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The Many Faces of Collaborative Planning and Teaching

The rationale for and documented benefits of collaborative planning and teaching are explored in this article. When teachers collaborate on their planning and teaching, they are better able to meet the needs of diverse students and fulfill their legal responsibilities. In addition, the authors describe the multiple ways to collaborate and coteach, including working with students as collaborative partners. Readers are provided with answers to some of the frequently asked questions about collaborative planning and coteaching. The authors describe a method for assessing the effectiveness of teaching teams and provide tips for successful collaborative planning and teaching. The importance of professional development and other forms of administrative support are emphasized. The mutual responsibilities of university personnel preparing future teachers, school administrators, and individual educators are discussed.

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IN 1994 THE UNITED NATIONS Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization issued the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education,* which supported the practice of inclusive education for students with disabilities, with the caution that "while inclusive schools provide a favorable setting for achieving equal opportunity and full participation, their success requires a concerted effort, not only by teachers and school staff, but also by peers, parents, families and volunteers" (p. 11). More than a decade later, North American schools struggle to create inclusive educational experiences for students, even with federal mandates such as the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (reauthorized as the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004) and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, both of which promote the inclusion of increasing numbers of students with disabilities as full partici-

pants in rigorous academic and general education curriculum and assessment. NCLB further requires all teachers to demonstrate subject matter competence in all subject areas they teach, encouraging the establishment of collaborative partnerships between highly qualified general educators, who have demonstrated subject-area expertise, and other specialists (e.g., special educators, speech and language pathologists, teachers of English learners, gifted and talented instructors), who have complementary expertise in specialized learning strategies and content. Legal requirements combined with student demographics, then, point to increased collaborative planning and teaching among school personnel attempting to best educate students in compliance with federal mandates.

Documented Benefits of Collaborative Planning and Teaching

What are the documented benefits of collaboration in planning and teaching (i.e., coteaching) for teachers, students, and schools? A recent comprehensive study conducted by Schwab Learning (2003) documented the impact of collaborative partnerships and coteaching in 16 California elementary, middle, and secondary schools in which teachers, administrators, and support staff creatively arranged for every student to receive blended services from Title 1 teachers, reading specialists, special educators, and paraprofessionals. Results included decreased referrals to intensive special education services, increased overall student achievement, fewer disruptive problems, less paperwork, increased number of students qualifying for gifted and talented education services, and decreased referrals for behavioral problems. In addition, teachers reported being happier and not feeling so isolated. This study reinforces the findings of Walther-Thomas's (1997) evaluation of coteaching models in 23 schools across eight school districts. Positive outcomes included improved academic and social skills for low-achieving students, improved attitudes and self-concepts reported by students with disabilities, and more positive peer relationships. Students perceived that these improvements were the result of more teacher time and attention. The coteachers themselves (general and special educator teaching teams) reported professional growth, personal support, and enhanced sense of community within the general education classrooms. The most frequently mentioned drawback was the lack of staff development to learn how to be more effective coteachers.

Coteaching has been documented to be effective for students with a variety of instructional needs, including students with hearing impairment (Compton et al., 1998; Luckner, 1999); learning disabilities (Klingner, Vaughn, Hughes, Schumm, & Elbaum, 1998; Rice & Zigmond, 1999; Trent, 1998; Welch, 2000); high-risk students with emotional disturbance and other at-risk characteristics (Dieker, 1998); language delays (Miller, Valasky, & Molloy, 1998); English-language learners (Bahamonde & Friend, 1999); and students with and without disabilities in secondary classrooms (Mahony, 1997; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Welch (2000) showed that students with disabilities and their classmates all made academic gains in reading and spelling on curriculum-based assessments in the cotaught classrooms. Moreover, Mahony (1997) reported that "for special education students [in cotaught classrooms], being part of the large class meant making new friends" (p. 59) in addition to meeting their educational needs.

Coteaching can also result in increased student performance on high-stakes assessments. The Memphis *Commercial Appeal* (Noeth, 2004) reported coteaching being used in all Shelby County, Tennessee high schools, resulting in 70% of the county's special education students being included in general education classrooms through support of teams made up of a special educator and a general education teacher certified in either English or mathematics. After 1 year of coteaching, the percentage of participating special education students passing the Gateway English test increased from 20% to 40%. Due to the test score gains, several high schools were removed from NCLB's troubled schools list.

In summary, there is an emerging database for preschool through high school levels (Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Malgeri, 1996) that leads to the following conclusions:

1. At all grade levels, students with diverse learning characteristics can be educated effectively in general education environments in which teachers, support personnel, and families collaborate.
2. Improvements are evidenced in academic and social relationship arenas.

What can account for such results? First, coteaching provides a greater opportunity to capitalize on the unique, diverse, and specialized knowledge of each instructor. Second, coteaching allows students to experience and imitate the cooperative and collaborative skills that teachers show when they coteach. With multiple instructors there is increased flexibility in grouping and scheduling, thus making it possible for students to experience less wait time for teacher attention and increased time on task, an important factor documented to increased academic productivity (Kneedler & Hallahan, 1981; Lloyd, 1982; Wheldall & Panagopoulou-Stamatelatou, 1991). Third, teachers who coteach can structure their classes to use more effectively the research-proven strategies required of NCLB (Miller et al., 1998). Fourth, coteaching is a vehicle for bringing together people with diverse backgrounds and interests to share knowledge and skills to generate novel methods to individualize learning. In interviews with 95 peer collaborators and 96 others who were not collaborating, Pugach and Johnson (1995) found that those in the peer-collaboration group had reduced referral rates to special services, increased confidence in handling classroom problems, increased positive attitudes toward the classroom, and more tolerance toward children with cognitive deficits.

What Are the Many Faces of Collaboration and Coteaching?

In some schools, coteaching is incorrectly viewed as the only way to support students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Students eligible for special education can be supported in general education classrooms through a wide variety of collaborative relationships with educators, support personnel, paraprofessionals, and students themselves. Table 1 offers a menu of options for student support that increases in intensity from natural peer supports to individualized supports, including four coteaching approaches, the focus of this article. Individual educational program planning team members, who are responsible for making placement decisions for students with disabilities, are encouraged to review the table and identify the level of support individual students require to receive a free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. When making support decisions for students to avoid overdependence, team members are encouraged to apply the principle of providing only as much help as necessary. The nature of support for a student may differ from one class or instructional activity to the next. The ultimate goal is to systematically reduce the intensity and frequency of support as students advance in academic and/or social competence.

The authors acknowledge that some students, with and without disabilities, may require support that goes beyond what is typically addressed in any given class (e.g., study skills training, homework support, remediation). To address these support needs, many schools have established learning centers where all students can receive extra support and targeted instruction. Students may be assigned to a learning center during study hall periods or as an alternative to an elective once a day, or they may attend only as long as is necessary for them to master a specific skill. The library media center is an ideal place for a learning center. For example, school personnel at a high school familiar to the authors use the library media center in this way: Every period of every day, one general educator and one special educator are assigned, as an official duty, to work with students in the library media center. In addition to the library media director and the general and special education personnel assigned to the learning center, trained peer tutors are available to provide tutorial and other assistance to their fellow students. Such an arrangement avoids stigmatization of students re-

Table 1
From Least to Most Intense and Intrusive Student Support Options

Natural peer support	Same-age or cross-age peers can assume responsibility for naturally supporting a student's participation in academic, cocurricular, and social activities. *Natural peer support* includes assisting a student to get from class to class, remember materials, or complete assignments. Peers may take notes for another student, facilitate communication with others unfamiliar with the student's way of communicating (e.g., use of an augmentative communication device), or serve as a role model. Peers also can expand a student's social network by assisting to include the student in free-time interactions, social clubs, and other in-school and out-of-school social activities. Occasionally, a classmate may serve as a peer tutor, providing specific academic instruction.
Consultative and stop-in support	*Consultative support* occurs when one or more adults, often a special educator, meet regularly with classroom teachers to keep track of student progress, assess the need to adapt or supplement materials or instruction, and problem solve, as needed. Specialized professionals such as nurses, occupational and physical therapists, augmentative communication specialists, and guidance or career counselors often provide periodic consultation. Students also may seek assistance from consulting staff for specific assignments or general support. *Stop-in support* occurs when consulting support providers stop by the classroom on a scheduled or unscheduled basis to observe student performance in the general education context, assess the need for any modifications to existing supports or curriculum, and talk face to face with the student, classroom teacher, and peers.
Coteaching support	*Coteaching support* occurs when two or more people share responsibility for teaching some or all of the students assigned to a classroom. There are four predominant coteaching approaches: a) *supportive teaching,* in which one teacher takes the lead and others rotate among students to provide support, b) *parallel teaching,* in which coteachers work with different groups of students in different areas of the classroom, c) *complementary teaching,* in which coteachers do something to enhance the instruction provided by another coteacher, and d) *team teaching,* in which coteachers jointly plan, teach, assess, and assume responsibility for all of the students in the classroom.
Individualized support	*Individualized support* involves one or more adults, oftentimes paraprofessionals, providing support to one or more students at predetermined time periods during the day or week or for most or all of the day. The key to successful individualized support is to ensure that designated support personnel do not become "attached at the hip" to individual students, but, instead, deliberately prompt natural peer support, support students in the class other than the focus student, facilitate small group learning with heterogeneous groups of classmates, and differentiate support, as needed, through planning with the classroom teacher. The ultimate goal is to fade the need for individualized support by facilitating increased student independence and increased natural support from classmates and teachers.

ceiving support and allows all students, whether or not they are eligible for a particular support program, to receive assistance from teachers and peers on an as-needed basis.

What Does Coteaching Look Like? Four Approaches

In a comprehensive national survey, teachers experienced in meeting the needs of students in a diverse classroom reported that they used four predominant coteaching approaches: *supportive, parallel*, *complementary*, and *team* teaching (National Center for Educational Restructuring and Inclusion, 1995). Before describing each approach in more detail, it is important to point out that none of these four coteaching approaches is better than another. When deciding which approach to use in a given lesson, the goal always is to improve the educational outcomes of students through the selected coteaching approach. Many beginning coteachers start with supportive teaching and parallel teaching because these approaches involve less structured coordination among the coteaching team members. As coteaching skills and relationships strengthen, coteachers then venture into the complementary teaching and team teaching approaches that require more time, coordination, and knowledge of and trust in one another's skills.

Supportive Teaching

Supportive teaching is when one teacher takes the lead instructional role and the other(s) rotates among the students to provide support. The coteacher(s) taking the supportive role watches or listens as students work together, stepping in to provide one-to-one tutorial assistance when necessary, while the other coteacher continues to direct the lesson. A caution in using the supportive teaching approach is that whoever is playing the support role (e.g., special educator, paraprofessional) must not become "velcroed " to individual students, functioning as hovercraft vehicles blocking students' interactions with other students. This can be stigmatizing for students and the support persons, leading students to perceive that the student and support teacher are not genuine members of the classroom.

Parallel Teaching

Parallel teaching is when two or more people work with different groups of students in different sections of the classroom. Parallel teaching includes at least the following eight variations.

1. *Split class.* Each coteacher is responsible for a particular group of students, monitoring understanding of a lesson, providing guided instruction, or reteaching the group, if necessary.
2. *Station teaching or learning centers.* Each coteacher is responsible for assembling, guiding, and monitoring one or more centers or stations.
3. *Coteachers rotate.* The coteachers rotate among the two or more groups of students.
4. *Each coteacher teaching a different component of the lesson*. This is similar to station teaching, except that teachers rotate from group to group rather than students rotating from station to station.
5. *Cooperative group monitoring.* Each coteacher takes responsibility for monitoring and providing feedback and assistance to a given number of cooperative groups of students.
6. *Experiment or lab monitoring.* Each coteacher monitors and assists a given number of laboratory groups, providing guided instruction to those groups requiring additional support.
7. *Learning style focus.* One coteacher works with a group of students using primarily visual strategies, another works with a group using auditory strategies, and yet another uses kinesthetic strategies.
8. *Supplementary instruction.* One coteacher works with most of the class on a concept, skill, or assignment. The other coteacher (a) instructs students to apply or generalize the skill to a relevant community environment, (b) provides extra guidance to students who

are self-identified or teacher-identified as needing extra assistance in acquiring or applying the learning, or (c) provides advanced enrichment activities.

As with supportive teaching, there are cautions in implementing parallel teaching. Primarily, there is the possibility of creating a special class within a class by routinely grouping the same students in the same group with the same coteacher. It is important to keep groups heterogeneous whenever possible and to rotate students among different coteachers. Students stretch their learning by experiencing different instructors' approaches and expertise. They avoid stigmatization that may arise if someone other than the classroom teacher (e.g., special educator or paraprofessional) always teaches one set of students. With all members of the coteaching team familiar with all students, teachers are better able to problem solve any barriers to academic, communication, and social learning that their common students encounter.

Complementary Teaching

Complementary teaching is when coteachers do something to enhance the instruction provided by the other coteacher(s). For example, one coteacher might provide a lecture on the content while the other coteacher paraphrases statements and models note-taking on the content on chart paper or a transparency. Sometimes, one of the complementary teaching partners preteaches the small-group social skill roles required for successful cooperative group learning and then monitors as students practice the roles during the academic cooperative group lesson facilitated by the other coteacher. A common concern with complementary teaching, particularly at the secondary level, is that those coteachers who are not the content area teachers do not have the same level of content mastery as the content teacher. This cannot be avoided and is not necessarily a drawback. Complementary teaching partners have expertise in other areas (e.g., speech and language pathologists have expertise in communication, a special educator has expertise in adapting curriculum and learning strategies, a paraprofessional speaks fluent Spanish or another language that is the primary language for many of the students in the classroom) that can be readily used to complement and supplement the expertise of the content area teacher. Through planning and teaching together, all members of the team have an opportunity to acquire new skills. For example, the special educator may learn new content and the classroom teacher may acquire skills to differentiate curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Team Teaching

Team teaching is when two or more people do what the traditional teacher has always done—plan, teach, assess, and assume responsibility for all of the students in the classroom. Team teachers share the leadership and the responsibilities. For example, one might demonstrate the steps in a science experiment while the other models the recording and illustrating of its results. Coteachers who team teach divide the lessons in ways that allow the students to experience each teacher's strengths and expertise. For example, for a lesson on inventions in science, one coteacher whose interest is history will explain the impact on society. The other coteacher's strengths are more focused on the mechanisms involved and can explain how the particular inventions work. In team teaching coteachers simultaneously deliver lessons; both teachers are comfortable alternately taking the lead and being the supporter. The bottom line and test of a successful team-teaching partnership is that the students view each teacher as their teacher.

Team teaching is not issue free. One concern is whether team teachers should remain together at the end of the school year or whether one coteacher, such as the special educator, should follow students transitioning to the next grade level. There are advantages and disadvantages both ways. Starting over again every year with a new teaching team can thwart the development of coteaching relationships and content knowledge. On the other hand, there are obvious benefits to teachers receiving new students at risk of failure with accompanying teaching personnel who know the students. The new teacher has immediate access to resource personnel with in-depth knowl-

edge of the student(s). It is up to each team to weigh advantages and disadvantages of each option and choose what is best for students.

Students as Collaborative Partners

Collaborative skills are important to success in 21st-century life. Consequently, one important reason for teachers to collaborate is to allow their students to experience and imitate the cooperative skills teachers demonstrate when they collaboratively plan and teach. Students also can become collaborative partners with their teachers. As explained in Villa, Thousand, & Nevin (2004), students are more likely to develop collaborative dispositions and skills when their teachers explicitly (a) teach them how to tutor or work as study buddies, and (b) structure reciprocity so students serve as teacher and learner. Similarly, by structuring cooperative group learning experiences, teachers create forums for students to practice communication and interpersonal skills while jointly acquiring and demonstrating learning outcomes.

Assessing Collaborative Planning, Teaching, and Learning Relationships

In all collaborative planning, teaching, and learning relationships, there are five elements that facilitate cooperative functioning: *face-to-face interaction, positive interdependence, interpersonal skills, monitoring,* and *individual accountability* (see Johnson & Johnson, 2000, for detailed explanations of each).

For collaborative partners to be optimally effective, they need to know what the five elements of cooperative functioning look like when team members are sitting face to face and planning or debriefing curriculum, instruction, or assessment.

Issues in Collaborative Planning and Teaching

All collaborative planning and teaching teams face common issues concerning instruction, time for planning and other logistics, behavior management, communication among members, and the evaluation of success in collaborating. Among the questions teammates must ask themselves are "Who adapts the curriculum and the instructional and assessment procedures for select students?" "Who carries out the disciplinary procedures and delivers the consequences?" "How will students' progress be monitored?" and "Who completes the paperwork for students eligible for special education?" Some questions relate to daily responsibilities, such as giving feedback on assignments and recording student progress. Others relate to periodically occurring roles such as meeting with parents and administrators. It can be anticipated that answers to many questions will change as members of the team gain experience and trust with one another.

Tips for Success in Collaborative Planning and Teaching

Effective collaborative teachers can achieve more effective outcomes for their students, feel happier about their work, and be more likely to work together in the future (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 1999) when they practice the following tips.

1. Know with whom you need to collaborate. Who will be affected by the decisions you make? Who has the expertise? Who wants to participate? Include those who will help you invent new solutions.
2. Establish and clarify collaborative goals to avoid hidden agendas. Goal setting helps each member of the collaborative team achieve what each person needs for success. Creating a common goal sets up a positive interdependence with each other.
3. Agree to use a common conceptual framework, language, and interpersonal skills. Avoid using jargon terms. Participate in staff development and training to learn similar strategies. Establish ground rules to make it OK to ask questions for clarification and to learn from each other.
4. Practice communication skills to concurrently achieve the task and maintain relationships. Consciously include trust building and creative problem-solving activities in collab-

orative planning. Be sure that absent team members are notified of decisions. Clarify accountability for who will do what, set deadlines, and include celebrating daily successes.

5. Know how to facilitate a collaborative climate. Changing to a collaborative culture means that unconscious beliefs must be made conscious. For example, new traditions that celebrate cooperation must replace the old traditions of competition. Instead of celebrating one teacher of the year, add a coteacher team award.
6. Recognize and respect differences in motivation of collaborators. Create flexible scheduling to encourage collaborative teachers to use their time to meet and plan as well as debrief and problem solve. Set up multiple opportunities to observe others to discover their secrets of effective collaboration.
7. Expect to be responsible and expect to be held accountable. Support and facilitate individual and team actions such as following through on agreements.
8. Agree to reflective analysis of collaborative planning and celebrate often. Create a tool to measure the changes of collaborative partners (see Thousand & Villa, 2000, for an example). Periodically take time to celebrate the positive changes.

Conclusions: A Triangle of Responsibility

> Our task is to teach the kinds of kids we have, not the kinds of kids we used to have, want to have, or the kids that exist in our dreams. (Gerlach, 2002, personal communication)

Collaborative planning and teaching can result in a variety of positive outcomes for the kids we have today as well as the educators who teach these children and youth. Yet we acknowledge that collaborative planning and teaching is intellectually and interpersonally demanding; it has not occurred spontaneously or naturally within most schools.

To achieve the research promise of collaborative teaching requires institutions and individuals to take responsibility at three levels. First, at the university level, teacher preparation institutions must accept the responsibility to provide training in and modeling of effective collaborative planning and teaching practices for all future educators. Second, at the school district level, school administrators must assume responsibility for providing ongoing professional development in collaborative planning, the four approaches to coteaching, differentiated instructional practices, cooperative group and peer tutoring learning, positive behavioral supports, and other best educational practices that support diverse learners to succeed in general education. Administrators also must assume responsibility for (a) articulating the rationale for collaborative planning and teaching, (b) assisting school personnel to understand the necessary changes in their traditional roles and responsibilities, (c) providing incentives and resources for collaborative planning and teaching (e.g., scheduling common planning and teaching time, opportunities to attend conferences and/or observe veteran coteaching teams), and (d) evaluating the efficacy of the collaborative planning and teaching practices at their school sites.

Third, at the individual educator level, it is a fact that the job of *teacher* has become increasingly complex, demanding, and exciting due to our nation's increasingly diverse student population and requirements of NCLB, Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, and other state and federal mandates. As professionals who have chosen teaching as a career, we educators have a third tier of responsibility; that is, to take the initiative to keep abreast of the emerging knowledge and skills needed to do the job for which we are paid. We are compelled as professionals to do this regardless of how successful our university teacher preparation programs or school district administrators have been in doing their part to promote collaborative planning and teaching as a natural part of the culture and practice of modern day schooling. After all, collaborative planning and teaching is for the benefit of the kids—the only kids we have.

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