



- Digital Corner
- Current Research

Important Dates

- **Early September:** Mentor Workshops
- **September 13:** Mentor Connection 4-4:50 rm 2417
- **October 18:** Field Advisory 4-4:50 rm 2417
- **November 1:** New Student Orientation 4:00-5:30
- **November 7-December 2:** Advance Registration
- **November 15:** Field Advisory 4:00-4:50 rm 2417
- **November 25:** Deadline for newsletter submissions.
- **December 6:** Advisory Board 4:30-6:00

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Special Teachers and Exceptional Pupils = Urban Promise

Collaborative Teaching: An Overview

Today in our school systems, 8.9% of students ages 6-21 have some type of disability classification (Report to Congress, 2003). IDEA calls for as many children as possible to be educated in the general education classroom. Currently, most special education students have at least some classes in the general education, and about half receive less than 21% of their education outside of the general education classroom; that is, inside all special education classrooms. The 1998 Corey H. settlement in Illinois was made based on illegal segregation of students' special needs by not placing them in their least restrictive environment (LRE). All of these initiatives, along with 2001's No Child Left Behind, focus on trying to provide a quality education for all children so

that they can rise to their fullest potential. These pieces of legislation present an interesting challenge for educators, both those trained in a core subject area and those trained in special education, as they attempt to provide full access to the general curriculum, in the LRE, with highly-qualified teachers for all students with special needs. Creating inclusive environments can potentially meet those needs for all students, but implementing these environments is challenging. Collaborative teaching, or co-teaching, has become a rallying cry and potential answer.

Sometimes it is helpful to define co-teaching by

stating what it is not. Co-teaching is not having one educator teach while the other corrects papers or copies handouts in another room. Nor is it having one teacher sit in the back of the same room and watch. Co-teaching does not occur when one person makes all the educational planning decisions, while the other does not participate. Co-teaching is not the same thing as tutoring.

Co-teaching can take several forms including supportive teaching, parallel teaching, complementary teaching, and team teaching. Supportive teaching happens when *one teacher takes the lead* in the lesson while the other rotates throughout the classroom, monitoring student progress. Parallel teaching occurs when *both teachers lead small groups in the same room*. Complementary teaching is when *one teacher leads the lesson and the second teacher does something that assists* such as making notes on an overhead, or restating the first teacher's statements. Team teaching occurs when the *teachers split the lesson*, each taking the lead during a different aspect to highlight different skills of the individual teachers. Supportive teaching and parallel teaching are common models when teachers are beginning their co-teaching experience, while the other two are common after the teachers have experience and knowledge of each other.

Due to many reasons, such as the traditions of teaching as an independent act, co-teaching can be difficult. Those who successfully co-teach tell us to begin the relationship with by finding some shared planning time and having clear and honest discussions around basic classroom

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issues such as discipline, overall curriculum goals, and ways to share responsibilities. After the initial bigger picture is established, teaching teams often turn to focusing on how to accomplish daily goals.

Many co-teaching pairs often find it valuable to record their initial expectations and responsibilities so that they are clear. In their book, *A Guide to Co-teaching: Practical Tips for Facilitating Student Learning* (2004), Villa, Thousand and Nevin (2004) point to several stages which co-teaching pairs pass through. These include forming, functioning, formulating, and fermenting. The forming stage focuses on estab-

lishing relationships and procedures, while the functioning stage outlines some of the basics of working together and providing support. The formulating stage focuses on understanding the mind of the co-teacher while the fermenting stage is a time when teachers explain their reasoning and attempt to integrate their two sets of ideas into a convergent whole. If both teachers can agree on the work that is part of these stages, and discuss them hon-

estly, the process of co-teaching might become more expected and less difficult. Over time, we might change the traditions of teaching to one of collaborative work for the sake of students' learning.

Overall, co-teaching is a process that develops over time, through varied phases. It certainly is not an easy or instantaneous process. We'll examine ways that teachers have developed successful work together in our newsletters during the 2005 – 06 year.

Call for responses:

What have been your reactions/experiences/responses to the co-teaching experience?

Please send your responses to: searma1@uic.edu by November 27th.

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Many resources for team teaching are available on the web. One website is an text book of which chapter three at:

http://www.parrotpublishing.com/Inclusion_Chapter_3.htm

gives an excellent overview of important issues in collaborative teaching, as well as other aspects of special education teaching.

The Chicago Teachers' Center, through DePaul University, provides a list of resources that could be helpful when working collaboratively with a general education teacher at:

<http://teacher.depaul.edu/ctcn.html>

Of specific note is the list of ways to help students in the regular classroom:

<http://teacher.depaul.edu/CTCNpdfs/strategies.pdf>

This toolkit provides many hands on ideas in subject areas that might be helpful both in the general and self-contained classrooms.

What Does the Literature Say About Inclusion in Secondary Schools?

(from *Teaching Exceptional Children*, May, 2004)

There is a critical shortage of research into the inclusion of students with disabilities at the secondary level (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). The majority of the research to date has focused on teachers' perspectives towards inclusive settings. The literature indicates that general education teachers claim they do not receive the professional preparation or appropriate teaching experiences to make them comfortable providing special instruction to students with disabilities (Ellett, 1993; Houck & Rogers, 1994; Schumm, Vaughn, Gordon & Rothlein, 1994). Some educators have criticized this literature on teacher perspectives because it involves teachers who are not actually teaching in inclusive settings (McLeskey, Waldron, So, Swanson, & Loveland, 2001). In contrast, when McLeskey et al. compared the attitudes of teachers in inclusive versus noninclusive settings in Grades K-6, they found the teachers in the inclusive settings to be far more favorable toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education. For the rest of the article, which provides positive suggestions for practice, see: