Chapter 3
Pushing In:
A Guide to Enhancing Co-Teaching in the Inclusion Classroom With ESL Students

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the research that encourages co-teaching between the content specialist and the ESL teacher as a delivery model. Many schools are making a shift from ESL pull-out to ESL – mainstream co-teaching, or pushing in, because research suggests that co-teaching can be one of the most effective ways to meet the needs of the growing ESL population (Causton-Theoharis, 2008; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2008; Young, Smith, 2006). Collaborative teaching relationships are productive and rewarding, but of greater importance, ELL student achievement increases substantially in co-taught classes. Suggestions for enhancing the co-teaching experience for teachers and students is disseminated and analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

While co-teaching has been used in other fields, it is a relatively new concept in the field of English as a Second Language (ESL). Not all of the older models of co-teaching designed for special education co-teachers apply to teachers working with students who are learning a language and learning content at the same time. English Language Learners (ELL) generally need different types of accommodations to bridge a language gap than those students who need accommodations to bridge a learning gap. Unfortunately, ESL teachers are still fighting a perception among colleagues and administrators that ELL students can benefit more from a pull-out program when the research clearly does not support this. Isolating these students from their peers denies them equal access to content and access to English-speaking peers. As the populations of ELL students steadily increases in more and more districts, the idea of using co-teaching to meet the needs of immigrant students is also growing. Bridging the learning gap is only one part of the problem. Bringing all professionals to the point of understanding the advantages of co-teaching is also another part of the problem. Content area teachers, especially, need to understand

the role and expertise offered in a co-teaching situation by the ESL teacher and how best to implement strategies that enhance success for all students, but especially the ELL students. This chapter will examine the research supporting the co-teaching model for ESL inclusion classes and provide strategies for a successful co-teaching partnership to benefit all students.

BACKGROUND

In a co-taught classroom, ELL students and their English-speaking peers both learn required curriculum together. When the classroom remains heterogeneous, ELLs are given the opportunity to work with a variety of students with different skill sets and with students who can model English language fluency. This is contrary to the idea that ELL need remedial or pullout programs. Pull out programs force ELLs to be grouped with other youngsters who are struggling and have little English language proficiency (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2008). This makes both language and social growth difficult.

Co-teaching research is very new in the ESL field, but the results of research are promising. While the research on the effects of co-teaching in ESL/ content classes is sparse, there are a few studies that show success in the use of co-teaching as a successful method of delivery. Pardini (2006) reported on the experiences in the St. Paul, MN Public Schools in moving services for students who are English language learners from separate settings to inclusion classes. With the largest populations of Somali and Hmong in the United States and a rapidly increasing Hispanic population, the district was offering ELL services in almost every school in the district. As a means of increasing the efficiency of delivery and the effectiveness of the students' learning, the district carefully constructed co-taught inclusion classes. The results of their decision to employ co-teaching are evident in the achievement data for the ELL student group. During 2003-2005, the co-taught time period covered by the report, the gap in reading achievement between other students and ELLs fell from 13 percent to 6 percent on high stakes testing; the gap in math fell from 6.7 percent to 2.7 percent (Pardi, 2006, 25). The results achieved by the district are among the best in the country for this student group. English-language learners in St. Paul are catching up to native English-speakers on key measures of academic achievement (Zehr, 2006).

Similar success was shown in Colorado and Idaho. After just one year of implementing this model in Colorado, Field Elementary School's median student growth percentile moved from a rating of "Approaching" to "Exceeds," the highest rating possible in Colorado (Beninghof, Leensvaart, 2016). In Idaho, The co-teaching model has also led to gains in student achievement. Brady Dickison, a prinicpal at Canyon Ridge High School, explained that "The ESL teacher makes sure concepts are explained in a way that all students understand (Wooton, 2013, 70)". ELL students who didn't pass the Idaho Standards Achievement test in math last year when they were in pull out classes showed growth when they took the test in the fall after being a year in a co-taught class (Wooton, 2013)

Additionally, York-Barr et al. (2007) conducted a 3-year case study of co-teaching in an urban elementary school in the mid-western United States. This study examined teacher perceptions of co-teaching as well as the model's impact on ELL students' achievement on standardized assessments in reading and math. Their conclusions cite ''considerable positive academic gains in both reading and math'' for ELLs (York-Barr et al., 2007, p.301). McDuffie et al. (2009) examined the differential effects of intervention in co-taught and non-co-taught settings in co-taught versus non co-taught classes. Two hundred and three

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