Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities
2021, Vol. 46(1) 35–52

DOI: 10.1177/1540796921992518
rpsd.sagepub.com
SAGE

Effects of a Collaborative Planning and Consultation Framework to Increase Participation of Students with Severe Disabilities in General Education Classes

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Abstract

Although many students with severe disabilities are enrolled in general education classrooms, general educators rarely receive strong training and guidance on supporting the academic and social participation of these students. A multiple probe across participants design was used to evaluate the effectiveness of a collaborative planning and consultation framework on the academic engagement of four middle school students with severe disabilities and the instructional behaviors they receive from their general educators. The intervention package increased each focus student's academic engagement with classwide instruction and changed the types of instructional behaviors some general educators directed toward these students. Recommendations are offered for research and practice aimed at engaging general educators in the design and delivery of inclusive interventions.

Keywords

collaborative planning, severe disabilities, inclusion, middle school

Long-standing legislation supports the rights of students with severe disabilities to access strong instruction within general education classrooms (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). Moreover, the benefits of well-supported inclusive experiences have been studied extensively (e.g., Agran et al., 2020; Copeland & Cosbey, 2008). Although many students with significant cognitive impairments spend at least some portion of their school day in general education classrooms (Kleinert et al., 2015), the quality of instruction and support they receive can be a concern. Observational studies in general education classrooms often report that secondary students with severe disabilities have few interactions with either general educators or peers and experience low levels of academic engagement (e.g., Carter et al., 2008; Chung et al., 2012, 2019). Therefore, it is important to strengthen the instruction and supports these students receive in general education classrooms.

Within general education classrooms, general educators are important leaders and provide the majority of instruction to enrolled students (Goldhaber, 2016). General educators have the primary responsibility for the instruction of all students attending their classes, including those who have severe disabilities. They serve as a linchpin for services—bridging the individual needs of a student with severe disabilities to the

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general curriculum. As general educators are usually the only certified teachers in their classrooms and often lack sufficient preparation in this area (Zagona et al., 2017), research-based practices are needed to help them take a more active role in teaching students with severe disabilities.

A recent systematic review of 40 studies indicates that general educators typically have very limited or peripheral roles in the implementation of interventions designed to support the inclusion of students with disabilities (Kuntz et al., in press). General educator involvement was often very modest, such as when they helped plan an intervention, provided feedback on the intervention, or suggested ways in which peers might be involved (e.g., Brock & Carter, 2016; Chung & Carter, 2013). However, a smaller number of studies illustrate how general educators can be more involved in delivering instruction to students with severe disabilities. For example, McDonnell and colleagues (2001) examined general educators' use of a classwide peer tutoring intervention and its impact on students with moderate and severe disabilities. This research underscores the potential impact general educators could have on the instruction of students with severe disabilities.

Furthermore, increasing the involvement of general educators in the instruction of students with severe disabilities would better reflect recommended practice in inclusive education (Jorgensen et al., 2010; Kurth & Gross, 2015). Ryndak and colleagues (2014) recommended that general educators participate in the design, implementation, and evaluation of instruction for students with disabilities. One means of increasing involvement is through collaborative planning. General educators can work with special educators and other service providers (e.g., paraprofessionals) to develop strategies individualized to students with severe disabilities enrolled in their classes. Previous studies have explored collaborative planning and reported positive outcomes for both the general educators and students. For example, Hunt and colleagues (2003) investigated the effectiveness of collaborative planning between a general educator and a special educator on the social and academic participation of elementary school students with severe disabilities. Results indicated a decrease in unengaged time for all six focus students and an increase in their interactions with teachers and peers. Likewise, Biggs and colleagues (2017) evaluated the efficacy of collaborative planning and peer support arrangements to increase peer interactions and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) use with middle school students with complex communication needs. The intervention produced increases in student and peer communication and peer support behaviors. In both of these studies, members of the student teams viewed the collaborative planning process as beneficial and important.

Collaborative planning often requires educators to apply and generalize support behaviors across a range of instructional situations that may not have been explicitly addressed in the initial plan. A collaborative planning intervention may benefit from an added element of support for the implementer. Ongoing consultation could assist educators who implement support plans to apply and generalize important student supports within their weekly lessons. This consultation could come from a special educator or a district instructional or inclusion coach. Previous research on collaboration has not often included ongoing consultation after the initial planning meetings (e.g., Biggs et al., 2017; Brock et al., 2016). In contrast, Hunt and colleagues (2003) held monthly meetings to create and then assess a Unified Plan of Support for elementary students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms. Although implementation of the plan was measured through self-report each month, teams reported that 42 of the 52 student supports were *moderately* or *fully implemented* across focus students at the first follow-up meeting and 67 of the 69 supports by the final meeting. Additional research is needed to further explore how such ongoing consultation could be folded into other intervention approaches.

Despite federal mandates requiring the involvement of general educators on Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams and research supporting collaborative planning, no study has evaluated the effects of collaborative planning focused on guiding general educators to implement instruction for students with severe disabilities in their classes with ongoing consultation. In addition, no studies have focused on secondary (i.e., middle or high) school educators who often work as part of larger school teams and teach multiple classes of students. It is unclear what impact this type of educator support could have on the academic engagement of students with severe disabilities in general education classes. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of collaborative planning with ongoing consultation for general

educators serving students with severe disabilities in general education classes. Three questions were addressed:

1. Does the academic engagement and interactions of students with severe disabilities increase when their general educators deliver lessons using the collaborative planning with consultation (CPC) process?
2. Does the introduction of the CPC process lead to changes in the percent and types of interactions general educators have with students with severe disabilities?
3. How do general educators view the social validity of the CPC process?

Method

Participants

After receiving institutional review board approval, we recruited participants. Each general educator (a) had at least one student with severe disabilities enrolled in at least one class, (b) taught at the middle or high school level, and (c) taught their class using traditional instructional approaches (e.g., direct instruction, guided practice, and independent practice) that could accommodate a planning framework aligned to these approaches. Focus students had to (a) attend a public middle or high school; (b) have a severe disability, as evidenced by participation in the state's alternate assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities; (c) attend at least one general education class; and (d) have a current IEP with at least one academic goal. Four teacher–student pairs met the inclusion criteria, provided consent or assent, and participated. In addition, the two special educators who also served the focus students consented to participate in an initial planning meeting. Table 1 includes participant descriptions. Carolina attended Ms. Carpenter's class, Austin attended Ms. Adams's class, Bridget attended Ms. Brown's class, and Daria attended Ms. Davenport's class. All names are pseudonyms.

General educators. Table 1 displays information on the teacher–student pairs (i.e., dyads). Ms. Carpenter was an African American female who taught sixth-grade English language arts (ELA). She had 8 years of teaching experience—three of which included students with severe disabilities. Ms. Adams was a White female who taught seventh-grade social studies. She had one previous year of experience and no experience teaching students with severe disabilities. Ms. Brown was a White female who taught sixth-grade science. She had 18 years of experience—three of which included students with severe disabilities. Ms. Davenport was an African American female who taught fifth-grade ELA. She had 5 years of experience—two of which included students with severe disabilities.

Student participants. Carolina was a 12-year-old female who attended Ms. Carpenter's class. She was diagnosed with autism and a seizure disorder. Austin was a 13-year-old male who attended Ms. Adams's class. He was diagnosed with autism, intellectual disability, and a visual impairment. Bridget was a 13-year-old female who attended Ms. Brown's class. She was diagnosed with an intellectual disability, language impairment, and Down syndrome. Daria was a 10-year-old female who attended Ms. Davenport's class. She was diagnosed with an intellectual disability and an unspecified chromosomal disorder.

Special educators. Ms. Williams was Austin's and Bridget's special educator. She was an African American female who served students primarily with severe disabilities. Ms. Johnson was Carolina's and Daria's special educator. She was an African American female who also served students primarily with severe disabilities. Special educators participated in one planning meeting but did not participate in ongoing consultations due to limited availability and scheduling conflicts.

Intervention coach. The first author, a White female, who had a master's degree in special education and was a doctoral student in special education at the time of the study, served as the intervention coach. She was a

Table 1. Demographic Information for General Educators and Students with Disabilities.

Information	Dyad 1	Dyad 2	Dyad 3	Dyad 4
Class subject	Sixth-grade English language arts	Seventh-grade social studies	Sixth-grade science	Fifth-grade English language arts
Total students	25	27	24	20
General educator	Ms. Carpenter	Ms. Adams	Ms. Brown	Ms. Davenport
Race/ethnicity	African American	White	White	African American
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Female
Degree	Master's in educational leadership	Bachelor's in American politics	Master's in curriculum and instruction	Master's in literacy
Licensure	Elementary ed.	Middle social studies	Elementary ed.	Elementary ed.
Teaching experience	8 years	1 year	18 years	5 years
Inclusion experience[a]	3 years	0 years	3 years	2 years
Student	Carolina	Austin	Bridget	Daria
Age	12	13	13	10
Sex	Female	Male	Female	Female
Race/ethnicity	Hispanic	White	Asian	Hispanic
Disability	Autism, seizure disorder	Autism, intellectual disability, visual impairment	Intellectual disability, language impairment	Intellectual disability, chromosomal disorder
IQ	59[b]	57[c]	—	53[d]
Communication	Single words, short phrases, EL	Full sentences	Gestures, Vocalizations, single word approximations, EL	Brief, simple sentences, EL
Challenging behaviors	Occasional noncompliance (not observed)	None indicated	None indicated	None indicated
Other general education classes	Art	Science, related arts	Social studies, related arts	Math, related arts

Note. EL = English learner.
[a]Inclusion experience was defined as teaching a class with one or more students with severe disabilities. [b]Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence–Second Edition. [c]Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children–Fifth Edition. [d]Stanford–Binet Intelligence Scales–Fifth Edition.

licensed teacher, a board certified behavior analyst (BCBA), and had previously served as an instructional and behavior coach in a public school district.

Setting

The study took place in two middle schools in a large, metropolitan school district in the southeastern United States. Both public schools served students in Grades 5 through 8. Austin and Bridget attended the same middle school, which enrolled over 600 students—one third of whom were classified as economically disadvantaged and about 4% were English learners. The school served students of varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds (approximately 50% White, 33% African American, 10% Hispanic, and 5% Asian) and had included students with severe disabilities in general education science, social studies, and related arts classes for more than 7 years. Carolina and Daria attended a different middle school, which enrolled nearly 700 students—over 40% of whom were classified as economically disadvantaged and about 20% were English learners. The school also had a diverse student body (approximately 44% Hispanic, 35% White, 19% African American, and 3% Asian) and started to include students with severe disabilities in core content classes within the previous 3 years.

Experimental Design and Procedures

We used a multiple probe across participants design (Gast & Ledford, 2014) to evaluate the effectiveness of the CPC process. We graphed data to examine any changes in each primary dependent variable (i.e., academic engagement, teacher interactions with the focus student) and used visual analysis (i.e., level, trend, overlap, and variability) to determine a functional relation. We also measured student interactions and types of instructional behaviors to assess any changes upon implementation of the intervention, but did not analyze these variables to determine a functional relation. General educators were aware of the focus of the observations during both baseline and intervention conditions.

Baseline. During the baseline conditions, all general educators provided instruction in the same manner as prior to the study. General educators received copies of the focus students' IEP from the special educator at the beginning of the school year but did not collaborate regularly with the special educator outside of school-wide faculty meetings. All four focus students received paraprofessional support. Paraprofessionals typically sat at the same table or desk as the focus student and either directed the student to attend to class-wide instruction or repeated the general educator's instruction. Focus students sat at tables similar to, but separate from, peers without disabilities. We did not provide directions or restrictions about how general educators were to plan or deliver instruction or how they were to utilize the paraprofessional. General educators often provided whole-group instruction and independent work activities in their classes, had copies of the students' IEPs prior to the study, but did not plan anything supplemental in relation to the student with severe disabilities.

CPC intervention. This intervention had two distinct elements: (a) one Student Support Plan meeting to gather important information about the focus student and develop general instructional and support strategies for the classroom routines, and (b) regular Quick Plan meetings to specify the strategies for daily lessons. The intervention coach used a Planning Guide with detailed steps and scripted questions to complete each element in the same manner across teachers. The Planning Guide and planning forms are available from the first author by request.

Student support plan meeting. After baseline data were collected, the intervention coach facilitated an initial planning meeting with the general and special educator of each focus student. The initial planning meeting, which consisted of 17 components, lasted 60 min and took place in an empty classroom after school. During the meeting, the team created a Student Support Plan using a one-page form adapted from Jorgensen (2018) and Kurth and Gross (2015). The form addressed five areas—(a) focus student's strengths

and interests, (b) focus student's present levels of performance in core academic skills, (c) helpful strategies for the general educator to support the focus student, (d) an academic goal for the general education class, and (e) participation in classroom routines.

In Step 1 of the Planning Guide, the intervention coach presented the goals of the CPC intervention, the steps involved, and the role of each team member (i.e., general educator, special educator, and intervention coach). In Step 2, the special educator shared information pertaining to the focus student's strengths, interests, present levels of academic performance, and other helpful strategies for working with the student (e.g., seating and lighting arrangements to reduce the impact of the student's visual impairment). In Step 3, the general educator identified the expectations for seven types of routines in her class—(a) the beginning/end of class, (b) whole class instruction, (c) whole class discussion, (d) small group work, (e) independent work, (f) class presentations, and (g) tests/quizzes—with input from the special educator about the supports the focus student would need to engage in the routines as described, if any. The purpose of this information was to broadly address how the focus student could participate in class activities and what supports would be needed to promote independence.

Quick plan meetings. Approximately, each week, the general educator and the intervention coach met for 30 min to use the Student Support Plan to create a Quick Plan specific to the focus student. The one-page written plan was adapted from Jorgensen (2018). This Quick Plan was based on the upcoming lessons that general educators already had planned for their class and consisted of 20 components. General planning for the class did not occur during the Quick Plan meetings. As the Quick Plans were based on the general educator's existing plans, the level of detail for the Quick Plans was directly related to the extent to which the general educator had planned for the upcoming classes. If plans for the week were not finalized by the Quick Plan meeting, the teacher emailed the additional materials and plans to the intervention coach when ready. This only occurred for Ms. Adams and Ms. Davenport who regularly used templates for daily notes and warm-up activities. Focus students' supports were the same across these materials (e.g., changing short essay responses to fill-in-the-blank statements) and applied by the intervention coach as the new content was emailed.

Step 4 of the Planning Guide addressed the Quick Plan meetings. It consisted of questions aimed at incorporating the supports indicated on the Student Support Plan into each lesson. This included directions for paraprofessionals and adaptations to lesson materials (e.g., enlarging the text on teacher worksheets, ensuring the availability of screen reading technology, and shortening assignments to focus on key ideas). For each lesson, the Quick Plan identified four main elements of each class period: (a) the details of the day's lesson, including which class routines would be used; (b) how the focus student would participate in each activity and any needed adaptations, if participation differed from the rest of the class; (c) the materials that the focus student would use, including any adapted materials; and (d) supports the focus student would need (e.g., assistive technology, peers, and paraprofessional). Although paraprofessionals did not partake in any planning meeting, they were discussed as a potential support for the focus student during some activities. Ms. Carpenter and Ms. Adams participated in six Quick Plan meetings each. Ms. Brown participated in five meetings, and Ms. Davenport participated in three.

Dependent Variables

We used interval recording to record the dependent measures concurrently (i.e., observers recorded data on each variable at the same time). All measures and definitions were drawn from prior studies addressing the inclusion of students with severe disabilities (e.g., Biggs et al., 2017; Carter et al., 2016). Observers used a pencil-and-paper data collection sheet to capture all measures live. Data were collected during scheduled class times 2 to 4 times per week for approximately 11 weeks.

Student measures. Dependent variables for the focus student included (a) academic engagement, and (b) student interactions. Academic engagement and student interactions are widely used as important indicators

of learning, particularly when more direct measures of knowledge and skill acquisition are difficult to obtain consistently over the course of an entire semester.

Academic engagement. Observers recorded the academic engagement of the student, displayed at the end of each interval, using a 1-min momentary time sampling recording system. Academic engagement was defined as actively attending to, looking at, or following along with instructional activities that were assigned by the teacher or a paraprofessional. Indicators of academic engagement included looking at materials (e.g., textbook, worksheet, and whiteboards) related to assigned activities, looking at the teacher as he or she provides instruction, writing related to the assigned activity, following teacher instructions/directions, raising one's hand, or asking questions of the teacher about instructional activities. Three codes were possible: *aligned engagement, unaligned engagement*, and *not engaged* (Carter et al., 2016, 2017). Aligned engagement was coded when the focus student was academically engaged in instructional activities that were consistent or aligned with the content provided to the majority of the class (i.e., identical or appropriately modified from the class curriculum). Examples we observed included working with peers on an assignment, watching the teacher present a lecture, and writing responses on adapted worksheets. Unaligned engagement was coded when the focus student was academically engaged in instructional activities that were *not* consistent or aligned with the content provided to the majority of the class (i.e., not identical or appropriately modified from the class). Examples we observed included unrelated coloring activities and reading unrelated books assigned by the teacher or paraprofessional. *Not engaged* was coded when the focus student was overtly not attending to, looking at, or following along with any instructional activities or when the focus student was engaged in activities that were not assigned by a teacher or paraprofessional. Examples we observed included doodling in a notebook and folding origami.

Student interactions. Interactions were defined as verbal or nonverbal behaviors from or to the focus student regarding instruction, behavior, or other topics and appeared to have communicative acknowledgment (e.g., gaining the partner's attention, looking at the partner, and responding to a partner; Biggs et al., 2017; Carter et al., 2016). We coded student interactions with four different categories of partners—general educators, paraprofessionals, peers, or other partners. Interactions were recorded using a 1-min partial-interval recording system. For each interval, if the focus student interacted with one or more peers, "peer" was indicated for the corresponding interval on the data sheet. If the focus student also interacted with a paraprofessional, "peer" and "paraprofessional" were indicated for the interval. If the focus student did not interact with anyone during an interval, "no interaction" was indicated for the interval.

General educator measures. Dependent variables for the general educators included (a) teacher interactions with the focus student, and (b) types of instructional behaviors.

Teacher interactions with focus student. Observers recorded the occurrence of an interaction between the general educator and the focus student. An interaction was defined as verbal or nonverbal behaviors directed to the focus student regarding instruction, behavior, or another topic (Chung et al., 2012). Examples included asking the focus student a question or giving the student a smile and thumbs-up. A teacher interaction directed toward all members of a small group (i.e., eight or fewer students) that included the focus student was recorded as an occurrence of a general educator interaction. General educator's interactions directed to the whole class (including the focus student) or other students in the classroom were not coded. Teacher interactions with the focus student were recorded using a 1-min partial-interval recording system, indicating the presence or absence of one or more general educator interactions.

Types of instructional behaviors. For each interval with the occurrence of a teacher interaction with the focus student, observers categorized the type of instructional behavior directed to the focus student. Types of instructional behaviors included the (a) presentation of a work task to the student, (b) reinforcement/praise of the student, (c) error correction of the student, (d) seating arrangement or grouping of the student,

(e) peer arrangement for the student, (f) behavioral plan for the student, and (g) other noninstructional behaviors. Behaviors were coded using a 1-min partial-interval recording system, and more than one type of instructional behavior could be coded in an interval.

The presentation of a *work task* could be coded as same, adapted, or alternate as it related to the content presented to the general class. To be coded as *same*, the presented task, direction, or comment was the same as the instruction of the entire class in content, materials, product, and other attributes. For the presentation of the work task to be coded as *adapted*, the presented task, direction, or comment was adapted from the instruction of the entire class in content, materials, product, or another attribute by supplementing or simplifying the task of the general class (Janney & Snell, 2006). For the presentation of the work task to be coded as *alternate*, the presented task, direction, or comment was different from the instruction of the entire class in content, materials, product, or another attribute by changing the content or type of skill completely (e.g., daily living skill vs. academic skill; Janney & Snell, 2006).

Reinforcement/praise was a comment or exclamation of approval from the general educator directed toward the focus student and was coded as academic or nonacademic. The comment or exclamation could be verbal or nonverbal and could include gestures (e.g., thumbs-up) or vocalizations (e.g., "woo hoo!"; Brock & Carter, 2016; Brock et al., 2016). *Error correction* was a comment or signal from the general educator directed toward the focus student with the intent to change the student's work or behavior and was coded as academic or nonacademic (Brock & Carter, 2016; Brock et al., 2016).

For *seating/grouping* to be coded, the general educator explicitly assigned the focus student to a desk/table in the classroom or to a group of students related to an assignment or activity. For *peer arrangement* to be coded, the general educator assigned a peer to support the focus student either academically or socially in the context of a work task or transition outside of classwide group work. For *behavioral support* to be coded, the general educator utilized a behavior support strategy with the focus student as outlined in the student's individualized behavior plan or the teacher's classwide management plan. For *other behavior* to be coded, the general educator engaged in a noninstructional interaction not otherwise specified in the previous categories. Seating/grouping, peer arrangement, and behavior support behaviors were only coded when the teacher discussed the arrangement with the focus student and were not coded in any subsequent intervals in which the arrangements continued.

Observer Training and Interobserver Agreement (IOA)

For each participating teacher–student pair, direct observations during the selected class period took place approximately 2 to 4 times per week during the baseline and intervention conditions. The length of the observations corresponded with the length of time the focus student was present in the class ($M = 40$ min, range = 7–63 min). During observations, observers sat quietly in the classroom where the focus student could be seen and heard but where they were not obtrusive (e.g., sitting to the side or back of the class) or a distraction (e.g., they did not talk with individuals in the class) to other students.

Observer training. Prior to the start of the study, we trained three observers on the observational measurement system. Two observers were graduate students pursuing doctoral degrees in special education; one was pursuing a master's degree in special education. All observers participated in two instructional trainings (averaging 2 hr each) to become familiar with the observational data collection manual, including operational definitions, examples, and non-examples for each variable. At the end of the second training, the knowledge of the coding manual, definitions, and rules was assessed on a written assessment. Before coding during live observations, all observers scored above 90% on the written assessment and exceeded 90% agreement with the primary coder on a novel practice video (approximately 10 min).

IOA. IOA data were collected across all study conditions for each focus student. A second observer observed with the primary observer in 37.5% of all observations and each observer recorded data independently. IOA observations were conducted randomly and balanced across students and study conditions—with the exception of the first tier's baseline condition. This was due to observer training and student absences. Overall,

IOA was calculated shortly after each IOA observation to have a discrepancy discussion and conduct retraining specific to the variable. IOA was calculated using overall point-by-point agreement by dividing the number of intervals in which the primary and secondary observer codes matched by the total number of intervals and multiplying by 100. Regarding teacher interactions, IOA was 98.7% for *work tasks*, 99.6% for *reinforcement/praise*, 98.8% for *error correction*, 99.8% for *seating/grouping*, 100.0% *for peer arrangements*, and 97.2% for *other* behaviors. In addition, IOA was 88.1% for student interactions and 82.6% for academic engagement. Although overall agreement was within acceptable levels (i.e., above 80%; for example, Gast & Ledford, 2014), academic engagement was occasionally lower when there were slight differences in observers' visibility. For example, one observer may have observed the focus student writing on an assigned worksheet (i.e., aligned engagement), whereas the second observer saw that the student was actually doodling on that worksheet rather than completing her work (i.e., not engaged).

Procedural Fidelity

Procedural fidelity was assessed at two levels of implementation of the collaborative planning framework—the development of the Student Support Plans and the consultation regarding weekly lesson plans through the Quick Plans. We used a set of pencil-paper checklists and written notes to assess procedural fidelity. We provided no support, advice, or suggestions to any general educator regarding classroom instruction or supports to the focus student during the baseline condition. At the introduction of the intervention, we used a checklist for the Student Support Plan meetings that consisted of 17 items mirroring the components on the document. Fidelity during Student Support Plan meetings was calculated by dividing the number of completed items by the number of possible items and multiplying by 100. Each item was addressed across all four students' meetings, and fidelity was 100%. During the intervention condition for each student, we used a checklist for the Quick Plan meetings that consisted of 20 possible items. This checklist was completed based on the applicable components of the plan each week. Applicable components were based on the lesson preparations of the general educator (i.e., the days the teacher had plans prepared) and fidelity consisted of the provision of support for each prepared lesson. Class periods in which the general educator did not provide plans to the researcher were not factored into procedural fidelity. Across participants, Quick Plan fidelity averaged 92.1%, and applicable components averaged approximately 17 out of 20 items. By participant, average Quick Plan fidelity was as follows: Carolina (94.8%), Austin (91.0%), Bridget (90.7%), and Daria (91.4%).

We did not collect data on how closely the teacher implemented her initial plans as originally written. First, we recognized there would be day-to-day variability in these classrooms based on ordinary (e.g., unfinished instructional activities spilling over to subsequent days, students grasping instructional content sooner or slower than expected) and unanticipated (e.g., fire drills, student or teacher absences) factors. Second, we did not have the resources to observe each teacher every day for the entire class period throughout the semester. Third, our interest was in assessing the effects of the CPC process on our defined variables specifically and did not assess such factors as lesson planning or lesson delivery.

Social Validity

We assessed social validity by examining general educators' perspectives on the acceptability, feasibility, and impact of the intervention 5 weeks after data collection ended. Each general educator also participated in an interview and completed a 17-item survey (see Table 2). Response options were as follows: *strongly disagree* = 1, *disagree* = 2, *neutral* = 3, *agree* = 4, and *strongly agree* = 5. A different doctoral student who had no previous interactions with the general educators conducted the interviews. Interviews consisted of several open-ended questions addressing the feasibility and acceptability of the intervention, how they felt the intervention helped them meet the focus student's needs, how the intervention impacted their existing lesson planning and delivery, how their behaviors changed as a result of the intervention, and the supports/resources needed to continue the intervention (interview protocol available by request). Interviews took place in general educators' classrooms, lasted between 10 and 25 min, and were audio recorded and then transcribed.

Table 2. Social Validity Ratings From General Educators.

Social validity item	Ms. Carpenter	Ms. Adams	Ms. Brown	Ms. Davenport
The amount of time required for the CPC process was reasonable.	SA	A	A	SA
I feel I was effective in my responsibilities.	SA	A	A	A
I would need ongoing consultation to continue the CPC process.	N	A	N	D
Developing the Student Support Plan as a team was important to the success of creating the Quick Plan lessons.	SA	A	SA	N
Consultation was important to the success of developing the Quick Plan lessons.	SA	A	A	N
I could use what I learned to incorporate other students with severe disabilities into my lessons.	SA	SA	SA	SA
I could use what I learned to teach other educators how to incorporate students with severe disabilities into lessons.	SA	A	A	A
I am motivated to continue using the CPC process to incorporate students with severe disabilities into my lessons.	SA	A	A	SA
I am *not* interested in using the CPC process again.	SD	D	N	SD
The CPC process was a good way to address the instruction of students with severe disabilities in inclusive classes.	SA	SA	A	SA
The CPC process gave me clarity on how to support the student with severe disabilities in my class.	SA	SA	A	SA
The CPC process aligns with the goals of the school in supporting students with disabilities.	SA	N	A	A
I would know what to do again if I was asked to plan instruction for a student with severe disabilities in inclusive classes.	SA	A	A	SA
The student with severe disabilities benefited socially from the CPC process.	SA	A	A	A
The student with severe disabilities benefited academically from the CPC process.	SA	SA	A	SA
The CPC process *negatively* impacted other students in the class.	SD	D	D	D
Overall, I enjoyed participating in this project.	SA	SA	A	A

Note. CPC = collaborative planning with consultation; SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree.

Table 3. Descriptive Summary by Teacher–Student Pair and Study Condition.

	Ms. Carpenter and Carolina		Ms. Adams and Austin		Ms. Brown and Bridget		Ms. Davenport and Daria	
Variable	Baseline	CPC	Baseline	CPC	Baseline	CPC	Baseline	CPC
Teacher interactions	7.1	31.8	7.6	11.4	2.3	3.8	15.2	15.9
Work task								
Same	0.0	2.7	3.2	0.8	0.2	0.8	0.2	3.1
Adapted	0.0	9.0	0.0	5.7	0.0	1.3	1.4	5.1
Alternate	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	1.7	0.0
Reinforcement/praise								
Academic	0.0	11.3	0.3	2.0	0.0	0.2	1.4	2.9
Nonacademic	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.2	1.4	0.0
Error correction								
Academic	0.0	4.7	1.2	1.8	0.0	0.4	1.3	4.9
Nonacademic	0.0	2.6	1.3	1.1	0.0	0.0	2.4	0.3
Seating/grouping	3.8	1.5	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.4
Peer arrangement	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8
Behavior plan	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	4.2	15.2	2.5	4.1	2.1	1.1	7.8	3.6
Academic engagement								
Aligned engagement	9.7	51.0	15.8	69.2	2.7	36.4	36.1	78.9
Unaligned engagement	0.0	9.8	4.8	0.0	4.5	6.0	9.9	0.0
Not engaged	90.4	39.2	79.4	30.8	92.8	57.7	53.9	21.1
Student interactions								
Paraprofessional	46.5	68.1	20.5	36.9	27.3	35.4	41.7	14.3
Peer	3.0	10.0	7.1	1.2	15.3	10.3	28.0	22.2
Other	0.9	0.4	1.6	0.6	3.7	0.2	6.3	5.7
Instructional format								
Whole class	36.0	27.0	39.8	52.4	8.5	14.1	28.9	53.6
Small group	0.0	4.0	20.9	28.8	1.2	19.8	12.7	6.5
Individual	0.0	45.5	12.6	7.5	10.3	17.5	16.3	24.0
No instruction	64.0	23.2	26.7	10.8	80.1	48.6	41.6	15.9

Note. CPC = collaborative planning with consultation.

Results

Table 3 has descriptive information for all variables across participants and conditions.

Academic Engagement

Figure 1 displays the percentage of intervals with academic engagement aligned with the instruction of the class for each observation. As may be expected in a classroom with ever-changing content and activities, academic engagement varied across focus students and conditions. All students increased their levels of academic engagement as a result of the CPC process. With the exception of the third day when the class watched a video, Carolina's academic engagement was low and stable in baseline (M = 9.7%) and had a large increase in the CPC condition (M = 51.0%). Austin's academic engagement was low and variable in the baseline condition (M = 15.8%) but increased immediately above baseline levels in the CPC condition (M = 69.2%). Bridget's academic engagement was very low in the baseline condition (M = 2.7%) and had large increases in the CPC condition (M = 36.4%). Daria's academic engagement varied greatly in the baseline condition (M = 36.1%) and was most elevated when Ms. Davenport assigned silent reading for the

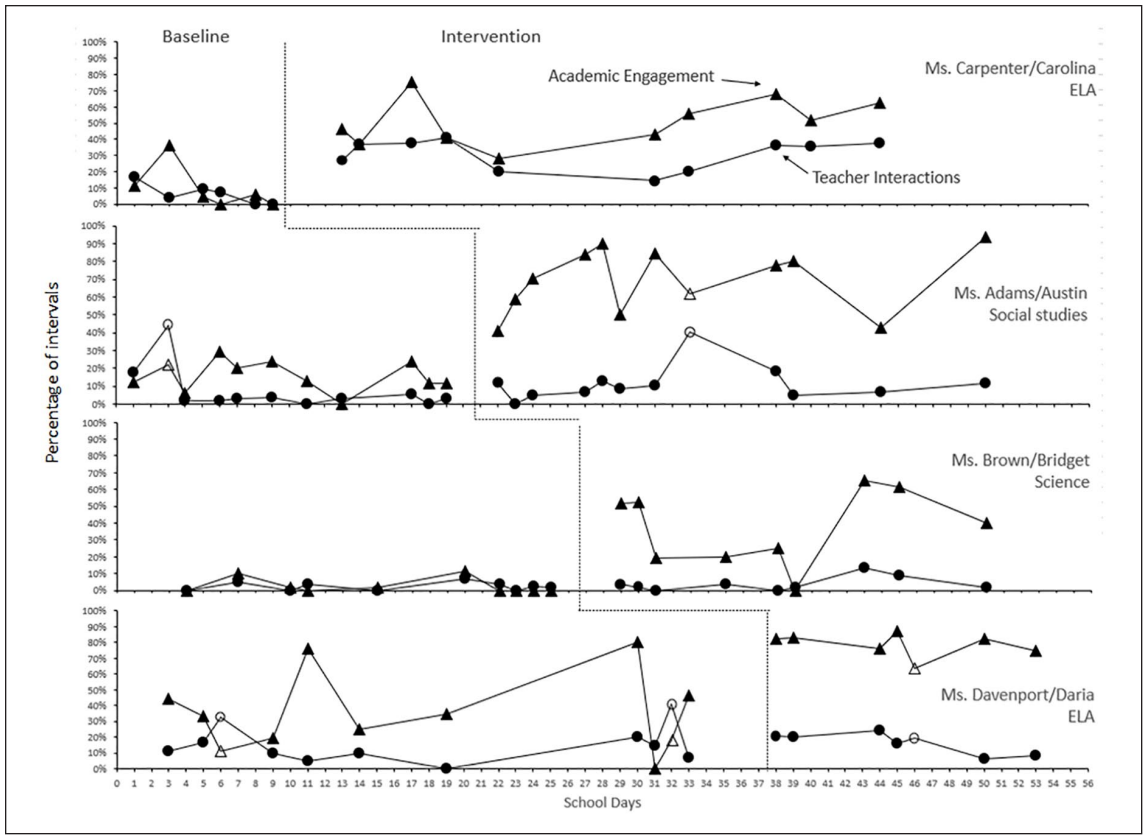

Figure 1. Teacher interactions and student academic engagement across intervention conditions and focus students.

Note. Teacher interactions are represented by closed circles. Student academic engagement is represented by closed triangles. Open icons indicate sessions in which the paraprofessional was absent from the class. ELA = English language arts.

morning work (i.e., School Days 9 and 30). However, her percentage of academic engagement increased immediately and remained stable in the CPC condition ($M = 78.9\%$).

Teacher Interactions with Focus Student

Figure 1 displays the percentage of intervals with at least one teacher interaction directed toward the focus student. We observed inconsistent changes in overall levels of teacher interactions with the focus student as a result of the CPC process. Ms. Carpenter had large increases in her percentage of interactions with Carolina (from 7.1% to 31.8%). Increases were smaller for Ms. Adams (7.6%–11.4%) and Ms. Brown (2.3%–3.8%). No changes were found for Ms. Davenport (15.2%–15.9%). In the baseline condition, most interactions addressed noninstructional topics. In the CPC condition, however, all four general educators used a greater variety of types of instructional behaviors with the focus students (e.g., assigning work tasks, providing praise, and delivering prompts), reflecting a shift from noninstructional to instructional interactions.

Student Interactions

Although focus students' interactions with others were not a primary focus of this study, we were interested in their social involvement across conditions. Table 3 displays the percentage of student interactions by interaction partner. Carolina had few interactions with peers (3.0%) in the baseline condition but more than

tripled her peer interaction (10.0%) in the CPC condition. Interactions with the paraprofessional also increased from 46.5% to 68.1%. Interactions with peers decreased for Austin—from 7.1% in the baseline condition to 1.2% in the CPC condition. His interactions with the paraprofessional increased from 20.5% in baseline to 36.9% in the CPC condition. Bridget also had more interactions with peers in the CPC condition (15.3%) as compared with the baseline condition (10.3%). Bridget's interactions with the paraprofessional slightly increased from 27.3% to 35.4%. Like Austin and Bridget, Daria's interactions with peers decreased from the baseline condition (28.0%) to the CPC condition (22.2%). Daria's interactions with the paraprofessional also decreased from the baseline condition (41.7%) to the CPC condition (14.3%).

Social Validity

Table 2 displays general educators' ratings of social validity survey items. All general educators agreed or strongly agreed with 11 of the 15 positive statements regarding the intervention. We reviewed postintervention interview transcripts for general perspectives and attitudes toward the intervention. Ms. Carpenter stated,

> When I tell you it really made a difference, it really did. I don't think that I would have gotten as close to Carolina if we didn't have that because I really didn't know how to . . . I just didn't know.

Ms. Adams detailed,

> For me it was powerful too to realize how little gen ed students had expected of my inclusion students up until that point. And how that changed so dramatically when my special education students had materials that were the same information just reflected in a different way.

Ms. Davenport acknowledged,

> Of course, I have attended her IEP meeting. I feel like a lot of times those are very general and not really specific. But [the intervention] allowed me to know specifically what she needed and how what I was doing could match up with what she needed.

The general educators reported that (a) the CPC process provided them clarity on how to include the focus student into lessons, (b) the focus students benefited from the intervention, and that (c) they learned ways to include students with severe disabilities in lessons.

Discussion

Creating general education environments where teachers have the tools to be active instructors for students with severe disabilities—and where those students receive equitable instruction to be actively engaged participants—requires careful planning. We evaluated the effectiveness of a collaborative planning framework with ongoing consultation to increase the academic engagement of students with severe disabilities and teacher interactions with these students. We also examined the views of participating general educators on this intervention package. Our findings indicate a functional relation between the CPC intervention and academic engagement but yield mixed findings for teacher interactions with the focus students. These results extend the literature by providing new insights into the implementation and impact of a collaborative planning intervention.

Prevailing practices—as depicted in our baseline or "business as usual" conditions—may not be sufficient for ensuring a quality education for students with severe disabilities in general education classes. With the exception of Bridget, the focus students had attended their class for nearly 2 months prior to the study. Despite having access to each student's IEP and periodic communication with special educators, general educators seldom interacted with the focus students prior to introducing the intervention. When interactions did occur during baseline, they were often noninstructional in focus (i.e., social-related). Moreover, all four

students were rarely engaged academically. This finding is consistent with both descriptive studies (e.g., Carter et al., 2008; Chung et al., 2019)and the baseline patterns of prior intervention studies carried out in general education secondary classrooms (e.g., Brock & Carter, 2016).

This study shows some beneficial impacts of a collaborative planning intervention with ongoing consultation. Drawing upon similar support strategies found to be effective with younger students (e.g., Hunt et al., 2003), we introduced an intervention package to middle school general educators focused on increasing their interactions with their focus student, while also measuring the academic engagement of focus students and their interactions with their teachers and classmates. As in the study by Hunt et al. (2003), we found that academic engagement increased across all students. The CPC process offers another model for educators to collaborate efficiently and effectively.

We also found that teacher interactions with the focus students encompassed a broader range of instructional behaviors across all teachers. Few prior studies have equipped general educators to function as primary instructors of students with severe disabilities in general education classes. For example, Biggs et al. (2017) established collaborative planning as a method to increase peer supports for middle school students with disabilities who used AAC devices. However, they did not involve the general educator beyond the initial planning meeting. We found that general educators can take an active role in planning and delivering supports to students with severe disabilities to promote academic engagement and to alter the focus of their interactions.

The intervention package was not without challenges. Although this study suggests that collaborative planning with ongoing consultation can have some impact on students' academic engagement and teacher interactions with these students, several elements require closer consideration. Each class included a paraprofessional assigned to support the focus student. When the paraprofessional was absent, teacher interactions with the focus student were often much higher than sessions in which the paraprofessional was present. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that paraprofessionals assigned to support a student with severe disabilities specifically can inhibit general educator interactions (e.g., Giangreco et al., 2001). Clarifying roles and responsibilities in collaborative planning could alleviate this effect by empowering general educators as the primary instructor for students with disabilities and reinforcing paraprofessionals as a supplemental and secondary support. We also found that student academic engagement seemed to depend on the extent to which general educators engaged in lesson planning for *any* of the students in their class. When the general educator did not provide instruction to the class, it was not possible for students with severe disabilities to be engaged.

Feedback from participating general educators affirmed the acceptability and social validity of this intervention within middle school general education classes. General educators said the time required to collaborate was reasonable, the collaboration allowed them to be effective in their responsibilities, the collaboration process was a good way to address instruction for students with severe disabilities, and that students benefited academically and socially from educator participation in the collaboration. All four general educators reported that their planning and instruction benefited from the intervention. These findings suggest that general educators may be motivated stakeholders in developing more inclusive education.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of this study are important to consider. First, the lead author served as the interventionist by providing collaboration and ongoing consultation to the general educators. Although special educators who attended the Student Support Plan meetings contributed important information about the needs of the focus student during the initial planning process, they were not involved in the subsequent meetings with the general educators. A growing number of districts now employ "instructional coaches" or "inclusion coaches" who might readily serve in the same role as the researcher. Indeed, the lead author had previously served in such a role prior to her doctoral studies and designed the planning process with this application in mind. Because we were piloting a brand new approach to collaboration and consultation, we wanted to first examine its impact when implemented with a high degree of fidelity. With the promise of this intervention now demonstrated, future studies should next focus on the ways special educators or

district inclusion coaches could be trained and supported to undertake these responsibilities. Second, generalization and maintenance data were not collected formally. We noticed that general educators used adapted materials and engaged with other students with severe disabilities in the class, but we did not measure generalization specifically. However, during observations on days not discussed in Quick Plan meetings, general educators continued to provide supports to and adapted materials for the focus students. In future research, generalization and maintenance data should be measured formally to assess the extent to which general educators continue the use of the plan. Third, we did not collect normative data on teacher interactions with other students in the class or on the academic engagement of classmates. This makes it more difficult to situate our findings in relation to the experiences of students without severe disabilities enrolled in the same class. Fourth, we did not measure the skill acquisition in the focus students. Future research should assess acquisition of content-based skills to make certain that students are progressing in the general curriculum as fully integrated members of the class. Fifth, the content area of each of the classes varied. Some classes are more social or interactive than others, which could have implications for the interactions and academic engagement of participant students. Sixth, none of the focus students exhibited significant problem behaviors and all communicated using verbal speech. Future research should examine how the CPC intervention might be applied with students who exhibit challenging behaviors, who use AAC, and/or who have more extensive support needs. Additional consideration of these issues may need to be incorporated into the planning process. Seventh, we only collected social validity data from general educators. Future studies should ask focus students and their classmates for input that could inform future refinements to this intervention. Finally, general educators planned with varying levels of detail. This variance may account for differences in teacher interactions with focus students and student academic engagement.

Implications for Research

The results of this study have important implications for researchers in the field of inclusive education. First, there is a need for better measures of procedural fidelity for highly individualized interventions like the one used in this study. Fidelity measures should accommodate the variable conditions (e.g., schedule changes, varying day-to-day activities) when conducting applied research in general education classes. We noticed that educators planned their lessons with widely varying degrees of detail. In future research, fidelity measures that accommodate individualized interventions could help to identify specific factors that led to any positive changes through collaboration. Second, despite most of the teachers' prior experience of having students with severe disabilities in their classes, we noticed that little, if any, collaboration or communication was occurring with their special educators. General educators knew very little about the focus students' abilities and needs and often left instruction entirely to the paraprofessional. Future research should focus on viable avenues for increasing the *ongoing* collaboration among special and general educators. Third, it is important for the generalizability and sustainability of the intervention to include the existing special educators in providing consultation to the general educators. To carry out this pilot evaluation of a collaborative planning framework in secondary-level general education classes, researchers provided consultation to general educators in the role of the special educator. Future research should include the current special educator in the ongoing consultation to generalize across more students and sustain positive outcomes.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this study have several implications for practice. First, collaborating teachers could benefit from the low-cost and low-effort strategies used to adapt lessons for students with severe disabilities. As mentioned previously, frequent adaptations used in the Quick Plan meetings included enlarged or bold font, visual supports for the content, and simplifying the type of responses. In addition to training on adaptations and differentiated instruction, teachers need specific support on applying these concepts to their own lessons.

Second, the lesson planning of general educators can have an impact on the opportunities for teachers to interact with students and for students to engage and interact within the class. In classes where instruction was planned no more than 2 days in advance and seemed sporadic, we observed fewer teacher–student interactions and less time the focus student was academically engaged (less instructional time in general). Well-planned, classwide instruction of the general education curriculum (often called Tier 1 instruction) is foundational to supporting the instruction of students with severe disabilities who are a part of the class.

Third, general educators are not the sole support for students with severe disabilities in general education classes. Across all four general educators, teacher interactions with the focus students were periodic as they attended to all students in the class. To support students who may need more than occasional assistance in a general education class, general educators can tap into supplemental supports such as paraprofessionals and/or peer support arrangements (e.g., peers providing academic and/or social support guided by a paraprofessional or special educators). Results of this study indicate positive changes in dependent variables when only targeting the general educator. Future practice may see greater change by combining collaboration with the general educators with previously identified interventions such as paraprofessional training (e.g., Brock & Carter, 2013) and peer support arrangements (e.g., Brock & Huber, 2017).

Fourth, district administrators should support collaboration among general and special educators by providing overlapping planning time dedicated to co-planning. With external support, general educators were able to apply Student Support plans to their ongoing lesson plans and increase student engagement in their classes. However, this collaboration did not occur with the current special educator as none of the general educator–special educator pairs had a common planning time. In practice, administrators need to provide educators with support for conducting collaborative planning meetings (e.g., resources, inclusion coach) and the time to collaboratively plan (e.g., ongoing and scheduled, so both teachers are able to attend).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Partial support for this research was provided by a doctoral leadership grant from the U.S. Department of Education, through Grant H325D140077 to Vanderbilt University.

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Date Received: January 9, 2020
Date of Final Acceptance: October 11, 2020
Editor-in-Charge: Susan R. Copeland