Co-Teaching: Idea to Implementation

Mark S. Montgomery, Ph.D.
Adam Akerson, Ed.D.
James I. Perkins College of Education
Department of Elementary Education

Co-Teaching Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Social Science</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
<th>Science 2</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
5. Prepare to lead a feedback meeting with the course instructor.

Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Notes</th>
<th>Peer Data Collection</th>
<th>Instructor Notes</th>
<th>Self-Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 of my co-teacher and getting a different perspective. It incorporated my style of teaching with the help of another teacher 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. I have gained TWICE as much teaching experience this semester! I saw value in a “team” 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 strategizing your teaching and finding 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 as a team with the other teacher. It also made me realize how other people can interpret your lessons differently unless you explain it to them.

Planning

After numerous discussions, we decided to pair PTCs as co-teaching pairs. Together, we make up two of five field experiences. 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-teaching pairs would act 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 started 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-taught 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 showcase the different models of co-teaching. Each lab, orientation and individual lab class, was facilitated by both of us, as co-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-teachers.

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 perception of our PTCs as it relates to their experience 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 TUIT 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 covering part of the lesson. As students alternate between the two teachers, the groups cycle through all learning stations, resulting in all students engaging in all activities.
- **Peer Teaching**: Students are divided into two groups. Each teacher works with a different group. The teaching may present information in different ways so that they may discuss and summarize the same information.
- **Alternative Teaching**: One teacher works with the majority of students, while the other teacher instructs a small group to research, enrich, assess, present, or another purpose.
- **Supporting**: Students work in one group, while the teachers co-teach.
- **One teacher, One group**: One student is in one group, while the other teacher teaches independently while students to focus attention answer questions, further explain content, and so on.
- **One teacher, One class**: One teacher teaches instruction while the other teacher collects data observing the one or more children.

The training also provided an opportunity for co-teaching teams to interact with other universities, districts, and schools to see how co-teaching could be used.

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.

Co-Teaching: 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-6 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 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.

Concepts

**Teacher Proximity**

Identify changes for future teaching.

**Effective Teaching Strategies**

Collecting feedback means to provide specific data related to the act of teaching.

**Effective Teaching Strategies**

Collecting feedback means to provide specific data related to the act of teaching.