ABSTRACT

This paper shares preliminary results from the first two years of an ongoing, small-scale, professional development and research project that is implementing and investigating co-teaching practices in culturally and linguistically diverse elementary classrooms. Participants comprised co-teaching teams in classrooms where Spanish was the home language of many students, and included one veteran teacher and one master’s intern who had completed student teaching the year before. Results include a preliminary model for productive co-teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Also shared are co-teaching teams’ definitions for co-teaching, along with their perceptions of co-teaching overall and of specific co-teaching approaches (e.g., one teach, one observe; one teach, one assist; parallel teaching; station teaching; alternative differentiated teaching; team teaching). Implications for research and professional practice are shared.

CO-TEACHING APPROACHES WITH BENEFITS NOTED BY CO-TEACHING TEAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Diagram</th>
<th>Explanation and Example (March 2015)</th>
<th>Examples of Benefits Noted by Co-Teaching Teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Teacher, One Observe</td>
<td></td>
<td>One teacher teaches while the other strategically observes and analyzes observational data. Co-teachers share and analyze observational data afterward.</td>
<td>• Having one teacher observe helps to inform instruction for grouping and differentiation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>One Teacher, One Assist</td>
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<td>One teacher has the primary responsibility for planning &amp; teaching; the other teacher assists. The other teacher moves around the classroom helping individuals and/or “scooping” student perceptions and questions.</td>
<td>• Can support higher order thinking, for example, one teacher questioning individuals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parallel Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>The two teachers plan jointly, but split the classroom in half to teach the same content at the same time. (Teaching may be done in different languages.)</td>
<td>• Can support use of hands-on materials.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Station Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>The two teachers share responsibility for planning &amp; teaching. The classroom is divided into teaching stations. Co-teachers are at particular stations; other stations are run independently by the students or by another adult.</td>
<td>• Can allow teachers to do different tasks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative (Differentiated) Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>One teacher manages most of the class; the other teacher works with a small group inside or outside of the classroom. The class group does not have to integrate with the current group.</td>
<td>• Supports differentiation (overlap with alternative teaching).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>Both teachers are responsible for planning, instruction, and classroom management (with help).</td>
<td>• Allows for more targeted, scaffolded, and/or sheltered instruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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METHODS

• OVERVIEW: 2 years of ongoing, small-scale studies investigate how supported, co-teaching practices may enhance engagement with math discourse in linguistically diverse elementary school classrooms.

• PARTICIPANTS: 7 co-teaching teams: one experienced teacher & one master’s intern (co-teaching), professional development (PD) and collaborative support in co-teaching and math discourse.

• DATA: Interviews [audio & video recordings & transcriptions] and written reflections. The concept of cogenitive dialogue (Tobin & Roth, 2005) frames the ongoing qualitative analysis (Creswell, 1998).

CO-TEACHING DEFINITION (Friend & Cook, 2008)

Co-teaching is two (or more) educators who share instructional responsibility and mutually agreed-upon goals for a single group of students. The teachers have mutual ownership, pooled resources, and joint accountability, although individual teacher’s roles may vary.

COMPONENTS OF CO-TEACHERS’ DEFINITIONS

• Collaboration & shared responsibility (Agreed with Friend & Cook, 2004)

• Shared goals & expectations (Agreed with Friend & Cook, 2006)

• Varied roles and approaches (Agreed with Friend & Cook, 2006)

• Co-planning (not explicitly mentioned by Friend & Cook, 2006, but overlap with collaborative accountability)

• Communication and reflection (not explicitly mentioned by Friend & Cook, 2006)

• Differentiation (not explicitly mentioned by Friend & Cook)

TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF CO-TEACHING

Outcomes & Co-Teachers’ Voices

| Positive student outcomes (academic, linguistic, social) | “This year especially us working together, has really helped the kids see. They’ve gotten things that they haven’t in the past. There’s a deeper understanding of concepts for sure…” We have a new curriculum this year and its very involved and just having both of us together to work with. Co-teaching dynamic is really about how to engage with someone else because classrooms are kind of like a bedroom. It’s kind of our private space – public spaces for kids and teaching; but just think, at the end of the day, teachers become very protective of their own space. And I think that this [co-teaching] allows for practice in the area of engaging with another adult about best practices in the classroom with kids.” ~ KG, Gr. 2 Co-teacher |
| Increased instructional flexibility | “It's powerful to be able to be in the same space, and hearing the same language and seeing the same strategies. Which is something that we don't get to see most of the time. … it really helps us to see.” (Gr. 2015-16, interview)

| Increased student-teacher interactions | “…it makes you look at your own instruction too.” (Gr. 2015-16, interview)

| More positive working environments | “…we should be times two I'd hear how she would say something, and it would make me think of how I could explain – oh yeah, I can say it that way too!” (Gr. 2015-16, interview)

| Positive teacher outcomes (professional growth) | “…it makes you look at your own instruction too.” (Gr. 2015-16, interview)

| RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This research documents voices of co-teachers, describing their collaborative practice in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. These voices, informed by qualitative data analysis, highlight the potential for co-teaching as a means of supporting the “dreams, possibilities, and necessity of public education” (AERA theme, 2015) responsive to the diverse learning needs of students and teachers.

The co-teachers’ definitions, along with each team’s perceptions of professional co-teaching practice, emphasize the three interacting factors (focused PD, co-planning, co-teaching practices) which must be considered when designing and implementing productive co-teaching experiences. In summary, co-teaching, when accompanied by focused PD and co-planning opportunities, has the potential to increase student-teacher interaction, instructional flexibility, and attention to student needs – and, thus, may promote positive student learning outcomes.

This work is significant because it has the potential to identify best practices, strategies, and tools to support teacher education and PD with specific emphasis on co-teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.

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REFERENCES


