

Co-teaching: The Benefits and Disadvantages

Emily Stark

Abstract: By adding another teacher in the classroom students are able to get more attention they need along with the teacher feeling less pressure of having to do all the work by themselves. There are many issues in co-teaching like lack of time to prepare, teachers not being educated on co-teaching, and not having the right pair of teachers working together. These are all small road blocks that could be easily fixed like having co-teaching meetings one morning a week, but the most beneficial thing would be to pair a general teacher with a special education teacher. Involving a special educator in the classroom along with the general teacher in secondary education and allowing them the same prep-hour to prepare for class will be very beneficial for the classroom. Not only will individualized learning be increased for students, but it will also improve their skill and performance on standardized tests.

Key words: *Co-teaching, students, development, and special education*

There are many reasons why teachers leave the profession and one is because many feel overwhelmed with all the time spent planning for the next class or preparing another class activity. The overwhelmed and run-down feelings could all be fixed with one simple solution, co-teaching. When it comes to teaching with another co-worker some teachers find excitement, while others find it very uncomfortable. This should not be an issue when it comes to teaching students. All teachers should be able to work in a cooperative setting or in other words co-teach, when it comes to any situation. There have been many studies for co-teaching and many have realized the benefits, but also the drawbacks. Co-teaching should not be seen as negative, but a positive way for teachers to interact with one another and also give more individualized attention to students.

Advantages of Co-Teaching

There are many different ways that co-teaching could be executed. For example, it could be two general education teachers, one general education teacher and a special education teacher, or even a special education teacher and an administrator (Magieri & Zigmond, 2005 p. 80-81). There have been many different ways to co-teach, but one that has

seemed beneficial in many situations has been a general education teacher paired with a special education teacher (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & Mcduffie, 2005, p. 267). With this co-op, there are clear roles between the two and as they work together longer and longer over the years they will be able to form a bond and be able to form an effective co-teaching regimen for the classroom. This allows both teachers to work off of each other to form a cohesive way of teaching that benefits not only special education students, but also the general student population.

Having this pairing of teachers allows the general education teacher to teach in a style that is comfortable for them and having a special education teacher with them allows someone else to simplify or allow children with disabilities to learn in a way that is helpful for them. One example that is demonstrated in the article, *Case Studies in Co-Teaching in the Content Areas: Successes, Failures, and Challenges* by Margo A. Mastropieri, Thomas E. Scruggs, Janet Graetz, Jennifer Norland, Walena Gardizi, and Kimberly Mcduffie, which is a case study that shows a chemistry class with two women that were studied for a year and were allowed to co-teach in a way that was effective for the teachers and students.

These two women at first were very shaky in managing the new style of co-teaching, which is seen as normal when it comes to first co-teaching experiences, but through out the years they spent together they were able to mold their two styles together to form a class that was beneficial for everyone. These teachers followed the basic rules of, "(a) teachers presented information to the class as a whole; (b) teachers reviewed the textbooks, major points or text-based chapter questions, and lab activities with the class as a whole; (c) teachers occasionally assigned longer-term more project-based activities; and (d) tests and quizzes were administered on a regular basis" (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & Mcduffie, 2005, p. 267). Through out this class there was a lot of group work and many other times where students were able to work on their own so this allowed teachers to talk and discuss how things were going and what to prepare for in the future along with many other things (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & Mcduffie, 2005, p. 266).

Disadvantages of Co-Teaching

There have been many great outcomes from co-teaching, but there have also been some situations that have not worked out so well. There was another case study performed with two general education teachers that emphasized on middle school social studies. At the beginning of this study there were two teachers that had two very different teaching styles, which reflected in the classroom. When the class was observed, "At the beginning of the year, this classroom appeared to have little structure in place" (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & Mcduffie, 2005, p. 265). This caused the classroom to split through out the school year and teach half the class in one teaching style and the other half in a different way. This proved that two teachers with the same degree, but different teaching styles were not good examples for co-teaching. There has to be a balance between both teachers to be effective in a classroom and they also have to have close to or the same type of teaching style for the teachers to mesh.

Another problem that occurs in co-teaching is that there is a lot more planning and preparation that is involved for class the next day and very little time for teachers to work together (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & Mcduffie, 2005, p. 262-263). Especially with teachers that are involved in other things after school like coaching or tutoring it can be very difficult for teachers to find time during school or after school to collaborate on what to do for the next day or week of the school year. This causes teachers to give up more of their free time that they have available to preparing for class with another co-worker. After a year of this teachers could become run down or over whelmed with the amount of time they are working and the small paycheck they are receiving in return.

Co-teaching also requires extra classes to get teachers prepared for this new way of teaching, which many teachers do not want to do because it requires more hours for them along with more preparation (Magiera, & Zigmond, 2005, p. 82, Murawski, & Dieker, 2004, p.54). This really deters many teachers from being put into a co-teaching situation because of all the extra classes and time and preparation that they have to do when one can simply stick to what they know and prepare their class the way they want instead of trying to mold two different styles. When a teacher decides to teach by

him or herself they miss on some opportunities to work with students that may be having troubles with the content. Since teachers on average have thirty kids in a classroom one teacher can only do so much by themselves. Having another helping hand would be helpful in this situation.

Conclusion

Although there are some negatives to co-teaching, many more positives have come from it. Through co-teaching students are given extra attention, teachers are able to work with a co-worker, and not all the pressure is put onto one individual person. Right now teachers are hesitant to join with one another, but with time and making co-teaching very prominent through school districts teachers will find this style of teaching very useful for everyone across the board. Especially when a special education teacher and general education teacher are put together amazing progress can occur because every single student across the board is able to get the attention that they need to be successful in school. Due to this students will feel more confident when taking any type of testing that they need to. Co-teaching could become a life long learning experience for not only the student, but also the teachers because many new ways of co-teaching could be developed and more efficient teaching styles could be mad

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