

Co-Teaching Issues

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Nowadays, the legalizations allow children with special needs to attend public school where they can be educated with non-disabled children and receive supports and services as needed. However, in 1975, the passage legalization of Public laws PL. 29 has required for implementing an instructional model to give students with disabilities an opportunity education in a least restrictive environment (LRE) in a general education setting. The reauthorization of Individual with Disability Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 emphasized the needs of accessing the curriculum of general education for students with disabilities while (IDEA) in 2004 required the needs of highly qualified teachers for students with disabilities. Both laws of NCLB (No Child Left Behind) and IDEA enable students with disabilities to receive their services in a general classroom as well as instructional curriculum (Packard, Hazelkor & Harris, 2011).

From this point, specialists, general education and special education teachers, and other service providers put their efforts together to design a new instruction and related services that allocate special education working with general education teachers in general classrooms as co- teaching (Friend & Cook, Pg. 108-109, 2012).

Therefore, "co -teaching is a service delivery option for providing special education or related service to students with disabilities or other special needs

while they remain in general education classes. Co-teaching occurs when two or more professionals jointly deliver substantive instruction to a diverse, blended group of students in a single physical space” (Friend & Cook, Pg. 109, 2012).

There are four rational components of Co-teaching. First, co-teaching increases educational opportunity for all students. The students who are disabled, at risk, or struggling English language learners can take advantage and success in their learning opportunities. Second, co-teaching reduces educational fragmentation for students with special needs in education settings. It is an opportunity to limit the dilemma of pullout students in situations for those who missing instruction, receiving special education, or fragmented curricula. Third, co-teaching can significantly decrease stigma. Students who are labeled in the general classroom setting are very embarrassed when they are being assigned in special education because of being recognized as having a disability or inability of learning in the same classroom. Fourth, co-teaching is creating a professional support system. In fact, co-teaching develops the camaraderie between teachers. As long as co-teachers have different perspectives, they can generate and put their ideas together to improve students or instruction and classroom procedure (Friend, Pg. 37 to 39, 2014).

In fact, co-teaching emerged to remedy the situation of low academic performance of students with disabilities. Generally, Co-teaching is described as the best way to have students with disabilities interact and participate with peers under mandatory legalization of educating them in the least restrictive environment. Meanwhile, methods such as co-teaching students with disabilities can provide an

opportunity to access curriculum and receive their specialist instruction (Friend, Cook, Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010).

Co-teaching is implemented in the classroom effectively by six approaches for teachers in order to meet students' learning needs. The approaches are: one teaching and one observing, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, teaming, and one teaching one assist. Teachers at least should use three approaches during the signal lesson. The one teaching and one observing approach is that teachers may work collaboratively; one collects data on behavioral, academic performance or social data on specific class group or students while the other teacher can teach the class and manage the instruction of the class. The station teaching approach consists of three non-sequential groups of students and divided instruction into three parts where teachers can teach them the instruction at two stations and work independently in the last one. The parallel teaching is most likely to have each teacher teach half group of students with the same instruction and materials. In alternative teaching, students can be in two groups where one teacher works with the large group while the small group of students is working with the teacher for remediation or an assessment. Teaming approach is when both teachers are sharing the responsibility to lead instruction of large group. The last approach is one teaching, one assisting. This is when one teacher leads instruction and teaches class while another teacher takes turn to assess individuals (Friend, Cook, Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010).

Nevertheless, a number of studies have been developed in order to identify what teachers and schools need to be successful in such a co-teaching practice. The

two critical factors that have been found for effective co-teaching are professionals' preparation and administrative support. Much emphasis must be directed to the need of training these professionals for additional skills development in communication skill and collaborative planning. It is essential to have activities and training programs for professionals to gain communication and collaborative skills; this encourages teachers to understand and maintain relationships in co-teaching. The more training offered for these skills, the more knowledgeable the professional will become, and readiness for co-teaching will be enhanced. The professional preparations program should focus on training activities for special education of the specific curriculum areas (content area) as well as preparing general education teachers for teaching students with disabilities. These professionals should be practicing the approach of co-teaching to be eligible to develop instructional strategies and methods. However, the administrative support can promote the collaboration between the two professionals by teaching and modeling the desirable traits and modeling the communication skills. This can build effective relationships and foster mutual respect. The administrators can use incentives and resources so that professionals can be fostered to develop instructions or reflect desirable changes when they provide service. Another way for administrative support for co-teachers is to help them in planning and scheduling their programs. Administrators could also have committee resources for training activities of co-teaching, and administrators should be part of these activities (Lynne & Marilyn, 1995).

Although co-teaching is found to be a very effective method for all students especially those who have disabilities, there is a significant barrier that impacts the effectiveness of co-teaching in the secondary level.

Packard, Hazelkor and Harris in 2011 claimed that the prevalent issue that challenges special education teachers in a secondary school is the lack of knowledge in the specific content area (Packard, Hazelkor & Harris, 2011). Ideally, when teachers are knowledgeable of content area, it means that teachers should be able to understand the subject area or the specific curriculum to teach class. They also should be able to organize the structure and know the curriculum well, so they can teach science, mathematics, physical education or English or other areas (Deborah, Thames & Phelps, 2008).

Indeed, this limitation of lacking of knowledge in content area comes from the programs preparation of special education teachers which focus on training them for using different strategies and methods for teaching diverse students but not preparing them for teaching in the content area (Packard, Hazelkor & Harris, 2011). However, the controversy is true that the preparation programs of general education teachers are to train teachers to master the content area rather than counterpart in special aids (Dieker & Murawski, 2003).

As an example, in the secondary level, when special education teacher was assigned to co-teaches in general setting, she did not know how to teach Algebra 1. In this case, the general education teacher of Algebra 1 not only taught the class but also taught the special education teacher in her own leisure time. General education teacher complained that special education teacher did not do her homework or

study Algebra neither supported her in class. The special education teacher was doing her assignment during the class lesson. The general education teacher said that she did not find co-teaching useful for many reasons. Algebra teacher could not do plan lesson with special educator because it was above her ability nor any assessment in Algebra 1 (Isherwood, Richael, 2008).

As the result of this dilemma, when special educators do not master the content area, they will have limitations in teaching assessment and education consultant. They cannot collaborate for teaching or doing co-planning. Moreover, the issue can impact on mutual trust and respect between two teachers, which is paramount for successful co-teaching. Significantly, not feeling equal between special and general education teacher poses the jeopardy of the co teaching process as well as negatively causing frustration in teaching curriculum (Packard, Hazelkorn & Harris, 2011).

Overall, despite the fact that co-teaching is an approach that offers to students with disabilities an inclusive setting for learning, accessing materials, participating with peers, and showing high achievement, there are many barriers can affect its success. One of the most important issue that has been found in the secondary school is the lack of knowledge in content area that impacts the effectiveness of co-teaching. This dilemma can arise and create other issues at the same time. It is important for special educators to have training programs in at least two or more content areas to be knowledgeable of what they are going to teach. This can enhance mutual respect, support and the building of perfect relationships between teachers to share responsibility in the teaching of the class.

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