From Space Invaders to Collaborators: Building Successful Co-Teaching Relationships

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2017 California Teacher of the Year
Poway Unified School District
Building Math Skills with Mr. B

Mr. B:
15+ years math experience
Well respected
Familiar with including students w/IEPs

Me:
A new teacher
A “remedial” math student
Seeking to implement best practices in inclusion
Honesty + Communication = Team building

• Frame your reality
  • Mr. B’s perspective
  • My perspective

• Identify barriers
  • Lack of content knowledge & confidence
  • No shared planning time

• Problem-solve together
  • Request release time to co-plan
  • Preview lesson material over the weekend

• Create a plan for what Co-Teaching looks like
  • Mr. B provide initial instruction, I lead review warm-up
  • Stations
The Paradigm Shift
Professional Development-Be Creative

- County office of ed
- SELPA
- Conference
- District trainings
  - Content knowledge
  - Support strategies
- Staff meetings
- Book club

Advice from Co-Teachers...

“Without the trainings I have taken the time to go to, I would be a completely ineffective co-teacher.”
Being vulnerable

Reflect on who you are as a teacher

Palm: Core belief/value about teaching

Reflect on what you bring to a co-teaching partnership

Fingers
1. Strengths
2. Current weaknesses
3. Time management
4. Behavioral support strategies
5. Communication & Conflict
Guiding questions for Co-Teaching Partners

- Personal strengths & co-teaching concerns
- Rules for operating as a team
- Logistics of co-teaching & administrative duties
- Instruction
- Communication
- Managing student behavior
- Evaluation

Adapted from Richard Villa
Planning for Co-Teaching

- Elementary school
  - Identify academic blocks
  - Weekly lesson planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Lesson (Main ideas, goals)</th>
<th>Activities &amp; Co-Teaching Model</th>
<th>Materials &amp; Adaptations (Student-specific goals)</th>
<th>Notes &amp; Reminders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Practicing addition facts to 20</td>
<td>1. “I have, who has” facts game (Team)</td>
<td>Game cards Worksheet WS 12-1 James &amp; Pam work with facts to 10 Jesse’s WS adapted for counting with pictures</td>
<td>Benchmark assessment next week Collect Jesse behavior data</td>
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Planning for Co-Teaching

- Secondary
  - Master Schedule
  - Align Prep Period
  - Training for HOW to Co-Teach

Advice from Co-Teachers...

What’s the 1 thing you need?

“TIME to plan and reflect together - this is essential to move the coteaching relationship from a teacher/support to a teacher/teacher dynamic.”
Master Schedule-Secondary

• Identify teaching partners Feb/Mar
• Identify number of sections per class needed
• Identify number of seats for students with IEPs
• Build master schedule around these parameters
• Hand assign & program identified students with IEPs prior to scheduling system random sort
Overcoming Barriers: Cost of Co-Teaching

• Can be cost neutral (direct switch from pull out to push in)
• When you need extra FTE
  • Principles of LRE
  • Focus on courses for graduation requirement
  • Start one section at a time
  • Collect data to demonstrate student outcomes
Overcoming Barriers: When Co-Teaching Isn’t a Choice

• Administrator assigns co-teaching (not ideal)
• Teachers are moved to different grade/subject level due to unforeseen changes
• New teachers are hired

Advice from Co-Teachers...

If you could improve 1 thing...

“Being trained PRIOR to being told I am co-teaching. A bunch of emailed documents do not help. You have to tell me the purpose and motivate me. No one really explained this my first year of teaching and I thought it was a punishment that there was another teacher in my classroom, like I wasn't doing my job well.”
Overcoming Barriers: Lack of planning time

• Swap out supervision duties
• Carve out time on pre-scheduled Non-study work days
• Release time
• Meet for lunch
• Saturday Starbucks

Advice from Co-Teachers...
If you could improve 1 thing...

“Time to prepare together, otherwise it undermines the other teacher.”
But, what do you do with planning time?

Start with getting to know you, then dive in to:

- Define roles & responsibilities
- Focus on routines & unit plans
- Strategize individualized student needs
- Learn how to let go, be open, and learn from each other
Build a Relationship: Visibility

• Presence consistently in the classroom
• Class contact information
• Back to school night
• Parent-Teacher Conferences
Build a Relationship: Communicate

• Say what you mean, mean what you say
• Share highlights, ideas, strategies
• Share struggles, challenges
• Demonstrate awareness & concern
• Ask for help
• Be the partner you would want to have
Build a Relationship: Do the Work!

• Follow through with commitments
• Be present
• Be honest
• Problem-solve together
• Demonstrate competence
Build a Relationship: Conflict is Natural

• Assume best intentions
• Use “I” statements
• Resolve issues at the lowest level
• Resolve issues when kids aren’t present
• Be open to compromise
• Pick your battles
Co-Teachers Need SEL, Too

If she only knew...

If she only knew how much I love to draw, she would make me the class poster maker. Instead, she doesn't let me because my handwriting isn't so great.

Read If She Only Knew Me as a co-teaching cohort. Follow up with a teacher version of If you only knew me.
I'm not telling you it's going to be easy, I'm telling you it's going to be worth it.
Build a Relationship: Celebrate!

• Share kudos
• Surprise your co-teacher with their favorite treat
• Order in lunch
• Invite your administrator in to see you both in action
• End of Year Luncheon
More Places to Learn about Co-Teaching

- Wendy Murawski books
- #CoTeaching: Twitter!
- Paula Kluth & Julie Causton
  www.cotaughtclassroom.com
Thank you!

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