Benefits and Barriers to Collaboration and Coteaching in Gifted Education
Dr. Emily Mofield

Collaboration
Allows two or more professionals to come together to contribute individual expertise to develop shared expertise (Friend & Cook, 2007).

Collaborative Practices
- Consulting
- Co-planning
- Co-teaching
- Coaching

Research Question
How do gifted education teachers and general education teachers perceive collaboration as a means to serve students identified as gifted?

Sample and Design
- 16 out of 21 invited participants
- Survey
- Interview
- Open-coding

Survey Questions
1. What are the benefits for student learning because of the collaboration between regular ed teachers and gifted teachers? Please comment on specific benefits you have directly observed.
2. What supports and structures have been beneficial in making collaboration work well between the regular ed teacher and gifted ed teacher?
3. What are the obstacles that you have encountered during the collaboration process? Please comment on issues that make collaboration difficult to implement.
Qualitative Findings

Benefits
- Increased classroom teacher’s capacity to differentiate (64%)
- Increased student learning (100%)

Barriers
- Time Constraints (93%)
- Conflicting Assumptions (64%)


Benefits- Capacity to Differentiate

“I have been able to provide my students with a new perspective of how to present specific content due to the collaboration between myself and our school’s gifted teacher. Her suggestions for classroom presentation were endless. This collaboration also included weekly co-teaching….Maximum student learning occurs when we collaborate with meeting the needs of our students as the top priority.”

Benefits- Student learning

“Some of the benefits of collaborating include an increased excitement and engagement for the lesson and learning because of the additional challenge, complexity, and depth that has been added. Students have an increased understanding of the content, and they have usually developed their own abstract connections, and you can actually see their confidence building. Students do not refer to their work as “busy work” or “boring” when collaboration has taken place concerning the required outcomes and goals surrounding a unit.”

Barrier- Lack of Time

- “She is only at our school 2-3 days per week and can only collaborate or present lessons sporadically.”
- “In most schools, gifted students are sprinkled through all classes making it difficult to find the time to consult with multiple teachers.”
- “Collaborating to differentiate in the regular classroom is just a drop in the bucket to meet the needs of gifted students. Add-on differentiation here and there is not an adequate service without other intensive efforts.”

Barrier- Conflicting Assumptions

- The biggest obstacle that I see and hear about are the closed minds, and that can include/lead to a lack of support from the administration. The idea that gifted students “will be fine” without support and focused challenges is prevalent still, and that bars the door for many educators in allowing gifted educators into their world.

Barriers – Conflicting Assumptions

“With so much to cover with standards and getting ready for state tests, regular education teachers do not want to divert from a prescribed scope and sequence they feel pressured to follow. They seem to be afraid of developing instruction with above-grade level content. They think they are already challenging the kids adequately, so they do not perceive they need our support.”
Barrier - Conflicting Assumptions

• When I’ve tried co-teaching, sometimes I felt the teacher did not understand my role. Some reg. teachers ask me to just teach a lesson for the day so they can use that time to take care of other responsibilities like make copies for their next class.

Lessons Learned

1. Administrators must value and communicate collaboration
2. Implement in context of systemic change
3. Establish clear purposes and roles
4. Build relationships and trust

Collaborative Process Model

Mofield & Phelps, 2020

Collaborative Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions to Consider</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do we seek to do specifically?</td>
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<td>What are our desired outcomes?</td>
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<td>What is our main goal for the meeting?</td>
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<td>Plan</td>
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<td>How will this be done?</td>
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<td>Who will do what?</td>
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<td>What resources will we need?</td>
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<td>What strategies will we use?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did we accomplish our purpose and goal?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What worked and what didn’t work?</td>
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<td>What are our next steps in moving forward?</td>
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“SCARF model”

• S- Status
• C- Certainty
• A- Autonomy
• R- Relatedness
• F- Fairness

David Rock

Presuming Positive Intent

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<tr>
<th>Instead of</th>
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<tr>
<td>Have you...?</td>
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<td>Could you...?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you...?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can you...?</td>
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<td>In what ways...?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you thought about why the student is acting out in your class?</td>
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Lessons Learned

• Strategically choose partners [Work with the Welcoming]
• Build a toolkit for differentiated instruction (not “different” activities)
• Use Common Framework for Differentiation
• Continually evaluate the role of collaboration within program design

Limitations

• Limited to 16 teachers who responded
• Did not capture administration perspectives
• One school district
• I was once part of this district

Future Research

• Types of collaboration (coaching, coteaching)
• Assess student outcomes
• Understand complexities of interpersonal relationships

Easing in

• Who will be open to collaboration?
• Consider culture and context
• Classroom visits
• PLCs
• Discussing student issues/challenges
• Start small: sharing strategies, modeling strategies, then co-action

Co-Teaching: Unraveling Assumptions

• What are your beliefs about gifted learners?
• What are your beliefs about grading?
• How much time are you willing to co-plan instruction? When might we co-plan instruction?
• What are your assumptions about my role in co-teaching?
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