

Why Co-Teaching?

*An Analytical and Qualitative
Perception of Co-Teaching*

By: Jared Harvey & Jeff Krieger

Ipswich High School 1/2017

Just a few numbers

- 6 million middle and high school students have very low literacy levels.
- 38% of dropouts have learning disabilities (LD).
- 6.5 million public school students receive Special Education services.
 - That is 13% of all public school students (Michaels & Wilson).
 - 17.5% of all public students in Massachusetts receive Special Education services.
 - Massachusetts has the highest percentage of students receiving Special Education services (Ed Data Express).
 - 11% of Ipswich High School students are on an I.E.P. (Finnegan).
- 77% of middle schools are using some form of co-teaching (Kohler-Evans).
- In 2016, co-teaching saved Ipswich High School \$94,472.40 (Finnegan).

What is Co-Teaching?

- Teaching takes place in a classroom that is taught by both General and Special Education teachers and is a supplementary aid and service that can be brought to General Education to serve the needs of students with and without disabilities through by IDEA (Cramer).
- The instructional delivery approach in which General and Special Educators share responsibility for planning, delivery, and evaluation of instructional techniques for a group of students (Sileo).
- Co-teaching as one General Educator and one Special Educator who share physical space, actively instruct a blended group of students, including those with disabilities.(Cook and Friend).
- Co-teaching as a collaboration between General and Special Education teachers who are responsible for educating all students assigned to a classroom (Gately & Gately)
- Co-teaching is an instructional delivery approach in which General and Special educators share responsibility for planning, delivery and evaluation of instruction for a heterogeneous group of students. General and Special Educators work in a co-active and coordinated fashion that involves the joint teaching of academically and behaviorally heterogeneous groups of students in integrated settings. Like a marriage, co-teaching is an ever evolving growth process for the teachers involved (Hartman).

Concerns About Co-Teaching?

Drawbacks from Teachers' Perspective:

1. The integrity of curriculum

- a. "Class content might be 'watered-down.'"

2. Equity - Mutual Respect

- a. "Co-teaching may not be effective if Special Education teachers are relegated to support staff or monitors as General Education teachers deliver the majority of content."

3. Compatibility

- a. "If I had known that I would have to defend the way I have always believed in teaching, I would not have agreed to co-teach...I have not been teaching for 30 years for someone else to tell me how to teach....I am furious."
- b. "Inflexibility and personal issues. 'She thinks the downfall in their collaboration occurred because 'Julie spent a lot of time on the computer doing personal things. When you have a lot of kids in the room with different needs you can't be doing it all yourself.'"

(Scruggs, Mastropieri, Mcduffie)

Drawbacks from Students' Perspective:

1. **Structural Support** - The structure of co-teaching makes it difficult to get away with anything and may make students think that they are always being monitored.
 - a. "If one teacher is reading to a student while you are trying to do work, it is distracting."
 - b. "It is annoying to have one teacher teach and the other pacing the room scanning our papers to find out what we understand."
 - c. "Can't get away with much."
 - d. "You can't do your homework for another class because they are watching you."

2. **Multiple Perspectives and styles** - Learners may get confused and get different guidance or conflicting directions from the two teachers.
 - a. "Different methods of teaching."
 - b. "They might disagree on certain things."
 - c. "One could say one thing and the other say something else."

3. **Skills and Grades** - Co-teaching classes give more work and have higher grading standards and expectations for students.
 - a. "A little more work."
 - b. "They grade harder."
 - c. "They give you more work."

4. **Generic Statement** - Too generic in nature.
 - a. "It makes the students feel nervous."
 - b. "It is embarrassing being in the supported class."

The Benefits

What Researchers Say:

- The most striking finding was that with one exception, each school with a co-teaching model made noticeable improvements in average student statewide test scores over a period of four years (Idol).
- Literacy skills affect self confidence, motivation, and school performance.
- Many students struggle and become disengaged - avoid reading.
 - Co-teaching is a way to address these needs.
- Initial data suggests co-teaching has a positive influence in academic and social development.
- Students with learning disabilities who have a positive perception of their school environment are more likely to interact with teachers and complete work.
 - Stressing the need for supportive educational environments, collaboration with General and Special Educators in the co-taught setting can provide a caring learning environment that empowers students and supports success.
- Special Education students felt it a unique opportunity to gain access to General education.
- General Education students felt exposure to higher levels of abstract, concept development and literacy skills.
- Special Education students removed from General Education setting and taught in a resource setting do not benefit from instruction of content teacher.
- Some General Education teachers do not possess the expertise to meet the learning needs of all students. (Michaels & Wilson)

What Teachers Say: (listed in order of importance)**1. Professional Benefits**

- a. "Having Mary as a Special Education teacher showed me what she knows, could only make me a better teacher...she has lots of ideas, and I've done nothing but learn, and change, and grow."

2. Additional attention received by students with disabilities

- a. "The best thing about co-teaching is having another person in the classroom...knowing that there are targeted students in the classroom who need extra help and having either the co-teacher or myself address those while the other is doing something."

3. Administrator Support

- a. "The support of the principal also was instrumental in the success of the teachers' collaboration."

4. Compatibility

- a. Several teachers rated personal compatibility between partners as the most critical variable for co-teaching.
- b. "I'd say, 'you should do it (co-teach). It's awesome, you know. But make sure that it's with someone that you get along with and that you have the same, you know, ideas about teaching and are equally motivated.'" (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & Mcduffie)

What Students Say: (listed in order of importance)

1. **Availability of help** - Individual support and assistance are readily available in co-teaching classes for all students, as needed.
 - a. "It is easier during individual or group work for everyone to get help."
 - b. "One teacher might be doing something so the other teacher can help you."
 - c. "You can always get help from one of them."

2. **Structural supports** - The structure of co-teaching allows for more flexible and diverse instructional approaches.
 - a. "There is a better chance your question is going to be answered"
 - b. "While one teacher teaches, the other makes sure you pay attention and take notes in some models."
 - c. "Two people are watching you, observing you, and checking up on you."

3. **Multiple perspectives and styles** - Co-teaching enables learners to experience and benefit from opinions, styles, and approaches of both teachers.
 - a. "Teachers have different methods of teaching different things."
 - b. "You don't get tired of the same teacher all the time."
 - c. "Two minds can be better than one."
 - d. "Multiple perspectives and different opinions."

4. **Skills and grades** - Co-teaching help students to develop more skills and get better grades.
 - a. "You get a better understanding of assignments."
 - b. "I learn better."
 - c. "It helps you get better grades."

(Michaels & Wilson)

Works Cited

- "The Condition of Education - Participation in Education - Elementary/Secondary - Children and Youth With Disabilities - Indicator May (2016)." *The Condition of Education - Participation in Education - Elementary/Secondary - Children and Youth With Disabilities - Indicator May (2016)*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2016. <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp>.
- Cook, L., and M. Friend. "Co-Teaching: Guidelines for Creating Effective Practices." *Focus on Exceptional Children* 28(3) (1995): 1-16. Print.
- Cramer, E., and A. Nevin. "A Mixed Methodology Analysis of Co-Teaching Assessments: Implications for Teach Education." *Teacher Education and Special Education*, n.d. Web. 17 Dec. 2016. <http://www.bing.com/cr?IG=CDE86F63D83D4287BF194EA0D27E0460&CID=01FEA43298ED6BBE23CCADC299DC6ABD&rd=1&h=UVOYXxWWrG9uq-bppxkBVobdE5_nZ4dWZxB3ehP1-BI&v=1&r=http%3a%2f%2fwww.sagepub.com%2fcontent%2f29%2f4%2f261&p=DevEx,5085.1>.
- "ERIC - Co-Teaching: How to Make This Marriage Work in Front of the Kids, Education, 2006." *ERIC - Co-Teaching: How to Make This Marriage Work in Front of the Kids, Education, 2006*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2016. <<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ765824>>.
- "ERIC - General and Special Education Students' Perceptions of Co-Teaching: Implications for Secondary-Level Literacy Instruction, Reading & Writing Quarterly, 2006." *ERIC - General and Special Education Students' Perceptions of Co-Teaching: Implications for Secondary-Level Literacy Instruction, Reading & Writing Quarterly, 2006*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2016. <<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ736976>>.
- Finnegan, Megan C. "Co-Teaching." Personal interview. 17 Dec. 2016.
- Kat. "Toward Inclusion of Special Education Students in General Education: A Program Evaluation of Eight Schools." *Education Research Reviews*. N.p., 22 Apr. 2015. Web. 15 Dec. 2016.

<https://educ201.wordpress.com/2015/04/21/toward-inclusion-of-special-education-students-in-general-education-a-program-evaluation-of-eight-schools/>.

N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Dec. 2016.

<http://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1115&context=ejie>.

N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Dec. 2016.

<http://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1115&context=ejie>.

"Percent Children with Disabilities: 2013-14 - ED Data Express." *Percent Children with Disabilities: 2013-14 - ED Data Express*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Dec. 2016.

<http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/data-element-explorer.cfm/tab/data/deid/5/>.

Scruggs, T. E., M. A. Mastropieri, and K. A. McDuffie. "Co-Teaching in Inclusive Classrooms: A Metasynthesis of Qualitative Research." *Exceptional Children* 73.4 (2007): 392-416. Web.