MS. HAWES: Well I think we have given you a lot

of information. We have gone through it pretty quickly. Why don't we open it up for questions, see if we can answer any questions you might have. I might just ask that if you do have a question, if you could introduce yourself and tell us where you are from, and we will go from there.

MS. LUIS: Hi, and I have got a question about the evaluations. Are the evaluations protocols available to save us from reinventing wheels, the kind of content analysis you do to the types of focus group questions -- the survey questions and so on?

MS. HAWES: Well, what we are doing right now - we have a Web page, which is <http://appliedcollaboration.net>, that we just got up and running. The final piece that we have to put on there is our evaluation information and you can look on there. We don't have it up yet but we will have it up, I would say, within the next few months. All of our information as far as the evaluation that we have done, what our surveys look like, what we did with our content analysis and so forth. So, Fran if you look on web page in the next couple of months we should have all or most of the evaluation information up, and there is also contact information on that page that you could send an e-mail to me. I am the coordinator and we could talk further in detail about the evaluations.

MS. LUIS: Thank you.

MS. HAWES: Sure. Next question, anybody?

Can we talk a little bit about customizing the training for a specific district? Can we touch on that a little bit --?

UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: Sure. Minnesota has tried to be responsive to the needs of the districts because we do believe and I think we have got the research -- to show us, that in fact, it is making a difference for students. What we have asked districts to do is to contact their regional coordinator, and that coordinator will then contact trainers and those trainers, along with our help, will design training around the specific needs of the requesting district-- perhaps there are some specific issues that need a little bit more emphasis within one district. Our trainers are not only tremendous trainers; they are excellent teachers, and we expect them to be able to customize the training based on the needs of the districts.

MS. HAWES: Questions?

UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: Dan and Dale, Arizona. You mentioned on the Web site, you have the information regarding the evaluation protocols, do you also already have or plan on having some of the materials that you use in your workshops or examples of the

workshop materials or other pieces of material in place to help us set up this type of system in our area.

MS. HAWES: Sure. If you go to our Web page, we have an overview of what the training model looks like. We go through it step by step. We have an example of what our training curriculum includes as well as an expert from our training manual is on. We hope to be putting up just a few of the strategies that we present at the training. Of course, we don't put all of them up there, but you can go online and get information on what the training manual looks like, how you can get more information on the training and just a basic overview about how this would look in a particular state. The Web site is <http://www.appliedcollaboration.net>.

MS. LUIS: In any of the trainings, are you looking for a way you can match the NCLB requirement for highly qualified personnel, in any way helping with credit transfers or doing what would be needed either for the teachers or for the paraprofessionals to meet requirements?

MS. STAHL: This is Barbara from the Minnesota Department of Education, and we are definitely looking at how this would it meet the whole total requirement for NCLB? We've got some sort of large scale initiatives with credentials that is now being looked at in the school. Also paraprofessional competencies; this would serve to prepare paraprofessionals in one of those areas. As far as highly qualified personnel with regard to general education and special education, this would definitely support it but our state is still very much in the process as I know all of you are to figure out what that model's going to look like.

LAURIE: This is Laurie from Dale, Arizona also. Question about how you've used this in the high schools with the focus on transition for our students.

MS. STAHL: I'm going to talk a little bit, but one of the things that this training has focused around in a lot of cases is high school and how to have kids have access to general education; I need to stress that it is an academic model, that is a model that increases the focus around trying to create a situation where that general education curriculum is accessed by students with disabilities and all their accommodations or modifications that are included in the classroom to be successful. With a transition school age student, 14 or above, that academic plan is part of that transition plan. So, this would very, very much fit in the companion piece and allow that to have its roller in place along with the other five areas of transition.

MS. DAVIS: I think also that the instructional strategies that we are presenting are not just for teach-

ers to improve their strategies of teaching, they are really strategies that they teach the students in order for the students to be more independent and be able to advocate for themselves and so it's a dual role of those instructional strategies... to help the students become more able to access the curriculum on their own. And so, I think those skills are always helpful when it comes to transition because the more that those students can feel that they can take an active role in that curriculum and be a part of it can only benefit them as they continue on after high school.

UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: I'm a secondary level teacher having spent 20 years as a language teacher. I think it's critical- the dialogue takes place at the training site. These topics do come up, and I think it's imperative that these teams get together and have these discussions so that general educators also recognize their responsibility to really meet the needs of the students with disabilities including things like transition.

MS. HAWES: Thanks. Questions -- no more questions? If we could just talk a little bit about -- if you could touch on after the training takes place, what kind of technical assistance is available to districts.

MS. DAVIS: One of the benefits of our training teams is that we really try to have teams available in all parts of the state. And so, often those teams after they have presented will get calls from teachers or from districts that have had them and ask them to come back, maybe to do some additional training. They're always available for the kind of telephone questions kinds of things. We have done some individual things with Scott and his training partner Pat, they will go back and do some technical assistance. So, that again, is on an individual basis. A district that maybe heard the initially training or like we've said when we began this, we had sort of individual teams of teachers coming, not district teams and they would go back to their district and say -- it's a great training and we'd like to do some follow up. So, we've done all different kinds of technical assistance, again, based on what the district needs and wants.

MR. NURSE: I joined a little bit late. Did all these collaborative training teams -- how does the family -- is family part of the training team?

UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: At this moment, we've not had family members as part of the training team. This is two teachers usually possibly a pair of -- one general education, one special education and what they're doing is -- is running curriculum based or not curriculum based but instructional strategies around an academic model in order to work with from -- to bring back and work in the curriculum with both the students

and how they deliver the curriculum. So, at this point in time, families have not been included.

MR. NURSE: The reason why I asked that is because, you know, I think so much of the curriculum engages participation or support from families and sometimes the communication between professionals can be somewhat challenging, but can even be more daunting and how families interface with that -- with that communication.

MR. JOHNSON: Tom, I would say that we certainly wouldn't deny access to the training for family representatives. We frankly have not advertised it that way, but I also have to say that having done a number of these trainings around Minnesota, it's not uncommon to have family representation at a training session. What oftentimes will happen is when we promote the training within a district, the district recognizes the benefit of inviting those family members to be a part of the district team.

MR. NURSE: Well, I was also wondering about things like, you know, like advisory council chairs or state advisory councils, credit representative or things like that. So, it's just kind of maybe some of that family interface but I -- the focus is primarily on curriculum integration like I understand.

MS. HAWES: One of the things that we try to do and promote, in collaboration with our State Director of Special Education, Norena Hale, is to keep all committees and advisory groups informed about this, the Special Education Advisory Council very much has been a partner in looking at this training over the years and also informed us about it's benefits and has assisted us in telling other folks about it and getting the training into districts. So, SEAC Council -- Special Education Advisory Council, is definitely a group who knows about this training and has promoted it.

MR. NURSE: Thank you.

MS. HAWES: Yes. Well, we're getting towards the end here. As I said, if anybody is interested in getting any more information on this training model, you can go to our Web site and download different pieces of the training there and get an overview of it and there's also contact information on there. If you'd like to talk directly to one of the trainers or the coordinator you can get contact information at www.appliedcollaboration.net. I wanted to let you know that our next teleconference is going to be July 31st from 1 until 2 o'clock Central Time once again, and the topic's going to be "Developing Leadership Skills in Youth with Disabilities," and if you'd like to get a transcript of this teleconference, you can get that at the National Center on Second-

ary Education and Transition's Web site which is <http://www.ncset.org/> or the phone number is 612-624-2097. So, I think that's about it. I just want to thank Barb and Jean and Scott for sharing their information with us today on this training model, Applied Collaboration, and we look to hearing more about it.

END

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