A SYSTEMATIC review of the role of the teacher during collaborative learning in primary and secondary education suggests that several types of teacher guidance can be positive. However, the challenge for the teacher is to support interaction between students without taking control of the moments in which opportunities to learn arises for students.

The review, carried out by Anouschka van Leeuwen and Jeroen Janssen, included both qualitative and quantitative studies (n = 66) conducted in primary and secondary schools, and looked at the relationship between the teacher’s role and the processes and outcomes of collaboration among students.

The authors found that:

- Feedback, prompting, questioning, and transferring control of the learning process to students were all effective strategies for collaborative learning.
- In contrast, some aspects of teacher guidance were found negatively associated with students’ collaboration, such as when teachers were too present or absent.
- Teachers’ explanations and modeling behavior were not always contributive to students’ collaboration.

The review concludes that when guiding collaborative learning, teachers should try to not only focus on the content of the task, but also on how students approach the task and the strategies they use for collaboration, and should let students know that help is available without imposing this help.