Co-Teaching: Idea to Implementation
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Idea
From a university perspective, it can be challenging finding field experience placements with quality mentor teachers. The field experiences we provide help shape (positively or negatively) the development of pre-service teacher candidates (PTCs). Our university is fortunate to have, as one of our field experience sites, a K-12 university Charter school in which faculty work closely with K-6 teachers. Together, faculty and teachers are able to provide meaningful experiences. As one of our field experiences, we require all EC-6 PTCs to experience a semester in the university Charter School. A benefit of this university and charter school relationship is that the university is able to control the mentor teachers in which we work with and the experiences we provide our PTCs.

Perhaps the biggest challenge our field experience faces is accommodating our PTCs in the limited number of classrooms at the Charter school field placement. It is not uncommon to have as many as six PTCs placed with a given mentor teacher. How do provide a meaningful field experience while keeping all PTCs actively engaged in their field experience?

Our initial question lead us down the path of co-teaching. Cook & Friend (1995) describe co-teaching as “Two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single space.” Co-teaching was a topic somewhat unfamiliar to us as field supervisors. After embarking on additional literature review and consulting with our Department Chair, we soon found co-teaching to be a topic of interest.

Training
To learn more about co-teaching we attended a Co-Teaching Train the Trainer Workshop in Minneapolis during summer of 2016. The training was provided by The Academy for Co-Teaching & Collaboration through St. Cloud State University and TWW Consulting. The training was designed to provide a foundation in co-teaching. The training provided insight into the following co-teaching models originally developed by Cook & Friend (1995):

- **Station Teaching:** Students are divided into groups with each teacher instructing a different part of the lesson. This model is limited when working with visually impaired students.
- **Parallel Teaching:** Students are divided into two groups. Each group works with a different teacher. The teachers may present information in different ways so they may “duplicating the same information.”
- **Alternative Teaching:** One teacher works with the majority of students, while the other teacher instructs a smaller group in research, enrich, assess, pre-teach, or another purpose.
- **Supporting:** Students work in one group, while the teachers co-teach.
- **One-on-One:** One teacher is a group, while the teacher co-teachers.
- **One-on-One:** One student is in one group, while the other teacher teaches the lesson.

Feedback
The training was geared toward a mentor teacher and student teacher working as a co-teaching pair. While we found the training to be beneficial, we were left wondering how to facilitate the idea of co-teaching with one mentor teacher and as many as six PTCs being placed in a single classroom.

Planning
After numerous discussions, we decided to pair PTCs as co-teaching pairs. Together, we make up two of five field experience. As part of our field experience course, all PTCs are required to teach lessons related to mathematics and science.

We decided to let participants in our sections of the field experience self-select a peer to form a co-teaching pair. These co-teacher pairs would be selected as co-teachers for the duration of the semester, while implementing six models of co-teaching as it relates to the science and mathematics lessons they were to teach.

In order to prepare students for a peer-to-peer co-teaching field experience, we referenced to train our PTCs about the different models of co-teaching. We designed a co-teaching orientation for PTCs enrolled in our section of the field experience. The orientation was co-lead by both of us, providing an overview of the co-teaching models. Our field experience also includes a one-hour lab that meets once a week. We decided to conduct our labs together, as co-teachers, to showcases the different models of co-teaching. Each training, orientation and individual lab was facilitated by both of us, as field supervisors, using one or more of the six different models of co-teaching. Modeling of the co-teaching methods allowed each PTC to participate in the co-teaching models prior to the planning and implementing the components in their field placement. We soon came to the realization that we are also co-teacher.

In an attempt to collect data related to the co-teaching field experience, we asked for, and received permission, to use a survey instrument from our training. We wanted to gauge the perceptions of our PTCs as it relates to their experience co-teaching.

Impact on Future Teaching
- **The most beneficial part of co-teaching was collaborating with my co-teacher. This gave me more confidence for the future when I become a teacher and have to plan with the teachers on my team.**
- **The most beneficial thing about my co-teaching experience was being able to bounce ideas off my co-teacher and getting a different perspective. It incorporated my style of teaching [sic] with her style of teaching as well as incorporating the different learning styles of each child in the classroom.**
- **While co-teaching was new to me in the beginning, I felt that it was important to learn about it because it is directly applicable to our future in student teaching as well as in our future as teachers. I have developed more skills in communication and planning, and I have gained TWICE as much teaching experience this semester I saw in valued in a ‘shared’ teacher and a co-teacher. I am confident that I will use these models in my future.**
- **I learned how to work well with another teacher.**
- **Co-teaching gave me support when I needed extra help in my classroom, whether it be setting up materials or combining with students. My co-teacher was a big help with keeping students on task [sic] and helping with student questions if necessary.**
- **I liked the fact that (co-teaching) challenged me to work well with another teacher. It also made me realize how other people can interpret your lessons differently unless you explain it to them.**

Co-Teaching Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Mathematics</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Science II</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dual Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative Teaching</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Differentiated Teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Presence</td>
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Self-Reflection
Following each lesson, PTCs are given each of the Peer Feedback Forms and are asked to go home and reflect on the lesson. During this time, they analyze each of the questions they asked during their lesson, as recorded on the Teacher Questions form. They are then asked to complete a reflection sheet by responding to each of the following tasks:

1. Identify the strengths of the lesson.
2. Identify the weaknesses of the lesson.
3. Identify changes for future teaching.
4. Select the four Peer Feedback Forms that you felt gave you the best data and describe what specific information you learned from the data.

Peer Feedback
Peer feedback is one of the most powerful tools that a teacher can use. It is a two-way dialogue that allows teachers to improve their practice by learning from each other. Peer feedback is an essential part of professional development and growth. It helps teachers reflect on their practice, identify areas for improvement, and develop strategies to enhance student learning.

Feedback Form:

- **Mentor Notes:** This section is for the mentor teacher to provide feedback on the lesson and the co-teaching process.
- **Instructor Notes:** This section is for the instructor to provide feedback on the lesson and the co-teaching process.
- **Peer Data Collection:** This section is for the PTC to collect data on student engagement, behavior, and participation.
- **Self-Reflection:** This section is for the PTC to reflect on their own teaching and the co-teaching process.

Reflection on Teaching (PTC-Led Meeting)

- **Lesson Plan:** This section is for the PTC to reflect on the lesson plan and the co-teaching process.
- **Co-Teaching Models:** This section is for the PTC to reflect on the co-teaching models used during the lesson.
- **Impact on Future Teaching:** This section is for the PTC to reflect on how the experience will impact their future teaching.

Impact on Future Teaching

- Mentor Notes
- Instructor Notes
- Peer Data Collection
- Self-Reflection

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