

HOW DOES STATION TEACHING EFFECT LANGUAGE LEARNING?

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ABSTRACT

All across the nation, general and special education teachers, English as a Second Language teachers, and other service providers, such as speech-language pathologists from all grade levels and all content areas, are taking the plunge into co-teaching. Station or rotation teaching is a co-teaching strategy that calls for the designing of at least three workstations or learning centers where students rotate in and out in small groups. In a station teaching approach, teachers divide the responsibility for planning and content instruction. Students are rotated between three or more stations, also known as centers, which are either managed by a teacher or assistant or are independent stations. Teachers can work together to determine how many stations are appropriate for a given activity. Independent student workstations should include explicit instructions accompanied by teacher monitoring to ensure that learning objectives are met.

Keywords: Co-teaching, Co-teaching Models, Station Teaching, Co-teaching Relationship, Implementation, Benefits.

INTRODUCTION

All across the nation, general and special education teachers, English as a Second Language teachers, and other service providers, such as speech-language pathologists from all grade levels and all content areas, are taking the plunge into co-teaching. Many of these teachers have had little or no preparation in this approach, so they are learning about co-teaching largely through trial and error. Co-teaching requires three things: co-planning, co-instruction, and co-assessment. It is clear that, the main ingredient in a successful environment of collaboration and co-teaching is time for planning. Repeatedly, research on teaching, collaboration, co-planning, and teaming points in time as the key issues, it is essential to recognize that time for collaborative planning needs to be over and beyond the traditional preparation period. Despite the professional and personal challenges, teachers in a co-teaching arrangement find that their existing pedagogical and planning skills are refined and they develop new skills when involved in an effective co-teaching arrangement. So, co-teaching in a school environment offers teachers ways to help all children meet higher standards, deal with the changing roles and responsibilities that result of

collaboration, and grow professionally by acquiring new knowledge and skills through ongoing professional development.

What is Co-Teaching?

As the inclusion movement has grown, a sizable number of inclusive trends have grown with it. One of these trends has been to deliver services in the general education classroom by co-teaching. One widely accepted definition of co-teaching from Friend & Cook (2007) is "co-teaching occurs when two or more professionals jointly deliver substantive instruction to a diverse, blended group of students in a single physical space."

As per the definition, co-teaching involves two or more certified teachers. Usually co-teaching is thought as involving a general and special educator, but given the above definition, co-teaching can occur between or among two or more special educators, two or more general educators, or two or more other certified professionals. Many certified service providers, such as speech-language pathologists, school social workers, physical or occupational therapists, and English as a Second Language teachers now provide their services or support in the general education classroom rather than

pulling students out for services. This approach often provides greater opportunities for more integrated learning for students, rather than focusing on isolated skills in a totally different context.

Co-Teaching Models

Researchers, such as Friend and Cook (2007), have shared several co-teaching models. These are as follows.

- *Parallel teaching*: In parallel teaching, the class is equally divided in two, and each teacher teaches the lesson to half the students. Both teachers use the same lesson plan to ensure that students in both groups are exposed to the same information.
- *Station teaching*: Several variations of station teaching exist. Usually this model involves having several learning stations around the room with a group of students moving from station to station at strategic points. Often, one teacher co-ordinates one station, the other co-teacher coordinates another station, and the remaining station or stations include independent learning activities.
- *Alternate teaching*: In this model, one teacher takes the lead in instructing the large group, while the other works with a smaller group off to the side for a special purpose. Be sure to vary the reasons for and composition of the small group, and each teacher should take turns as the lead and alternate co-teacher.
- *Team teaching*: Often cited as the ultimate goal of co-teaching, this model involves both teachers taking a lead in active instructional responsibilities. In team teaching, both teachers together may co-present a lesson. Both teachers are viewed as equal partners in instructional planning and delivery.

What is Station Teaching?

'Station or rotation teaching is a co-teaching strategy that calls for the designing of at least three workstations or learning centers where students rotate in and out in small groups. The pedagogical possibilities of station teaching are valuable, but the planning and potential pitfalls deserve very careful consideration' (Schwartz, 2005).

After careful planning, the co-teachers divide responsibilities for the lesson and then take a station at one

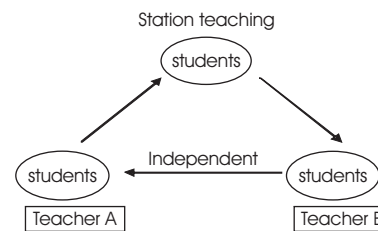


Figure 1. Station teaching

of the learning centers on the environment (Schwartz, D., 2005). In addition to two stations attended by a co-teacher, at least one other station must serve as a location for independent work related to the lesson or a place for peer tutoring or paraprofessional supervised activities. While the station teaching format has all the advantages of small group instruction, it gives the partners an opportunity to immediately complement each other's teaching and encourage a better understanding and deeper learning via lesson related discussions and/or activities.

The Co-Teaching Relationship in Station Teaching

'Learning to co-teach can be compared to the adjustment process encountered in cross-cultural learning' (Cushner, K., McClelland, A., & Safford, P., 1992). Schwartz, D. suggested that, the co-teachers in station teaching will face stages of behavior and emotional reactions that we shall call the 'E's of co-teaching': enthusiasm, establishment, and enrichment.

Stage 1: Enthusiasm

Mostert, M.P (1998) has pointed out that, since co-teaching should be most importantly a voluntary professional activity, station teaching often brings together self-motivated, enthusiastic professionals ready to engage in mutual work to enrich their classrooms, their students, and their professional lives. Prior to the actual station teaching experience, most teaching partnerships are characterized by a perception of exciting challenges that lie ahead. Anticipating a co-teaching opportunity provokes a sense of curiosity and novelty that seems to energize the participants and generate a healthy sense of optimism. Prior to actual engagement, the members of the new station teaching team often assume a professional psychological profile that serves them and the new partnerships well, despite some preconceptions or preconceived ideas. These new team members, while

anticipating hard work and unconventional challenges, usually enter the collaborative arrangement willingly, energetically, and optimistically. In fact, should any of the collaborators lack this sort of psychological profile, the emerging station teaching team will likely enter the establishment phase encumbered.

Stage 2: Establishment

The concept of establishment in co-teaching relationship put forth by Schwartz D. (2005). During the establishment phase of station teaching, the members engage in active collaboration. The teachers who have now established their routines, review their early plans, and begin arranging their preferred/or assigned roles and responsibilities. At this point, a very powerful set of psychological and personality forces may emerge which must be coped up with healthfully and professionally if the co-teaching arrangement is to flourish and enrich the learning of all its constituents. A sense of disequilibrium often emerges among station teachers during the establishment phase. Some of the preconceived notions are dispelled and partners begin to work with a new and differing pedagogical style, preferences, and values, it is not unusual for members of the co-teaching arrangement, to experience some frustration and discouragement. In successful co-teaching arrangements the establishment phase serves a very useful purpose. The struggles encountered by patient team members promote a healthy sense of acceptance without complacency and a reflective working relationship bonded in a spirit of collaboration. As the establishment phase passes, the station teachers begin to understand how the differences that occurred among the ingredients allow for enrichment.

Stage 3: Enrichment

Upon transition into the final phase of collaboration, many co-teachers experience a quality burst in their ongoing partnership. Successful practitioners in a prolonged collaboration report increases in trust, efficiency and a sense of value, creativity and humor as hallmarks of the enrichment phases of co-teaching (Walther-Thomas, 1997).

How does Station Teaching effect Language Learning?

In a station teaching approach, teachers divide the responsibility for planning and content instruction. Students

are rotated between three or more stations, also known as centers, which are either managed by a teacher or assistant or independent stations. Teachers repeat instruction to each group that comes through the station, though content or delivery can vary based on differentiated needs. Co-teachers can structure stations, so that students are able to focus on one aspect of a topic per station. For example, one station discusses the characters in a reading, while a second station identifies the plots/setting, and a third station reviews the themes in the reading. Another use of station teaching is, when each station focuses on a different topic altogether. For example, one co-teacher may be working with students on fluency exercises, while another co-teacher may be working with students on phonics and decoding, while a third station has students independently answering comprehension questions after listening to the questions on a tape recorder. Teachers can work together to determine how many stations are appropriate for a given activity. For older students, multiple independent stations may be acceptable. One group of students could be watching a video, while another group reads their textbook and answers questions, while a third group works collaboratively on a project. The fourth and fifth groups, each can be working with a co-teacher. As with all approaches, this approach should be used in conjunction with another approach as well and the students should change groups occasionally. Station teaching is considered a regrouping approach, since students do not stay in the traditional large group.

Factors to be considered for a successful Station Teaching

To make co-teaching work and continue successfully beyond the enthusiasm and establishment stages, a good deal of advance planning needs to take place before its actual implementation in the classrooms (Schwartz D., 2005). Areas for planning involve the following six aspects that school needs to consider with thoughtfulness and sensitivity.

- Identify a shared philosophy, common goals, and basic rules
- Schedule meetings and plan subsequent instruction
- Define roles and responsibilities
- Identify and select a variety of instructional formats

- Set up a process to deal with student problems
- Plan an assessment process.

Implementing Station Teaching in General Classroom

Implementing station teaching for the first time in general classroom, here recommending that you consider the 2 X 2 format (two stations led by each of the two co-teachers) before using a 3 X 2 setup (three stations, with each teacher leading a station and one station for independently engaged activity). By beginning with the 2 X 2 strategy, the general education teachers can focus on guiding an activity with two separate groups in the classroom and are not distracted by the independent student group. After you complete the 2 X 2 model successfully, consider moving to a 3 X 2 model. This structure supports two small groups with one independent group working alone with technology or some sort of cooperative learning groups where teacher support is not expected.

Impacts of Station Teaching

Benefits for Students

Stations can focus on reading, writing, or social skills depending on the targeted needs of individual students, while also providing support for a wide range of skills for all students. Station teaching gives teachers flexibility to vary interactions (e.g. Teacher-student, student-student, and student-hands on materials). Students who benefit from concrete examples can participate in a station learning activity with concrete materials prior to moving on to more abstract concepts. Moving students through the stations by placing them in situations that support their academic weaknesses, minimizes the frustration that students often experiences and can reduce behavior problems. Small-group instruction in station teaching encourages all students to take learning risks, defend their awareness when grappling with challenging content, and ask questions that support the development of Meta cognitive thought processes.

Benefits to Language Learning

In the words of Villa, Thousand & Nevin, co-teachers can use their strengths to differentiate instruction to help students gain language knowledge independently and through direct instruction in small groups. Once this structure is in place, planning time each week is dramatically

reduced. Impacts of station teaching to learning are,

- Explicit vocabulary teaching
- Content-based game training
- Supportive divergent dialogue
- Increased engagement/time on task
- Reducing teacher-student ratio
- Increasing reinforcement/feedback
- Technology tools to support learning

Conclusion

Station teaching provides co-teachers with both time and method to successfully instruct smaller groups of students in the use of tools and content in any subject area, particularly well suited to language learning. By using stations, both teachers are able to infuse best practices, targeted support, and ongoing dialogue into instruction. The number of stations may vary depending on the structure of the lesson and needs of the students. Independent student workstations should include explicit instructions accompanied by teacher monitoring to ensure that learning objectives are met. Although there is a limited amount of literature directly related to using station teaching as the preferred model for co-taught instruction, many recent research studies conclude that there is a need to utilize various models of co-teaching to increase the effectiveness of the model.

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