



How to Best Collaborate with Administrators

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Quick Math

Using the following rating scale, what score would you give to the following groups:



Limited Proficiency

Zero knowledge of special education laws, IDEA and service models



Developing Proficiency

Somewhat knowledgeable of special education laws, IDEA and service models



High Proficiency

Very knowledgeable of special education laws, IDEA and service models




Rate three principals in your district and your senior leadership team

Group	Score (1-3)
Principal A	<i>Enter Score 1-3</i>
Principal B	<i>Enter Score 1-3</i>
Principal C	<i>Enter Score 1-3</i>
Senior Leadership Team	<i>Enter Score 1-3</i>



Fun Facts:

MN principal survey is administered every other year:

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2023</u>
Addressing Emergencies & Crisis: 	60%	58%
Ensuring equitable student access: 	61%	81%
Understanding policies and regulations (special education & discipline) 	90%	85%



**What is the #1 top content missing from
administration licensure coursework?**



Answer: special education; due process

In the 2025 Principal survey,
what is the #1 concern they
reported?



**Answer: mental health
concerns of
students & families**





Ensuring Special Education Compliance per IDEA



How do you work with administrators to ensure special education compliance per IDEA?



What is your district's system structure of support and accountability?



Who needs to be at the table when decisions are made regarding special education?



Who is on the Cabinet or district leadership team representing special education?

Top 7 Strategies

#7

Schedule proactive monthly meetings:

Who attends:



Sped admin & sped leadership



Both admin teams w/sped team

What gets discussed:



Programming



Students; plans



Staff training



Staffing concerns



Other



Top 7 Strategies #6: Create shared roles



Strategy #6 Focus: Establish and document mutually understood roles and responsibilities



Interpersonal systems for coordinating shared oversight and decision-making



Inclusive practices that leverage diverse perspectives and active collaboration



Shared commitment to a vision of supportive leadership and student success

Top 7 Strategies

#5

Host leadership trainings

Top 7 Strategies

#4

Create a **toolbox for administrators:**

Top 7 Strategies

#3

District-wide leadership checklist

Top 7 Strategies

#2

Be collaborative



Mutual Respect & Understanding



Transparent Communication Systems



Inclusive Practices





Top 7 Strategies #1: Build trust & rapport



Strategy #1 Focus: Create a foundation of mutual respect and understanding



Develop interpersonal systems to support transparent communication



Inclusive practices that prioritize psychological safety and open dialogue



Shared commitment to a vision of supportive leadership and student success

References

[MN principal survey](#)

Kemper, S., Pekel, K., Su, M., Exsted, M., Evenson, A., (2026). *Executive Summary of Findings from the 2025 Minnesota Principals Survey*. Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota.