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Team Teaching

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Research

Team teaching is a co-teaching technique where two teachers, or a group of teachers, collaborate on planning, conducting lessons, and evaluate students. This is generally meant to enhance teaching and student learning. “Teams generally comprise staff members who may represent different areas of subject expertise but who share the same group of students and a common planning period to prepare for teaching” (<http://teaching.polyu.edu.hk>). In the case where two teachers are team teaching, both teachers are delivering the instruction to the class at the same time. Each teacher comments freely and moves about the room with the students. The instruction that is being delivered is closer to a conversation, rather than turn-taking (<http://www.ped.state.nm>).

There is a high amount of planning with team teaching. When teachers plan extensively it can prevent disagreements concerning assignments, teaching strategies, and grading procedures. Planning together also allows the teachers to familiarize themselves with each other’s instructional material. Integrating the other co-teacher’s perspectives and material in class is a powerful way to emphasize the team aspect. The teacher who is not instructing at the present time, can help the students by sitting in the middle of the class and asking questions therefor contributing to the discussion. Likewise, the teacher can play devil’s advocate and ask tough or thought provoking questions to initiate or stimulate class discussion. “The presence of

more than one instructor in the classroom increases the occasions for student-teacher interaction” (<http://www.stanford.edu>).

In order for the team teaching concept to truly be successful, colleagues must have a mutual respect for each other, feel that they can disagree respectfully, complement each other’s abilities, and be willing to compromise on various issues. Co-teachers also must decide how they share the teaching responsibilities (<http://cft.vanderbilt.edu>). Often-times two heads are better than one. This is extremely beneficial when instructional conversation is appropriate – when the goal is to encourage student interaction. Team teaching can be applied in a science unit, where one teacher is explaining the lesson/experiment and the other teacher demonstrates the materials that the class will use. Another subject area where team teaching can be applied is in language arts, where the teachers perform or act out a scene from popular literature (<http://www.ped.state.nm>). “Team teaching can lead to better student performance in terms of greater independence and assuming responsibility for learning.” “Team teaching aids the professional and interpersonal dynamics of departments leading to closer integration of staff”. Teachers occasionally will have some personal concerns about team teaching, including whether all team members will contribute equally, the preference for working alone, and the perception that team meetings will be a waste of time (<http://teaching.polyu.edu.hk>).

As in all co-teaching techniques, there are always pros and cons associated with team teaching. Team teaching does teach life skills, humility, imagination, and creativity. However,

some drawbacks of team teaching are not enough adequate planning time for teachers, the responsibility of the team leader is sometimes not taken seriously enough, and teams can be too large (teams of four or five) and it can be difficult to reach a consensus on planning (<http://www.spu.edu>).

Reflection

This co-teaching technique was one that worked out very smoothly. Although my assistant and I do not team teach, we often are teaching/reviewing the same information. We often teach/reteach the same lesson in order to ensure that the students can experience a great deal of success, with the goal of having the student master the skills. The overwhelmingly positive aspect of team teaching is that the students are able to experience a different teaching style and ample opportunities to succeed. My assistant and I are able to focus on the large group and at the same time provide the additional support the students who are struggling need in class.

Often during instructions, whichever of us is not instructing at the time, will ask questions or answer questions in order to drive home a point or to stimulate the discussion. Particularly during the conclusion of the lesson, it has been useful to have both teachers answering questions and providing feedback. Lastly, in the case of me and my assistant, we work together as a team. So although we do not co-teach in the traditional sense, we both work together as a team.

Lesson Plan

Grade Level: Kindergarten

Number of Students: 12

Objective: The students will improve on their gross motor skills, after concentrating on fine motor skills.

Materials: The students will use tug of war ropes to practice gross motor skills such as crossing the mid-line, tracing patterns, balance, etc.

Procedure: My assistant and I both taught this lesson, although it is not a traditional team teaching situation, we both taught the skills and worked with the group as a whole.

We will use two tug of war ropes and have them in "S" shaped patterns on floor. The students will be split evenly into two groups.

The students will initially walk along the rope with their feet on either side of rope, making sure to follow the pattern of the rope on the floor.

After completing the first task, the students will then walk atop the rope, with the heel of their front foot touching the toe of their back foot. The student proceeds to walk forward, concentrating on maintaining a heel-to-toe pattern.

Finally, the students will walk with the rope between their feet, crossing their legs over the rope in a left over right pattern, maintaining the heel-to-toe contact.

Evaluation: Both teachers will evaluate the students by looking at the students' ability to maintain their balance while walking along the rope and tracing the rope pattern. The teachers are looking for foot placement in the heel-to-toe pattern while also maintaining balance.

Taking Action (1)

Our school does not have any established co-teaching programs. It is something I wish we did have and I am not sure we will establish any in the future. The only instance of co-teaching I knew about at my school was years ago. At that time we had a self-contained E.D. classroom. That teacher would occasionally co-teach with one of the fourth grade teachers. From what I understood, that worked really well, and the students were very receptive to the co-teaching technique. However, we no longer have a self-contained E.D. classroom.

I will use the chart in the Chapter 6 appendix and try to create a plan to implement a co-teaching program. I will list the task, the person responsible, and the year of implementation below.

Stage 1 – Establish the program and Its Goals

Clarify content: The principal, assistant principal, and special education teachers will assume responsibility for this part of step one. This will be conducted in the spring of the current school year, in order for the program to be implemented by September.

Establish a planning structure: This team will be formed around June of the current school year and meeting will be conducted over the summer so that the plan is in place by September. Members should include advocates of co-teaching, one professional

who is against or uncertain about co-teaching, the assistant principal, a paraprofessional, and a related services provider (Friend, 2008, p. 155).

Assess needs and set goals: This will be completed by the planning team. The timeline for this to be completed should be May or June of the current school year.

Step 2 – Plan for Implementation

Identify and describe the ideal outcome: The primary people responsible for this step are the planning team members mention above. This step should be completed the summer before the new school year begins.

Specify component parts: This step also should be completed over the summer, prior to the start of the school year. Once again, this step is the primary responsibility of the planning team.

Match the context and resources: This important step will be conducted by the planning team and implemented by August, with the final steps completed before the professional development work week at the end of August.

Design implementation strategies: This step should be completed by the beginning of August, so that the strategies are in place by the start of the school year. This step is once again the responsibility of the planning team members.

Establish timelines: Often the timelines are dictated by the federal or state governments, but still need to be established by the planning team by August, in order for preparation of full implementation of the co-teaching program.

Stage 3 – Prepare for Implementation

Create Awareness: This step will be completed by the planning team and with a focus on potential first implementers. Comments and concerns about the program should be submitted to the team by June of the current school year.

Select implementers: The planning team will send out requests for interested teachers willing to be the first implementers of the program. This step should be finalized by June of the current school year.

Make logistical arrangements: The first implementers will be the primary people responsible for this step, with the teachers indicating their preferences for teaching partners. The principal will make the final decisions. This step should be completed in June, prior to the end of the current school year.

Prepare personnel: This step will be the responsibility of the school administrators. The teachers who are implementing the program also will be given professional development opportunities. This should be ongoing from June until the end of August, prior to the new school year.

Design an evaluation: This should be done by the teachers who are implementing the program and by the school administrators. The evaluation should be designed prior to the professional development week at the end of August.

Stage 4 – Implement the Co-Teaching Program

Expand professional development activities: The administrators will provide this for the co-teachers. The professional development opportunities should be continuous and new activities provide each year.

Carry out program activities: The co-teachers in the program will be responsible for this step and it will be completed throughout the school year.

Evaluate the program: This plan should be in place prior to full implementation, but also should be tweaked through the school year. This will be the primary responsibility of the planning team and the co-teachers.

Stage 5 – Maintain the Co-Teaching Program

Refine the program: This step should be ongoing and changes made, if necessary, throughout the school year. Since the co-teachers are implementing the program, they are the ones responsible for this step.

Plan for ongoing support: This step should be the responsibility of the planning team and should be continuous throughout the school year. The plans for ongoing support should not just end after the initial year of implementation.

Reflection:

This particular lesson was successful as a result of the fact that my assistant and I often use this technique. We will teach the skills that are required and float through the group, making sure the students are grasping the concepts. The students react well to this style of teaching, often relying on either myself or the assistant to provide support when needed.

In order to improve the lesson, I could make the activities a little more challenging. For the most part, every student had little difficulty with the tasks. Some students had some difficulties, but they were in the vast minority. I could have used jump ropes to make letter patterns that the students could have used to practice their tracing patterns. I also could have crossed the tug-of-war ropes and made the challenge a little more difficult in that way.

I would definitely use this approach again since it is one in which the students are very familiar. The students clearly know what is expected of them with this technique and they also do not see me as the teacher in charge. Even though I am the main teacher, I try to make sure

the students understand that both of us are in charge. By doing so, they do not feel as if they can get away with behaving inappropriately towards my assistant. This approach especially works well when we are doing our climbing wall unit. At this time, one of us is outside with half of the group, teaching a fitness lesson, while the other is inside teaching the climbing skills. We then either rotate groups or stay with our group and switch the activity for our group.

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