

Co-teaching in Secondary Schools: Making it Work!



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Rationale for Co-Teaching

- Increase instructional options for all students
- Improve program intensity and continuity
- Reduce stigma for students with special needs
- Increase support for teachers and related service specialists

Cook & Friend, 1995

Best Inclusionary Practices: What the Literature Says

- Continuous professional development
- Administrative support
- Positive classroom atmosphere
- Appropriate curriculum
- Effective general teaching skills
- Communication
- Varied co-teaching approaches
- Common planning time

Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Dieker, 2001



Social Justice High School

- Small neighborhood Chicago Public High School located on city's southwest side
- 350 students in grades 9-12
- 70% Latino, 30% African American
- College preparatory curriculum focused on issues of social justice
- Restructured school week
 - 50 minute classes M/Tu/Th/F
 - Colloquium seminar W morning
 - Staff Professional Development W afternoon



Social Justice High School

Special Education

5 special education teachers

- 2 certified in content areas
- 1 NCLB candidate

▪ Responsibilities include:

- Teaching 5 periods/day
- Providing academic support during advisory
- Leading a colloquium
- Managing a caseload of ~10
- Communicating regularly with all teachers re: students on caseload

- 40 students with disabilities (LD, BD, OHI, SPL)

▪ Special Educators are departmentalized

- Math
- Science
- Social Studies
- Language Arts





What Works:

Effective School Structures

- Strong administrative/teacher/family support
- Scheduling co-taught classes first
- Positive, accepting school climate
- Monthly Co-teaching Praxis group
- Leveled texts/audio lab available
- Weekly staff professional development with focus on differentiated instruction & literacy strategies
- Offering a continuum of services (Instructional → Consultative)
 - before/during/after school tutoring opportunities
 - Saturday school





What Works:

Effective Co-Teaching Practices

- Varied instructional approaches
- Daily common planning time
- Weekly grade level teams
- Weekly department meetings
- Regular peer observations
- Open and consistent communication with families
- Student progress monitored via Engrade
 - web-based grading tool that can be accessed by teachers, students, and parents
- Extensive summer planning to:
 - Create course scope & sequence/plan units
 - Review SOJO Snapshots*
 - Establish common co-teaching vision
 - Define roles/responsibilities



Lesson Planning

At Social Justice:

- Co-teachers meet regularly to plan, assess, and reflect
- General educators post lesson plans online by Friday morning
- Special educators review lessons and post additional plans by Monday morning, specifying daily co-teaching model and identifying specific roles that each teacher will take on during lesson

Lesson Planning • Accountability

Social Justice High School • Special Education Weekly Lesson Plan								
Gen. Ed. Teacher:			Sp. Ed. Teacher:			Dates:		
Literacy Strategy:			Course:			Period:		
Objective: Students will be able to...								
Model	Day 1:		Day 2:		Day 3:		Day 4:	
	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher A	Teacher B
Engagement								
New Material								
Guided Practice								
Independent Practice								
Closure								
Extension								
Assessment								

- Lesson plan template was designed by co-teachers to be more intentional about “making an effective use of teacher’s specific and unique skills”
Zigmond & Matta, 2004

SOJO Snapshot*

Hi. I'm Ana. I am a very hard working student and like to be challenged. Because of my disability, I have some very important needs that you must know about. I may also need to leave your class early so that I can get to my next class on time and avoid the crowded hallways. I have a paraprofessional aide. She helps me out with anything I need, including helping me write down information, carrying heavy books, or making sure that I get to places safely. If you have any questions about my disability, please just ask me!



Primary Disability:	Secondary Disability:
Service Providers:	IEP Date:
<u>Academic Levels</u> Reading Comprehension: Math Computation: Written Expression:	Behavior Plan: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Identified triggers: Strategies to reduce behaviors:
Academics strengths:	Preferred Learning Style(s):
Academic deficits:	How does this manifest in the classroom?
Modifications & accommodations:	
Additional Information:	

* Service Providers create "SOJO Snapshots" of each student on their caseload and distribute them, in addition to the IEP, to the students' teachers at the beginning of each school year. Teachers report that they are helpful and refer to them often when planning lessons.

Student Voice

- Jeremy is a senior. Before high school, he had spent over 6 years in a separate classroom for students identified with an Emotional Disability.
- At Social Justice, Jeremy attends co-taught Math, Science, Language Arts, and Social Studies classes.



“I like having two teachers because I always have someone to help me if I need it. I am less frustrated and I actually understand the work. When I get off task, my teachers help me refocus. They let me take small breaks to cool off and they are always reminding me that I can do it. I know that I have a disability. But at Social Justice I feel just like everyone else.”

Student Voice



- Maria is a sophomore. She is reading at the second grade level.
- In her co-taught classes, she works closely with a peer tutor.
- During advisory she previews upcoming lessons and gets organized with her service provider.

“I like being able to work with my friends. They help me when they can. If not, I have two other teachers to answer my questions... When I need more help, I go to Homework Hall. I am always prepared for class.”

Student Voice

- Ryan is a junior. He also attends co-taught Math, Science, Language Arts, and Social Studies classes. He is on track to graduate next year and has been very successful in co-taught classes.
- Ryan receives additional support in Homework Hall after school and during advisory.



“Two teachers means I have extra help staying on task. I need that type of support. Also, I like the examples and connections that two teachers are able to make. They make class more interesting.”

Teacher Voice



- Mrs. Bancroft is a Special Education teacher. She co-teaches four math classes and teaches one senior instructional career math class.
- She has been co-teaching the same math class with Mr. Reitzel for three years.

“Each year it gets easier and easier. I am more familiar with the content and more comfortable with my co-teachers. I am finally able to take the lead at any time. Our students see both of us as their teachers. Students don’t experience the stigma of receiving special education that they would in a separate setting. They are not “mine” or “yours”. We plan, grade, and reflect on our progress together. We truly are a team.”

Co-Taught Classrooms

- Who is the Special Education teacher?
 - Who is the General Education teacher?



- Which students have disabilities?

Co-Teaching:

A Work in Progress

Ongoing challenges include:

- Small school - limited programming options
- Providing services to students on caseload and students in classes
- Addressing large gaps between skill level and grade level expectations
- Limited availability of space – alternative settings
- Assessing the impact of co-teaching on student outcomes
- Limited content area mastery
- Balancing life skills with content knowledge