Team Teaching in Education

Introduction

What is Team Teaching?

Team teaching is an educational model used in some K-12 schools, in which multiple teachers collaborate in the planning, implementing, and evaluation of a class or classes (Simons, 2019). At the elementary and middle school level, there are often grade level teams that are interdisciplinary, whereas at the high school level, teams might be within and across content area departments (e.g. math and science, English and social studies, art and music, etc.). Team teaching can take on different forms, including models in which teachers work together behind the scenes but teach the classes alone, and other models in which teachers plan together and teach the classes together.

Although team teaching is sometimes used synonymously with co-teaching, it should not be confused with co-teaching that is strictly between a general education and special education teacher. Here, we are referring to team teaching more broadly, as two or more teachers working together to provide the best instruction for the entire class, and not with a specific focus on diverse learners. Team teaching might (and often does) include a general education and special education teacher but it is a more general teaching model, typically focused on interdisciplinary and grade level groupings. Team teaching utilizes the expertise of certified teachers, paraeducators, related service providers (e.g. Social Workers, Speech Language Pathologists), educational leaders, and other adults to provide quality instruction in a collaborative, problem-solving, and creative manner.

Why is Team Teaching Important?

The national teacher shortage is growing and it has only been exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis. In a nationwide poll of 3,621 educators taken by the National Education Association [NEA], 55% of teachers say they are likely to resign, pursue other careers, or retire early, and 90% say that they are experiencing teacher burnout (Walker, 2022). While teacher retention and entrance into the profession is decreasing, teaching demands are steadily increasing. With the push for both in-person and online instruction, individualized and personalized learning, technology use, and rigorous lesson plans, teachers are struggling to do it all on their own. Given the wide range of academic, social-emotional, and life skills support that "educating the whole child" demands, students require teams that consist of multiple individuals with expertise

across those areas (Mary Lou Folton Teachers College, 2022c). Solo teaching is outdated and is no longer sufficient to meet all of the needs of students; likewise, fulfilling all of those needs is an unrealistic burden to place on educators.

The Economic Policy Institute [EPI] (2022) suggests that one of the key solutions to increasing teacher retention and decreasing burnout is to "nurture stronger learning communities that acknowledge and foster teacher collaboration," as only 38% of teachers feel there is "cooperative efforts" at their schools. A teacher's perception of team support is one of the major predictors of teacher retention (EPI). Experts believe that team teaching may be the future of education because it is a collaborative approach that allows educators to share responsibilities, create and teach courses together, and better meet the needs of students, all while alleviating some of the stressors that come with traditional solo teaching. In a team-teaching model, teams of educators share students, and personalize instruction to meet the needs of each student.

Reflection Questions

1. Thinking about specific demands in your own practice, how might a team teaching approach alleviate some of the stressors you face each day?

2. How can team teaching be used as a proactive approach to prevent burnout?

Benefits & Drawbacks to Team Teaching

Benefits

Student Outcomes

"Team teaching offers teacher possibilities for enhancing the learning environment to achieve better learning outcomes through collaboration, sharing expertise and enhancing their own competencies and responding better to learners' needs" (Simons, Coetzee, Baeten, & Schmulian, 2019). Team teaching utilizes a combined expertise approach that can only benefit students taking part in the learning.

- **Achievement -** Everyday, teachers aim to increase student achievement by presenting engaging material, while meeting statewide requirements and differentiating for student needs. Obviously when there is one teacher and 20-30

students, individualization and differentiation is much more difficult; as a result, many teachers end up teaching to the middle while differentiating for a few. Team teaching allows for instruction to better focus on strengths and needs of the whole group, as well as individuals. "Students excel when teachers differentiate material for each student's zone of proximal development, provide frequent formative feedback and build close relationships" (Qtd. in Solheim & Opheim).

Team teaching allows educators to teach to their strengths while weaknesses are remedied by teammates, which results in a higher quality of instruction in all subject areas for students (Boyes, 2019). In a solo-teaching model, teachers often have to do extensive research to plan for subjects that they are not strong in and even then, they are not really providing students with expertise in that area. Team teaching combines teacher strengths specifically to maximize student achievement. Teacher collaboration in and of itself plays a factor in student achievement. "One study found that peer learning among small groups of teachers was the most powerful predictor of improved student achievement over time" (Qtd. in WIDA).

- **English Language Learners -** The main goal of team teaching for ELLs "is to ensure that language and literacy skills develop while students participate in an equitable learning environment with full access to grade-level opportunities" (Wisconsin Center for Educational Research [WCER], 2020). For example, a world history class that is co-planned and taught by a social studies teacher and an ESL teacher can provide the entire class with rich content area instruction, while providing ELLs with the support needed to access the curriculum. This should not be presented as the social studies teacher teaching to the majority of the class and the ESL teacher remedying the ELL students, but rather co-planning allows the teachers to use pedagogy and strategies within the whole-group instruction that meets the needs of the entire group. WCER explains, "With sustained collaboration, [ESL] teachers expand their understanding of core content in different subject areas, whereas the classroom teachers develop insights into and respond to the language and literacy development needs of multilingual learners."

- **Students with Disabilities -** Team teaching models allow students with disabilities to receive instruction in the mainstream classroom. With distributed expertise between content area teachers, interventionists, and/or Special Education teachers, students with special needs can learn alongside their peers and receive

the same instruction. Receiving instruction in a team taught general education classroom, opposed to a self-contained classroom, increases academic achievement and participation for students with disabilities (Cooley, 2021).

- **Relationship Building -** Team teaching creates the opportunity for more positive student-teacher relationships to form. In a solo-teaching model, students spend the majority of their days with one teacher, which limits the positive relationship opportunities. With team-teaching, there are multiple adults that students can engage with, creating more opportunities to form trusting relationships.

Equity

K-12 public school teachers in the United States are much less racially and ethnically diverse than the students that they teach (Schaefer, 2021). During the 2017-18 school year, the last year that the National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES] published demographic data on public school educators, 79% of educators identified as White, about 9% Hispanic, 7% Black, 2% Asian, 2% two or more races, and less than 1% as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander or American Indian/Alaska Native (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2020). Even in schools in which the majority of students were Hispanic, Black, Asian, or American Indian/Native American, the majority of teachers were still white (USDOE). So what does all of this have to do with teaching teams and why does it even matter?

In the traditional elementary classroom, one teacher typically works with one classroom of 20-30 students for the school year. This means that those 20-30 students have access to and build a close relationship with that one teacher. When schools use a team teaching model, more educators can work with more students, and students have the opportunity to build relationships with multiple educators instead of just one. This also means "that a student of color who may, in the traditional model, have been assigned to work exclusively with a white teacher, might now have the opportunity to work with two or more educators, increasing the possibility of racial identity match" (Mary Lou Folton Teachers College, 2022c).

Some may question why it matters if students have teachers that are the same race or ethnicity as them, but research shows that this actually does affect student attitude and achievement. "When the race of teachers matched their students' races, those students reported feeling more cared for, more interested in their schoolwork and more confident in their teachers' abilities to communicate with them," as well as having a "small, positive effect" on student achievement (Qtd. in Mary Lou Folton). All students should

have access to an adult that they can relate to and when a limiting teaching model affects this access, schools are inadvertently creating an issue of inequity. Team teaching models "catalyze educational equity in a number of ways, including through racial identity match" and increased opportunities for beneficial relationships with educators (Mary Lou Folton).

Teacher Outcomes

- **Less Demands -** With the mass exodus of teachers taking place in the United States, as well as 90% of public school teachers reporting teacher burnout, putting supports in place and implementing models that lessen the load might help to retain teachers (Walker, 2022). Team teaching allows for shared responsibilities for planning and implementing instruction, as well as shared responsibilities of students. Practically speaking this means that teachers are no longer responsible for every aspect of every student's education, but they work collaboratively with their teammates to meet the collective and individual needs of their shared students. This team approach leads to less demands on teachers while the combined efforts of a team lead to increased instruction and overall experience for students. Further, dividing responsibilities "and working closely alongside colleagues builds a stronger community in a school" (Boyes, 2019).

- **Professional Learning -** Team teaching provides teachers with professional learning in real time in their daily jobs. Teaching teams work together to improve instruction both individually and collectively as a group, through feedback and support. "Collective work in trusting environments provides a basis for inquiry and reflection into teachers' own practices, allowing teachers to take risks, solve problems, and attend to dilemmas in their practice" (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, Gardner, & Espinoza, 2017). Because team teaching involves daily collaboration, observation, and learning in real-time, teachers can co-plan and co-teach a lesson while "simultaneously reflecting as a team and adjusting teaching to improve student learning" (Smith, Ralston, Naegele, & Waggoner, 2020). Team teaching encourages professional learning and improvement on a daily basis.

- **Collaboration -** Collaboration amongst teacher teams leads to teachers feeling less "isolated" than they do in a one-teacher one-classroom model (Christensen Institute, 2018). Teaming allows for educators to provide feedback, bounce ideas off of, and implement new strategies to improve practice with their teammates. "Research shows an increase in quality teaching as each teacher approaches topics from a different angle," and working as a team allows educators to reap the

benefits of seeing and sometimes adopting the viewpoints of their peers (Boyes, 2019).

Drawbacks

Differing Expectations & Styles

While different teaching styles can be beneficial for a classroom, it can also cause teachers to disagree with one another. Classroom management, instructional style, grading, and parent communication are all components that might vary in style from teacher to teacher and could make collaboration more difficult. For example, there are some teachers who take a more traditional approach to teaching and feel intimidated by, or just dislike, technology use in the classroom. On the other hand, some teachers are excited to use the latest and most innovative technology to aid in their instruction. Neither approach is necessarily right or wrong but the differing styles could make team teaching challenging.

Personality Clashes

Collaborating with other professionals can sometimes lead to personality clashes. Basically, everyone isn't going to necessarily like everyone else, and team teaching is no exception. Along with possible personality clashes, "the vulnerability of working alongside another colleague can cause teachers to worry about the fear of failure or humiliation" (Boyes, 2019). Some educators don't accept constructive feedback or interpret it as criticism, causing conflict amongst the team.

Increased Demands

Some teachers consider team teaching to be more demanding than solo teaching because your practice is essentially dependent on the input of other individuals. Boyes (2019) explains that team teaching "can be more demanding on a teacher's time and energy and finding a mutually agreeable time for planning and evaluation is sometimes a challenge." Team teaching cannot be successfully implemented without support from the building administrators, which includes master scheduling for collaboration time, as well as ongoing professional development surrounding collaborative teaching.

Reflection Questions

1. Think about a time when you were working with a group of students that needed significant academic or behavioral support. How might a team teaching approach have helped you in that situation?

2. Which beneficial teacher outcome do you identify as the biggest need for improvement in your practice? Do you feel that team teaching would be helpful in this area? Why or why not?

3. In looking at the drawbacks of team teaching, how might you solve the potential issues that could arise?

Team Teaching Models

Teaching Separately

Team teaching models vary in design, meaning some models include both teachers not only planning and evaluating the course, but also teaching it together, while other models allow for co-planning and evaluating, while teaching separately.

Grade-Level Teams

Grade-level teams are commonly found in elementary and middle schools. At the elementary school level, students are typically with one main teacher for all of their content area subjects but teachers still work with grade-level teams to plan units and content for their respective classrooms. At the middle school level, students typically go to different teachers for different subjects within their grade levels, and grade-level teaching teams are more interdisciplinary by nature. Although they are working as a team in planning and evaluating, there is usually only one content area teacher at a time teaching each class.

- **Subject Matter -** Dividing the work of a grade-level team by subject matter is one way that some teams choose to divide the workload. Even at the elementary level where teachers teach all of the subjects, teams can split up the lesson planning by subject. One teacher plans the instruction for English, one teacher plans for math, and so on, and then they share the lessons with their teammates (Mulvahill, 2020).

Dividing the work by subject matter allows for teachers to focus on more in-depth planning of 1-2 subjects, rather than having to plan activities and assessments for 4-5 subjects. In doing this, teachers are able to plan richer experiences for their students because they have more time to spend on the subjects that they are responsible for. Further, teachers can play to their strengths and plan for the subject where they feel most confident, while still having rigorous and engaging lessons for the subjects where they are less assured. This also reduces stress levels for teachers, allowing them to plan for fewer subjects (Mulvahill, 2020).

At the middle school level and in some elementary schools, teaching teams not only divide the planning by subject matter, but they also split up the instruction this way. This allows for students to see multiple teachers throughout their day. From an instructional standpoint, this gives students the opportunity to experience different points of view, as well as teaching styles.   Switching classes and teachers is also helpful when there is a challenging student-teacher relationship; moving to another teacher for part of the day can relieve some of the strain on those relationships.

- **Online Vs. In-Person -** Following over a year of mostly remote learning, many schools have switched to a hybrid model, requiring teachers to teach both online and in-person. Sometimes, teachers are required to teach online and in-person at the same time, which is a daunting task for one person. Team teaching allows for teachers to switch roles from in-person to online. "Some teams are having one instructor teach in-person in the morning, then teach online in the afternoon and vice versa for the other teacher," while some teams have one teacher teach entirely remote and the other teach entirely in person (Mulvahill, 2020).

Departmentalized Teams

- **By Subject -** While departmentalized teams can sometimes be found in K-8 schools, it is the predominant team model in high schools. "In a departmentalized environment, each teacher focuses on one area, during a pre-set period or block, so students are guaranteed that all subject areas are taught" by a subject-matter expert, with adequate time to cover the content (Hodgin, 2018). In most American high schools, teachers work together in different departments. For example, there is an English Department, Science Department, Math Department, and so on. Within each department, teachers collaborate to plan and teach their courses at different levels. One teacher might teach both 9th and 10th grade English while teaming with others in the English department to ensure that the content is sequential across courses.

- **By Level** - Departmentalized teams focus more on content area and less on grade level but sometimes there are grade level interdisciplinary teaching teams. An interdisciplinary team consists of teachers of different subject areas planning thematic units for their classes, and progressing through said units at the same pace. Interdisciplinary thematic units allow students to find connections and common themes across their classes. For example, a science teacher and a social studies teacher might plan a unit about genealogy, where the science teacher covers topics on heredity and genetics, and the social studies teacher focuses on students researching their own backgrounds. This topic can be easily integrated with English as well, by deep reading a memoir of a famous person looking into his or her own history.

Teaching Together: Equal Status Models

Equal Status Models can be implemented with both grade-level and departmentalized teaching teams but it includes two or more teachers, paraeducators, or related service providers teaching a class together. Several teaching formats are possible within this model. Specifically, multiple educators have the same status and level of responsibility, though potentially different roles depending on the class, for the students and the course itself (Simons, Coetzee, Baeten, & Schmulian, 2019). With the Equal Status Model, teachers can distribute responsibilities, delivery of content, and learning activities in the way that they see fit for each class. Some of the common teaching formats within this model include parallel teaching, sequential teaching, station teaching, and teaming (Simons, Coetzee, Baeten, & Schmulian).

Parallel Teaching

Parallel teaching occurs when teachers split the class into subgroups and they teach the same content at the same time. In this format, the teachers typically plan the lessons together and they might rotate between subgroups (Simons, Baeten., & Vanhees, 2018). "The class can be split randomly, according to learning profiles (e.g., reading levels) or behavior tendencies (e.g. separating students who tend to argue), or students can be strategically combined or distributed based on strengths, needs, or characteristics" (Enome, 2022). While the same content is being taught to both groups, specific activities and instructional approaches might vary depending on the needs of the two groups.

- **Benefits -** One of the primary benefits of parallel teaching is that it lowers the student-teacher ratio. Breaking the class into subgroups allows for small group instruction, which is beneficial for all learners and crucial for struggling learners (Cassel, 2019). When working with smaller groups, teachers are able to better differentiate, individualize, and tailor the instruction for varied levels of need, as well as monitor for student understanding. Likewise, smaller group sizes allow for more time for student questions, as well as a deeper dive into the content.

  Parallel teaching allows for groups to be strategically (and flexibly) planned, based on data and frequently changed, as needed. Teachers can use a variety of data to form groups, including but not limited to assessment (tests or assignments) data, observational data, or behavioral data. With parallel teaching, it can be beneficial to "to strategically combine or distribute students with various strengths, needs, or characteristics," rather than by ability level (Enome, 2022a).

- **Drawbacks & Challenges -** Sometimes parallel teaching can be logistically difficult, as collaborative planning time is often limited (Cassel, 2019). According to Rosenberg, Daigneau, and Galvez (2018), most American teachers in a "typical" district have 45-minutes or less per week of team planning time, which is not an adequate amount of time to plan quality lessons. In addition to time challenges, it can be difficult to find a space that allows for each group to function without being distracted by the other.

- **When to Use Parallel Teaching -** Parallel teaching should be used when a lower student-teacher ratio would be beneficial. For example, this strategy is useful for "extremely challenging" content because it allows teachers to really differentiate the instruction for their respective groups (Cassel, 2019). Additionally, it is a really useful model for re-teaching because teachers can group students and plan the lesson to meet them where they are at and fill in the gaps. Finally, parallel teaching is a good model for test review, as this model allows for students to ask questions and really home in on the content.

Station Teaching

Station teaching is when two educators simultaneously teach different lessons or conduct different learning activities related to the same content at learning stations throughout the classroom (Enome, 2022b). Teachers work together to plan teacher-led stations, in which the content is introduced and practiced, as well as independent stations, where students engage in additional practice and reinforcement activities

(Enome). Unlike parallel teaching, in which both teachers teach an entire lesson to different groups, station teaching allows teachers to focus more on a specific part of the lesson that they are covering at their station.

In this model, teachers can group students based on ability levels (homogeneous), cooperative groupings, or randomly. Depending on the specific activities, it often makes more sense to incorporate homogenous grouping so that instruction can be differentiated for the ability levels of each group during the teacher-led stations. Groups should also be fluid based on content and needs, and should not necessarily stay the same for every station teaching lesson. However, every group should visit each station for the same amount of time in the class period. While there are usually 3-5 stations, teachers can determine the exact number based on the amount of time in the period and how much time is needed at each station (Enome, 2022b).

- **Benefits -** Station teaching provides students with the opportunity for "repeated exposure" to the content, while using varied teaching techniques and different learning activities so it remains engaging (Enome, 2022b). When done properly, all stations should complement each other, so that knowledge and understanding of the material increases with each rotation. Station teaching allows students repeated exposure to content, guided practice with teachers, and then independent practice of learned skills.

  Station teaching allows for multiple modalities of learning, which is helpful for appealing to different learning styles. Teachers can set up stations that utilize technology, group work, manipulatives, and the list goes on. This gives students the opportunity to learn the skills and content in several different ways and potentially, with several different strategies to aid their learning.

- **Drawbacks & Challenges -** If transitions aren't practiced ahead of time, station teaching can become disorganized and chaotic. It is important to prevent chaos by providing clear directions for students, including visual supports with station names and student names to direct who goes where and when. Modeling and practicing what a smooth transition should look like is also helpful. Additionally, providing a "2-minute until" transition warning is helpful for all students, but it is especially helpful for students that struggle with transitions.

  Planning challenging, yet realistically independent activities at the student-led stations can also be a challenge for teachers. Independent activities should not be overly complex, as teachers will not be available to answer questions;

independent activities should be "rigorous" and "sustainable" (Enome, 2022b). Independent stations should not introduce new concepts but allow students to practice and reinforce what they already know. "With students actively engaged and self-monitoring in independent stations, teachers can focus on small group instruction and conferencing uninterrupted" (Enome).

- **When to Use Station Teaching -** Station teaching is another great option to use for reteaching, test reviews, filling in academic gaps, or when students are at very different levels because it allows for small groups and individualized learning. Stations allow students to "focus on one particular topic or type of question or skill," whether directly with the teacher or practicing at an independent station (American Institute for Research, 2020). Likewise, since there is always an independent station, station teaching works well when the concepts being taught aren't completely new.

  Station teaching is also a great option to include enrichment activities for one group, while providing remedial activities for another. Stations allow the teacher to provide students with an extra challenge or to provide additional help, without the stigma of helping students one-on-one or pulling them aside for small groups.

Teaming-Model

The teaming model probably requires the highest level of collaboration, as teacher teams co-plan, co-evaluate, and co-teach the class together, through dialogue, interaction, and debate (Schmulian & Coetzee, 2019). The teaming-model differs from sequential, station, and parallel teaching in that both teachers are front and center in the delivery of the core lesson. Teachers might discuss ideas, theories, and frameworks, and share responsibility for leading discussions, or "one teacher may speak while another demonstrates a concept or model" (Scmulian & Coetzee). Teachers might choose to break into groups for practice or activities but the meat of the lesson is delivered together.

- **Benefits -** When executed correctly, the teaming model can provide rich learning experiences for students. Teaming allows students to learn the content through the perspectives of two different teachers in real-time. Thus, students get to experience different pedagogies, methods, and explanations in one class. If a student does not understand the way one of the teachers explains a concept, the other teacher can add on or explain it differently to clarify confusion (Schmulian & Coetzee, 2019).

Dialogue is one of the most crucial parts of the teaming model and it can be used not only to improve the learning experience, but to enhance the classroom community as a whole. By creating a safe space for open discussion between teachers and students, team teaching "can produce a dialogic community among all participants in the classroom. When there are no longer individual sources of energy and knowledge, the dialogue involves everyone as learner and everyone as teacher" (Game & Metcalfe, 2020). With the teaming model, students observe teachers discussing and learning from one another without judgment, which allows students to feel more comfortable to do the same.

- **Drawbacks & Challenges -** There tends to be less structure in a teaming class because so much of it revolves around the interaction between teachers; while it can still be structured to an extent and highly educational, it can be fast-paced and less organized than other models. While differing viewpoints keeps things more interesting, students might have "difficulty in creating knowledge and meaning from different opinions and approaches to solving particular problems" (Schullman & Coetzee, 2019).

  A positive relationship and teaching "chemistry" is relatively important in a teaming model. Since there is a lot of dialogue, friendly debate, and bouncing ideas off one another, it is important that the teaching team members understand each other, remain on the same page and maintain a positive rapport. This is not necessarily a drawback of the teaming model, but rather it is something that teachers have to work on to build and sustain.

- **When to Use Teaming -** Teaming is a useful strategy when a lesson is enhanced by two viewpoints or two different strategies being presented (Model Teaching, 2019). Instruction that includes significant discussion, for both teachers and students, fits well within a teaming model. Teaming can be particularly useful if the lesson is meant to demonstrate interaction, such as in the case of a debate or a social skills lesson.

Reflection Questions

1. Which team teaching models, if any, have you observed or used in your own practice? Was this model effective for your specific learning goals?

2. Discuss parallel teaching, station teaching, and teaming; what do you anticipate would be the biggest challenges with each of these models?

Optional Activities

1. Design a lesson plan using one of the team teaching models discussed. Identify the topic of the lesson, potential activities, and the roles of you and your teammates.

2. As a group or individually, make a chart with the teaching models as section headers. Think back on lessons that you have taught in the past and organize them under the teaching model that you think could have improved the lessons. Discuss how and why you think this model would have improved the lesson.

   a. Bonus: Reteach the lesson using the model and reflect on the differences you see.

Team Teaching Implementation Strategies

Successful team teaching does not just happen naturally; it takes time, effort, and intent to make team teaching beneficial for both teachers and students.

Ongoing Collaboration & Check-ins

Having a teammate or teammates should be beneficial on both a professional and personal level, as you should learn from one another and support each other. During team planning periods, it is necessary to have some type of structure to ensure productivity. One way to do this is to have a "live" agenda in a Google Doc that team members can add to as needed, to make sure that important topics are covered. There will never be enough time to cover everything during planning periods, so checking in with each other throughout the day and week is also necessary.

It's also important to "check in with each other on a personal level and see how you might support each other for a successful day" (Boyes, 2019). Providing extra support on a bad day or just offering an ear to listen is instrumental in sustaining a strong team. Working together means being flexible, compassionate, and understanding of the personal and professional needs of your teammate.

Clear Communication

Clear and constant communication will enhance teaching teams. Communication does not always have to be in a formal planning meeting, but it can also happen on a lunch break, passing period, through text messages, or through email. It's important to be straightforward and clear with expectations surrounding response times or necessary next steps. Likewise, decide on communication boundaries, such as not texting or calling after a certain time, or no work-talk on weekends. Finally, communicate clearly about "how you will give feedback to each other" in order to keep a constructive relationship (Boyes, 2019).

Joint Ownership

Experts discuss the importance of establishing parity in a team taught classroom, defined as "equality between the two teachers delivering instruction to the same class" (Blackley, 2019). Parity is extremely important in a teaching dynamic, particularly in presenting an equal and united front to students. Blackley suggests a few small but impactful ways to establish parity: Both teachers being in the classroom for Open House night, using the pronouns "we" and "us" when talking to students and parents, and ensuring that both educators have a physical space for their materials.

In a team taught classroom, it's important to remember that all students are "our" students and no student is just "my" student. Even if one teacher is a specialist, such as a Special Education or an ESL teacher, students should not question why a specialist is there, and should view both teachers equally as their teachers (Blackley, 2019). Both teachers should work with all students in the room, rather than working more or less with certain groups.

Defined Roles & Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities might change from lesson to lesson but clearly defining who is responsible for what and when is crucial for planning purposes. Clearly delineated and mutually agreed upon roles prevent team members from feeling like they are doing everything, or like their partner/s are overstepping. Team members should feel comfortable with their roles in behavior management, classroom procedures, grading, and student/parent communication.

Reflection Questions

1. If you had to choose one, which strategy do you think is most important in making a team teaching relationship work? Why do you feel this way?

2. What are some other strategies that aren't listed that you think would be important in fostering a team relationship?

3. What are some issues that might arise if a team does not define roles and responsibilities together?

Optional Activities

1. With a partner or individually, design a team teaching contract. Your contract should include: expectations (for each other, for student learning), roles/responsibilities for each teacher, classroom procedures, communication (how, when, limits, parents), planning (when, what to do if someone is absent), and grading policies.

   b. Include any other details that you feel are pertinent to a team teaching relationship.

Supports Needed

Scheduling

Educator teams require sufficient time to collaborate, analyze data, and evaluate. Without planning time, the team cannot function successfully. Leaders at the building and district levels need to "recognize the teams as functional units and provide them sufficient autonomy to operate in the service of their shared students," meaning intentional scheduling for team-planning and collaboration must be made a priority (Mary Lou Folton, 2022a). Scheduling is typically done at the building level, led by department heads and administration, but it is often done in such a way that leaves teachers searching for co-planning time.

Creative Scheduling

Scheduling is a challenge because there are many components that must fit into a school day, and only limited time for everything; however, scheduling does not have to be a barrier to team teaching. It just means that administrators must be intentional and creative with scheduling. For example, SPARK School in Tempe, Arizona, is committed to the team teaching approach and has created a daily schedule that allows for team planning for 50-minutes in the morning before students arrive (8:00-8:50 AM), and an additional minutes as needed (Mary Lou Folton Teachers College, 2022b). Lander Elementary School in Ohio incorporated creative scheduling for the 2021-22 school year by creating a "specials day" every six days, where each grade level has an entire day of special activities and grade level teams engage in collaboration and professional development. This flexible scheduling created a "short cycle of iteration where we create instruction; we then employ that instruction, and then we have a chance six days later to kind of reflect on that instruction and make tweaks" (Education Resource Strategies, 2021). Other possibilities for scheduling include weekly early release days for students, late-start days for students, or weekly enrichment periods taught by other professionals.

Complementary Teams

To meet the diverse needs of students, we need diverse teams of educators with "complementary strengths" or "distributed expertise" (Mary Lou Folton Teachers College, 2022c). Members of the team do not need to be equally good at every aspect of their jobs, but rather be grouped in a way that complements individual skills and strengths. For example, one member of the team "may be a certified special educator and speak fluent Spanish; another might be an excellent writing instructor skillful in creating multidisciplinary, project-based units; and a third might have expertise in the social sciences and a passion for trauma-informed pedagogy and restorative approaches" (Mary Lou Folton).

If teams are intentionally built with distributed expertise, creating roles within the teams becomes second nature as well. Roles can be filled based on individual strengths, such as a math or English language arts (ELA) lead, social-emotional coordinator, data expert, and so on.

Professional Development & Coaching

Team teaching requires a certain skill set that does not necessarily come naturally to everyone, which is why professional development and/or coaching for teaching teams is crucial. Professional development and coaching can help teams become familiar with the team teaching models, strategies for implementation, data analysis, and best use of collaborative planning time. Public Impact and the Clayton Christensen Institute performed a study of eight school districts that implemented team-based models and all of these schools "had cultures of intensive coaching, with weekly or even daily observations and feedback" (Arnett & Hassle, 2018). These teams allowed for the creation of new roles and opportunities for "educators to take on increasing responsibilities as their expertise grew — often for increased pay, within regular school budgets — without having to leave the classroom" (Arnett & Hassle). This ongoing professional development and coaching creates a "train the trainer" model, which actually makes the team teaching model more sustainable as well.

Reflection Questions

1. Reflecting on your own practice, which support do you think would benefit you the most if you were to be on a teaching team? Why do you feel this way?

2. Which support do you see as the biggest challenge to fulfill in a school environment? What can teachers and administrators do to overcome this challenge?

3. What other supports do you think you would need in order to be successful on a teaching team?

Optional Activities

1. Using your school's hours, create a mock master schedule that would lend itself to team teaching.

    a. Discuss if this schedule is practical and could really be used in practice. Why or why not?

Summary

- <u>Team teaching</u> is an educational model used in some K-12 schools, in which multiple teachers collaborate in the planning, implementing, and evaluation of a class or classes (Simons, 2019).

    - Some models include teachers that work together behind the scenes but teach the classes alone, and other models have teachers plan together and teach the classes together

    - Frequently used equal status team teaching models include parallel teaching, station teaching, and the teaming-model

- <u>Benefits</u> of team teaching include:

    - Increased student achievement and engagement, including ELLs and students with disabilities

    - Improved outcomes for teachers, including less stress, personalized professional learning, and increased collaboration with colleagues

    - Increased equity for students

- <u>Drawbacks</u> of team teaching include:

    - Personality and style clashes

    - Increased demands

- Team teaching won't work without effort and intent; such <u>strategies</u> include:

    - Ongoing planning and collaboration

    - Clear communication

    - Clearly defined roles and responsibilities

    - Joint ownership

- Team teaching requires <u>support</u> from administration, including:

    - Scheduling with co-planning times built in

    - Complementary teams

    - Ongoing coaching and professional development

Case Study

Mr. Fisher's elementary school is piloting a Team Teaching framework for the first time this year. Mr. Fisher has been a certified elementary (K-5) generalist teacher for 10-years and has taught 5th grade in the traditional one-teacher one-classroom model for the last 7 years. He is comfortable with all of the content areas but prefers math and science to ELA and social studies. This year, Mr. Fisher is on a team with one other elementary generalist teacher, one interventionist and one ESL teacher. Mr. Fisher plans and teaches math and science with the interventionist, Mrs. Robin, while the other generalist covers ELA and social studies with the ESL teacher. The whole team plans for and implements social and emotional learning (SEL) with their homeroom classes.

Although all experienced educators, none of them has worked in a team teaching situation before. The team has 1-hour daily for team planning, 45-minutes daily for individual planning and 45-minutes on Friday afternoons for team data analysis. While the team appreciates the collaboration, they are a little lost on what to discuss during planning time, unless a specific issue arises.

This week Mr. Fisher and Mrs. Robin's first period math class students took their mid-unit test on comparing decimals. The results were mixed: About 1/3 of the class mastered it, 1/3 were slightly below expectations (made a few common mistakes), and 1/3 were either inconsistent or well below expectations. Mr. Fisher and Mrs. Robin will discuss the test results at the data meeting tomorrow to determine how to best meet the needs of all of their students.

Reflection Questions

1. What type of support would best provide the greatest benefit for Mr. Fisher's team? What might this support look like in practice?

2. Considering the test results from Mr. Fisher and Mrs. Robin's class, what team teaching model would be most effective for the next class? Why?

3. Considering your answer for #2, why is this model more appropriate than the one-teacher one-classroom model?

Key Terms

<u>Students with Disabilities</u> - Refers to students who qualify for specialized services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and have an Individualized Education Program (IEP)

<u>English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher</u> - Certified teacher that specializes in helping non-native English speakers access the curriculum and improve their English skills

<u>English Language Learners (ELL)</u> - Refers to a student that is learning English as a second language, typically requiring additional supports so access the curriculum

<u>Parallel Teaching</u> - Team teaching model in which teachers split up the class into subgroups and they teach the same content at the same time

<u>Station Teaching</u> - Team teaching model in which two educators simultaneously teach different lessons or conduct different learning activities related to the same content at learning stations throughout the classroom (Enome, 2022b)

<u>Teaming Model</u> - Team teaching model in which educators co-plan, co-evaluate, and co-teach the class together, through dialogue, interaction, and debate (Schmulian & Coetzee, 2019)

<u>Team Teaching</u> - Sometimes referred to as collaborative teaching or co-teaching, an educational model used in some K-12 schools, in which multiple teachers collaborate in the planning, implementing, and evaluation of a class or classes

References

American Institutes for Research [AIR]. (2020). *Personalizing student learning with station rotations: Practitioner brief.* https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Station-Rotation-Practitioner-Brief-Final-July-2020.pdf

Cassel, S. (2019). *How to choose a co-teaching model*. George Lucas Educational Foundation. https://www.edutopia.org/article/how-choose-co-teaching-model

Cooley, M. (2021). *Co-teaching to benefit special education and general education students of all ages.* University of Wisconsin-Platteville. https://minds.wisconsin.edu/bitstream/handle/1793/81340/Cooley%2C%20Megan.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M.E., Gardner, M., & Espinoza, D. (2017, June). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Effective_Teacher_Professional_Development_REPORT.pdf

Education Resource Strategies. (2021, March 26). *Innovative schedules that focus on teaching teams.* https://www.erstrategies.org/news/innovative_schedules_that_focused_on_teaching_teams

Enome. (2022a). *Parallel teaching.* GoalBook. https://goalbookapp.com/toolkit/v/strategy/parallel-teaching

Enome. (2022b). *Co-Teaching Stations.* GoalBook. https://goalbookapp.com/toolkit/v/strategy/station-teaching

Game, A. & Metcalfe, A. (2017). Dialogue and team teaching. In D.H. Jarvis & M. Kariuki (Eds.), *Co-Teaching in Higher Education* (pp. 13-30). University of Toronto Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctv1n358rh.6

Hodgin, M. (2018). *How departmentalized schools prepare students for the future.* Oak Knoll School. http://blog.oakknoll.org/how-departmentalized-schools-prepare-students-for-the-future

Mary Lou Folton Teachers College. (2022a). *Specializations and advancement pathways*. Arizona State University. https://workforce.education.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Elements-brief-Specializations-and-advancement-pathways-v3-1.pdf

Mary Lou Folton Teachers College. (2022b). *SPARK School: Spotlight on the schedule.* Arizona State University. https://workforce.education.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/SPARK-School-Spotlight-on-the-Schedule.pdf

Mary Lou Folton Teachers College. (2022c). *Teams of educators with distributed expertise.* Arizona State University. https://workforce.education.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Elements-brief-Teams-of-educators-with-distributed-expertise-v3.pdf

Model Teaching. (2019). *Station teaching and alternative teaching: two effective co-teaching instructional models*. https://www.modelteaching.com/education-articles/teaching-strategies/station-teaching-and-alternative-teaching-two-effective-co-teaching-instructional-models

Mulvahill, E. (2020). *One upside of 2020? Grade level teams are collaborating more than ever*. WeAreTeachers. https://www.weareteachers.com/grade-level-teams-collaborating/

Rosenberg, Daigneau, & Galvez. (2018, January). *Finding time for collaborative planning.* Education Resource Strategies. https://www.erstrategies.org/cms/files /3876-finding-time-for-collaborative-planning.pdf

Schaefer, K. (2021). *America's public school teachers are far less racially and ethnically diverse than their students.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/ 2021/12/10/americas-public-school-teachers-are-far-less-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-than-their-students/

Schmulian, A. & Coetzee, S. A. (2019). To team or not to team: An exploration of undergraduate students' perspectives of two teachers simultaneously in class. *Innovative Higher Education, 44,* 317-328. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-019-9466-2

Simons, M., Baeten, M., & Vanhees, C. (2018). Team teaching during field experiences in teacher education: investigating student teachers' experiences with parallel and sequential teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education, 71*(1), 24-40. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487118789064

Simons, M, Coetzee, S., Baeten, M., & Schmulian, A. (2019). Measuring learners' perceptions of a team taught learning environment: development and validation of the Learners' Team Teaching Perceptions Questionnaire (LTTPQ). *Learning Environments Research, 23*, 45-58.https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-019-09290-1

Solheim, O.J., & Opheim, V. (2019). Beyond class size reduction: Towards more flexible ways of implementing a reduced pupil–teacher ratio. *International Journal for Educational Research, 96,* 146-153. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2018.10.008

United States Department of Education [USDOE]. (2020, September). *Race and ethnicity of public school teachers and their students*. National Center for Educational Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020103/index.asp

Walker, T. (2022, February 1). *Survey: Alarming Number of Educators May Soon Leave the Profession*. National Education Association [NEA]. https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/survey-alarming-number-educators-may-soon-leave-profession

Wisconsin Center for Educational Research [WCER]. (2020, July). *COLLABORATION: Working together to serve multilingual learners.* WIDA. https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/ resource/FocusBulletin-Collaboration.pdf