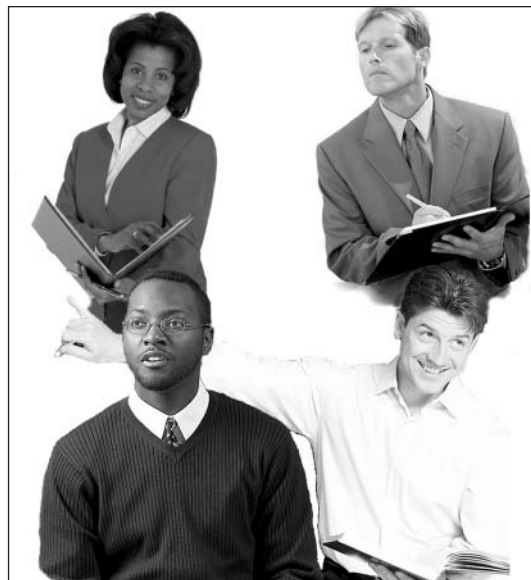


Observing Co-Teaching: What to Ask For, Look For, and Listen For

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Keywords

co-teaching, collaboration, general and special education, collaboration processes, administration, personnel preparation, professional development

The era of accountability established by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 has focused much attention on the efforts and actions of the nation's teachers (NCLB, 2001). As students take standardized tests to determine whether they have indeed achieved competence in the identified state and federal standards, stakes are high for both students and teachers. If students do not do well, schools are identified as "program improvement schools," and the efficacy of teachers is questioned. As the stakes continue to rise, another educational practice also continues to increase and affect those results. Inclusive education is the result of a philosophy that students with disabilities deserve the right to be educated alongside their peers in general education classes as well as the mandate in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA; 2004), which requires that students with disabilities be instructed in their least restrictive environment, most often considered the general education classroom. Thus, students with and without disabilities are now taught together,

as their special and general education teachers strive to ensure that the general education curriculum to which students are being introduced is not only accessed but in fact mastered to the degree that students pass the requisite tests.

As a response to this responsibility, schools have embraced the need for true collaboration among general and special educators. Many believe that if educators with varying areas of expertise and frames of reference are able to come together and collaborate on a daily basis in the same classroom, all students will benefit more: socially, behaviorally, and perhaps most important, academically. Thus, co-teaching between general education teachers and special service providers (i.e., special education teachers, Title I teachers, speech

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pathologists, academic coaches) has increasingly become the service delivery approach of choice for many of the nation's inclusive classrooms.

Co-teaching requires special and general educators to “co-plan, co-instruct, and co-assess” (Murawski, 2003, p. 10) on a regular basis. These teachers collaborate with one another to teach students with and without disabilities in the same classroom, focusing on the use of collaborative and differentiated instructional strategies to increase the accessibility of the content for all learners. Benefits cited for students in co-taught classes include increased individual attention (Zigmond, Magiera, & Matta, 2003), reduced negative behaviors (Dieker, 2001), improved self-esteem and social skills (Walther-Thomas, 1997), and increased academic achievement (Murawski, 2006; Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002). Teachers also seem to benefit from this service delivery approach, with identified benefits of learning from one another (Weiss & Brigham, 2000), shared accountability and responsibility (Friend & Cook, 2007), reduced burnout and improved morale (Weiss & Brigham, 2000), and the use of increased instructional strategies to differentiate for varied learners (Murawski & Dieker, 2004; O'Rourke, 2007). Certainly, the more teachers benefit and continue to learn, the more their students with special needs can likewise benefit.

Naturally, there are also identified barriers to this approach. Analyses of co-teaching practices cite a lack of training, a concern about effective scheduling practices, a lack of administrative support, and a need for time to engage in co-planning efforts (Correa, Jones, Thomas, & Morsink, 2005; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Mastropieri et al., 2005; Trent et al., 2003). In addition, when co-teaching is not done effectively, special educators complain that they are treated as “glorified assistants” who are unable to make any true impact on the general education curriculum or pedagogy (Murawski, 2009; Walther-Thomas, 1997). In cases such as these, where the special educator is merely a support to the general educator, the benefits of co-teaching are not observed, because true co-teaching is not in place. Murawski (2008) stated that these situations are examples of in-class support by special educators and not examples of true co-teaching.

Weiss and Lloyd's (2002) study identified that a majority of observed teams primarily used a one-teach/one-support approach to co-teaching (i.e., the special educator was always in the support role). If this is evidence of a national trend, administrators are entitled to question this approach. By definition, co-teaching involves having two credentialed teachers in the same classroom rather than one teacher alone or a teacher and a paraprofessional. Thus, administrators have the right to ensure that teachers are engaged in something that is substantively different from that of more traditional approaches. Indeed, they have the responsibility to ensure that co-teachers are engaged in those collaborative activities that distinguish co-teaching from the type of traditional instruction that has not been effective in meeting student needs in the past. If two teachers together are not able to help students

with disabilities who have traditionally struggled to master grade-level content, what is not happening? What supports do they need to more effectively teach these students?

What Is Required for Effective Co-Teaching?

Co-teaching requires three components: co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing. Without all three, co-teaching is not occurring. However, teachers and administrators alike may question what actually constitutes a shared lesson. Is it sufficient for teachers to agree on a lesson one teacher has already taught before? Can teachers agree to take care of their own kids, as long as the students are in the same classroom? This section clarifies what is required of each of the three components to ensure that teachers and observers know how to maximize effectiveness in the co-taught inclusive classroom.

Co-Planning

Without co-planning, teachers are at best working together in a parallel or reactive manner. Often the special educator enters the room and asks, “So, what are we doing today?” Because special educators are usually not expected to be the content experts, this can often put them at a disadvantage, as they spend the class time catching up, figuring out the instruction, and later remediating when students are not able to access the instruction as originally presented. In other situations, the extent of co-planning is the general and special educator taking a typical lesson plan and simply determining which teacher will do which part. This can often result in both teachers' simply splitting up a lesson and delivering it exactly as the general educator would have, were he or she alone. This can lead to the frequently asked question, “What is special about special education?”

The purpose of co-planning is for the special educator to have proactive input into the instruction. By using his or her expertise in differentiation, accommodations, positive behavior support, and pedagogy, a lesson can be created that will enable more of the students to access and learn the curriculum the first time it is presented (Murawski, 2009). Students with disabilities can be successful with general education content if their specific areas of need are addressed proactively by both teachers.

Co-Instructing

This is the in-the-classroom part. When two teachers with varying areas of expertise collaborate to provide quality instruction, the result can be inspiring. On the contrary, when two adults who do not believe in co-teaching or who do not respect one another as professionals are physically in the same classroom and do not interact, the result is often disheartening, discouraging, and ultimately a complete waste

of time for them and the students. Although it is fairly easy to determine those teachers who are dynamic together and those who are apathetic together, a large continuum looms in the middle with teachers who are unclear as to how to share the classroom stage.

Teachers who co-teach well together are those who take advantage of the fact that there are two adults in the room. They engage students actively, use a variety of co-teaching approaches to regroup students, collect and share assessment information to better individualize for students' needs, and are willing to try new things. These teachers communicate with one another during instruction and, within a classroom structure that is supportive of students, are also flexible to meet students' changing needs. It is clear that the classroom, as well as all the students in it, belong to them both and that they are both able to provide substantive instruction that maximizes their areas of expertise. Instruction does not look the same as in any general class. The input of the special educator is clear, resulting in strategies, mnemonics, and differentiated instruction. In a perfectly co-taught classroom, one would see two teachers laughing and enjoying each other while students are clearly learning and benefiting from the positive instructional environment.

Co-Assessing

Co-teachers should never view students as a "my kids" and "your kids" situation. This extends to assessment, evaluation, and grading as well. General educators and special service providers have different frames of reference that will affect the way they view assessments. General educators are typically more well versed in standards and whole-class assessments, whereas their special education counterparts often are more familiar with individualized and/or alternative assessments. For students with identified disabilities, this combination comes in handy given the standards-focused nature of NCLB (NCLB, 2001) and the individualized focus of IDEIA (IDEIA, 2004). Working together, co-teachers can ensure that they are able to assess what students actually know as well as what they are able to demonstrate on a standardized or even high-stakes assessment.

There are myriad ways co-teachers can co-assess; being aware and open to them is crucial. Co-teachers should be able to describe or demonstrate ways in which they accommodate, provide alternative assessments, and otherwise treat students as individuals in determining their mastery of content standards and curriculum. How can administrators assess the effectiveness of co-teachers? Certainly looking at student grades is an indicator of co-teaching effectiveness (i.e., are students with disabilities failing at a greater rate than typical students?), but that should not be the only method of assessment. Student improvement comes in a variety of forms. Just as co-teachers need to be open to various methods of assessment, observers likewise need to know the variety of ways

to determine the effectiveness of the two teachers in the inclusive classroom.

The Role of the Observer

Students with disabilities, those with English language needs, those who are gifted, and the typical learners in any classroom deserve to have instruction provided that meets their individual learning needs. There is a wide variety of literature on learning styles, multiple intelligences, and brain-based instruction. Strong teachers recognize that each student has a different learning profile and that each student deserves an education that matches his or her profile (Lavoie, 2007; Levine, 2002). To address those various learning profiles alone in the classroom is daunting, but to do it with a partner is exciting. Whereas co-teaching enables two teachers to collaborate in an effort to do this type of differentiated instruction, administrators are relegated to the role of supervisor, mentor, and support provider for those teachers, for whom this may be a new process. In addition, while the teachers themselves are struggling to understand their collaborative role in the classroom, many supervisors also have not received sufficient instruction on what they should be seeing in the effective co-taught classroom—despite the fact that their role is to observe, document, give feedback, and be instructional leaders.

Administrators and other observers need to be able to walk into a classroom knowing what the goal of the observation is and then be able to clearly describe what they want to collect, see, and hear (Hopkins, 2006). Observation literature indicates that to maximize feedback provided by observers, data need to be descriptive rather than evaluative (Friend & Cook, 2007). The major aim of this column is to provide specific items for administrators to ask for, look for, and listen for when observing co-teachers to assess their collaborative activities and, more important, to help guide them in their efforts to shape and improve their teaching. Ultimately, the goal is to improve the learning of students with and without disabilities by providing constructive feedback to the teachers working together in the inclusive classroom.

What Do I Ask For?

Ask-for items are an important first step in ensuring co-teaching accountability. The documentation of action has always been an important component of demonstrating treatment integrity. In fact, Gresham (1989) described treatment integrity as "ensuring that the intervention has been implemented as intended" (p. 27). In this case, it is critical for administrators and other evaluators to begin the process of assessment and feedback by collecting data.

Prior to observing co-teachers in the classroom, administrators should ask for documentation that enables them to begin appraisal of the three aspects that ensure effective co-teaching: co-planning, co-instruction, and co-assessment. Figure 1 lists

CO-TEACHING CHECKLIST				
General Educator: _____		Special Educator: _____		
Observer: _____		Date/Time: _____		
To demonstrate the following aspects of Co-Teaching:	ASK FOR ITEMS	0 – Didn't See It 1 – Saw an Attempt 2 – Saw It Done Well		
CO-PLANNING	Example	0	1	2
Lesson Plans	Lesson plans should demonstrate that both teachers have had input in instructional planning and will actively engage all students at the appropriate levels. The CTSS© Teachers' Toolbox (www.coteachsolutions.com) and the Co-Teaching Lesson Plan book (www.nprinc.com) are excellent resources for co-planning.			
Modified Materials/ Syllabi	Co-teachers who have planned together proactively will have materials ready prior to the lesson. These may include books on tape, modified assignments, close-captioned video, manipulatives, etc.			
Letters Home/Syllabi	All materials that are sent home to parents/guardians can help demonstrate that co-teachers are engaged in co-planning. They should be co-signed and express parity between teachers.			
SHARE Worksheets	Co-teachers should have completed the SHARE worksheets recommended by Murawski (2003) and Murawski and Dieker (2004).			
Problem-Solving Worksheet	Co-teachers should be able to provide evidence of problem-solving. They can use a variety of formats (notes from planning) to work through major problems together.			
CO-INSTRUCTING	What Items Should Include	0	1	2
Behavior Documentation	Co-teachers should be able to produce documentation of data they collect while co-teaching. This documentation could include behaviors, homework, tardiness, social skills, classwork and/or participation in data collection.			
Tiered Lessons	Co-teachers should be able to demonstrate how lessons are tiered to provide differentiated instruction to a variety of individual learners. Lessons should address the high, average, and low achievers.			
Class Notes	Class notes (indicate what was taught during the class & specifically what was emphasized). They also include mnemonics taught, and in some cases, modifications made.			
CO-INSTRUCTING	What Items Should Include	0	1	2
Grade Book	Administrators can ask co-teachers to provide a copy of their grade books. Even if one teacher does the actual recording of the grades, it should be evident that both teachers had a hand in grading and communicating about assessments through notes or assignments.			
Accommodated Assignments	Assignments and assessments need to be tailored to individual needs. Co-teachers should be able to provide copies of modified tests, examples of accommodations given to student with special needs, and lists of IEP requirements.			
Description of How Students Are Individually Graded	Co-teachers should have proactively discussed grading and how they will accommodate different learners. They may even have documentation of when they called or wrote parents to inform them of how the student with special needs would be graded in the class.			

Figure 1. Ask-for items

items that can be collected to provide feedback on these three areas. For each of these components, items are identified that will aid administrators in capturing a better picture of the areas in which co-teachers are excelling or struggling. Ask-for items should be assessed on an ongoing basis but need not be collected for every observation. For example, some items (e.g., a letter home to parents) may need to be seen only once, whereas other items (e.g., lesson plans) may be requested at various times throughout the year.

There are four ask-for items that are suggested for administrators to document co-planning. The first is the lesson plan itself. Whatever the choice of lesson plan format, as administrators look at the lesson plan, they need to ask themselves, "Do I see the impact of the special educator? Are lessons tiered, scaffolded, and/or differentiated? Is the role of each teacher clear?" (Wilson, 2005)

The second suggested item is an example of assignments that have been differentiated to support individualized learning, especially those that are clearly addressing students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. This provides observers with a way to assess the extent to which co-teachers are differentiating to meet student needs.

Third, administrators can ask for letters or syllabi that go to parents. Are both teachers' names on them? Is it clear that both teachers had input and are acting as a team? These permanent product data help observers determine how teachers are demonstrating their parity to each other, students, and families. In addition, it helps supervisors see how the co-teaching arrangement has been explained to parents. Parental support is a critical aspect to meeting student needs, especially for those students with disabilities. Reaching out in this way helps families recognize that there are two teachers equally helping their child succeed in the classroom.

Fourth, the SHARE worksheet (Murawski, 2003; Murawski & Dieker, 2004) is a tool that enables teachers to share their expectations, pet peeves, and preferences with one another prior to working together. SHARE stands for sharing hopes, attitudes, responsibilities, and expectations, which is what co-teachers should do proactively. Having a completed SHARE worksheet (see Figure 2) by both teachers would demonstrate to an administrator that co-teachers have jointly determined their discipline, grading, homework, and class work policies.

There are multiple items administrators can ask for prior to observing a lesson that demonstrate ongoing co-instruction. Three of these examples are adapted materials, documentation of behavior management, and copies of student class notes. Adapted materials demonstrate to administrators that co-teachers are differentiating their instruction to meet the needs of the different learners. A lack of such materials may indicate that students with disabilities are not receiving the accommodations or adaptations to which they may be legally entitled.

The documentation of behavior gives evidence of how co-teachers are using their time, especially in a one-teach/one-support approach (Friend & Cook, 2007; Murawski,

2006). Effective co-teachers recognize that behavioral or social skill challenges are frequently concomitant with learning challenges, and thus they need to have proactively planned for how they will work together to help students both behaviorally and academically. Shared data collection on behavior can help create a more effective classroom management system but is also helpful for documenting improvement of IEP goals and objectives.

Finally, copies of student notes provide a student perspective of what is being taught and how it is being taught. A positive example may include an administrator who asks for student notes and receives them in a variety of formats (e.g., on a thumb drive, using a cloze procedure, with a graphic organizer, on a PowerPoint printout, or even with pictures or mnemonics drawn on them). This would indicate that the teachers of the co-taught class have recognized that students learn in a variety of ways and have addressed that diversity in their original direct instruction of the content.

Examples of alternative assignments, tiered products, and accommodated assessments can be collected to show how teachers have worked collaboratively to co-assess students as a means to truly demonstrate their learning in an area. Any of these items can be collected to show the different ways teachers are checking for understanding, modifying instruction as needed, and adapting to the various learning needs of the students. Teachers may work together to assess students' final products in comparison to a standard while also giving credit for the process the students engaged in to create the product. Alternately, they may choose simply to weight student work differently so that whereas paper-and-pencil tests count a large percentage for the majority of students, they may count less toward the final grade for students with specific disabilities (Struyk et al., 1994). There are a variety of ways to grade students. What needs to be emphasized is that co-teachers should not take an "I'll grade mine, you grade yours" approach.

An additional component of co-assessing relates to the difficulties inherent in identifying children with learning disabilities, behavioral needs, English language needs, and those who are gifted. Response to intervention (RTI) is one method by which teachers are asked to proactively work collaboratively to ensure that research-based high-quality instruction and interventions are available to all students (Bender & Shores, 2007). That, of course, is easier said than done. Ongoing assessment is a major aspect of RTI and requires the input of both the general and special educators in many cases. Although this column is not focused on RTI, it is important to note that identifying and subsequently addressing the various needs of learners in a co-taught and inclusive class is a task that more and more general educators will find themselves facing as well. The collaboration and support provided through co-teaching is one that, when done well, can significantly add to the success of RTI and other methods of assessing, identifying, and teaching a wide range of students (Murawski & Hughes, 2009).

S.H.A.R.E. Worksheet

Sharing Hopes, Attitudes, Responsibilities, and Expectations
(Murawski, 2003; Murawski & Dieker, 2004)

Directions: Take a few minutes to individually complete this worksheet. Be honest in your responses. After completing it individually, share the responses with your co-teaching partner by taking turns reading the responses. Do not use this time to comment on your partner's responses — merely read. After reading through the responses, take a moment or two to jot down any thoughts you have regarding what your partner has said. Then, come back together and begin to share reactions to the responses. Your goal is to either (a) Agree, (b) Compromise, or (c) Agree to Disagree.

1. Right now, the main **hope** I have regarding this co-teaching situation is:

2. My **attitude**/philosophy regarding teaching students with disabilities in a general education classroom is:

3. I would like to have the following **responsibilities** in a co-taught classroom:

4. I would like my co-teacher to have the following **responsibilities**:

5. I have the following expectations in a classroom:
 - (a) regarding discipline - _____
 - (b) regarding classwork - _____
 - (c) regarding materials - _____
 - (d) regarding homework - _____
 - (e) regarding planning - _____
 - (f) regarding accommodations for individual students - _____
 - (g) regarding grading - _____
 - (h) regarding noise level - _____
 - (i) regarding cooperative learning - _____
 - (j) regarding giving/receiving feedback - _____
 - (k) other important expectations I have -**

Figure 2. SHARE (sharing hopes, attitudes, responsibilities, and expectations) worksheet

The essential question for all administrators as they review their ask-for items is “Is what I have collected demonstrating to me that these two teachers are doing something substantively different in this class that is better meeting the unique needs of these students than what one teacher would be doing alone?”

What Do I Look For?

The look-for items provided in Figure 3 are based on a thorough review of the co-teaching literature. These components were selected as elements of effective co-teaching that administrators can look to find when observing co-teaching in practice. For each look-for item identified, an explanation of actions or behaviors that would demonstrate that component is provided. Although most of these items should be easily observable in a brief observation, multiple short observations or a few lengthier observations will always provide more reliable data from which to make decisions.

As administrators observe in the class, whether over time or through an extended classroom observation, they will note that a successfully co-taught class involves two instructors who have clearly planned lessons collaboratively and who work as a team. In fact, the way both teachers circulate through the classroom and help all students should make it difficult to tell the special education teacher or students from the general education teacher and students. Both teachers are aware of the students, the content, the process of instruction, and the overall goals. It will be clear that they have discussed classroom management and are on the same terms. Although both teachers should be comfortable with the overall content, there may be times when one teacher takes the lead in some of the more complex content. That is certainly acceptable, provided it is evident that both teachers have a necessary role in the classroom and that they have planned together (Fattig & Taylor, 2007). In fact, while one is taking a lead on content, the other may be taking more of a lead in the pedagogy (including the introduction of strategies, accommodations, and group work). As RTI becomes more prevalent in schools as a means of supporting and identifying students with learning challenges, teachers should be working collaboratively to use the co-teaching model to provide the various tiers of support for students (Murawski & Hughes, 2009). This can help to ensure that students who previously fell through the cracks academically, or who had to wait until they were failing sufficiently to constitute a discrepancy between ability and achievement (Bradley, Danielson, & Doolittle, 2007), are being provided appropriately scaffolded instruction.

Teachers should be using a variety of co-teaching approaches to get students in small groups to benefit from cooperative learning, hands-on activities, and a smaller student-teacher ratio. Technology should be a regular facet of instruction, not just a PowerPoint presentation or use of a document camera. As co-teachers instruct together, it should

be clear that they are aware of students' different readiness levels, abilities, interests, strengths, and needs by the way in which they regularly differentiate instruction.

The essential questions for all observers to look for are “Is what I am seeing demonstrating to me that there is something substantively different in this class because of these two teachers that I would not see in a solo-taught class or one with a teacher and a paraprofessional? Is this substantive difference leading to an observable and positive difference in the learning of students?”

What Do I Listen For?

The listen-for items identified in Figure 4 are items that can help observers key into the conversations, questions, and dialogue that should be part of the successful co-taught classroom. By listening for certain items, administrators or other supervisors can identify the extent to which teachers are including all students in conversation, are scaffolding their instruction, and are providing tiered questions to challenge all learners appropriately. If the class instruction were taped and played next to the taped instruction of a typical classroom teacher, would the listener be able to identify differences in the way the co-taught class is being instructed and in the examples being provided? Is it clear from the dialogue, questions, and conversations that students with disabilities are being included and appropriately challenged?

The tone of conversation between teachers will also demonstrate the parity and collaboration—or lack thereof—between them. Both teachers are addressed by name, rather than “Mrs. Smith and the other lady” or “her helper.” Students with and without disabilities are clearly comfortable asking questions of either teacher rather than waiting for a specific teacher to be available. The way students talk to one another and respond to their teachers will cue observers to whether they are including their peers and accepting both teachers as equal partners in the co-taught classroom. When a student with special needs is struggling with a concept, a peer might self-initiate support rather than engage in ridicule. When a student who is a high achiever has completed a task or appears bored by the content, teachers ask questions that are challenging and motivating. When a teacher provides an accommodation for a child, the surrounding students do not complain of unfairness. Instead, they are aware that in this class, every student will get what he or she needs to succeed.

The essential questions for all observers to listen for are “Is what I am hearing demonstrating to me that these two teachers have established a classroom in which collaboration is valued, differentiation is expected, and all individuals are truly included academically, behaviorally, and socially? Can I hear typically developing students using language that demonstrates acceptance of differences and students with disabilities using language that demonstrates a strong self-concept and feeling of belonging to the class?”

CO-TEACHING CHECKLIST				
General Educator: _____		Special Educator: _____		
Observer: _____		Date/Time: _____		
		LOOK FOR ITEMS		
		0 – Didn't See It 1 – Saw an Attempt 2 – Saw It Done Well		
		0	1	2
Two or more professionals working together in the same physical space.	0 = only one adult; two adults not communicating at all; class always divided into two rooms 1 = two adults in same room but very little communication or collaborative work 2 = two adults in same room; both engaged in class & each other (even if not perfectly)			
Class environment demonstrates parity and collaboration (both names on board, sharing materials, and space).	0 = no demonstration of parity/collaboration; room appears to belong to one teacher only 1 = some attempt at parity; both adults share materials and space 2 = clear parity; both names on board/report card; two desks or shared space; obvious feeling from teachers that it is "our room"			
Both teachers begin and end class together and remain in the room the entire time.	0 = one adult is absent or late; adults may leave room for time w/o reason related to this class 1 = one adult may be late but for remaining time, they work together 2 = both adults begin and end together, and are with students the entire time *note – if adults have planned to use a regrouping approach (e.g., "parallel") and one adult takes a group of students out of the room (e.g., to the library), that is perfectly acceptable			
During instruction, both teachers assist students with and without disabilities.	0 = adults are not helping students or are only helping "their own" students 1 = there is some helping of various students but adults primarily stay with a few of "their own" 2 = it is clear that both adults are willing to help all students & that students are used to this			
The class moves smoothly with evidence of co-planning and communication between co-teachers.	0 = all planning appears to have been done by one adult and/or no planning is evident 1 = minimal planning and communication is evident; most appears to be done by one adult 2 = it is clear that both adults had input in lesson and communicate regularly as class progresses			
Differentiated strategies, to include technology, are used to meet the range of learning needs.	0 = there is no evidence of differentiation of instruction or use of technology in the classroom 1 = there is minimal differentiation and use of technology; most differentiation appears to be focused on groups rather than individuals 2 = it is clear that adults considered individual student needs; differentiation and use of technology is used when needed to meet individual student needs, as well as that of the group			
A variety of instructional approaches (5 co-teaching approaches) are used, include regrouping students.	0 = Students remain in large class setting; Adults rely solely on One Teach/One Support or Team 1 = Adults regroup students (using Alternative, Parallel, or Station) at least once 2 = Adults use more than one of the 5 approaches (Friend & Cook's One Teach/One Support, Team, Parallel, Station & Alternative); at least one of the approaches involves regrouping students *note – if teachers have been observed using other approaches in the past and only one approach is observed today (e.g., Stations), it is acceptable to recall previous observations and give a 2 for using a variety of approaches as adults have demonstrated competency			
Both teachers engage in appropriate behavior management strategies as needed and are consistent in their approach to behavior management.	0 = there is no obvious plan for behavior management, nor do adults appear to communicate about how they are approaching class management; possibly inappropriate class management 1 = behavior management strategies are utilized but there is very little clear evidence of how adults have communicated about their use 2 = it is evident that adults have discussed how they will approach classroom/behavior management and adults are consistent in their approach; clear communication between adults			
It is difficult to tell the special educator from the general educator.	0 = Observer could easily determine who was the general/special educator by their language/roles/lack of parity. 1 = Observer could tell who was the general/special educator but there was a clear attempt at parity between the teachers. 2 = Observer would not be able to tell who was the general/special educator as parity was evident and adults shared the roles and responsibilities in the classroom.			
It is difficult to tell the special education students from the general education students.	0 = Observer could easily determine who were the general/special education students by their lack of integration (e.g., students at back or separated from class). 1 = Observer could tell who were the general/special education students but there was a clear attempt at inclusion of students for most activities. 2 = Observer would not be able to tell who were the general/special education students as parity was evident and adults shared the responsibilities for working with all students.			

Figure 3. Look-for items

CO-TEACHING CHECKLIST				
General Educator: _____		Special Educator: _____		
Observer: _____		Date/Time: _____		
		LISTEN FOR ITEMS		
		0 – Didn't See It 1 – Saw an Attempt 2 – Saw It Done Well		
		0	1	2
Co-teachers use language ("we"; "our") that demonstrates true collaboration and shared responsibility.	0 = Adults use "I" language frequently (e.g., "I want you to ..." Or "In my class ..."), lacking parity. 1 = Adults attempt to use "we" language and include each other, but it is clear that one adult is more used to "ruling" the class. 2 = Adults clearly use "we" language (e.g., "We would like you to..."), showing that they both share the responsibility and students know they are equally in charge.			
Co-teachers phrase questions and statements so that it is obvious that all students in the class are included.	0 = Class is very teacher-directed and little involvement by students; questions/statements are general and not inclusive of all students. 1 = A few statements/questions are phrased to encourage participation from a variety of students. 2 = A clear attempt is made by both adults to engage all students through the use of a variety of types of questions and statements.			
Students' conversations evidence a sense of community (including peers with and without disabilities).	0 = Students do not talk to one another ever during class or specific students are clearly excluded from the student interactions. 1 = Most students appear to be included in the majority of student interactions. 2 = It is evident from the students' actions and words that all students are considered an equal part of the class and are included in all student interactions.			
Co-teachers ask questions at a variety of levels to meet all students' needs (basic recall to higher order thinking).	0 = Adults do not use questions or ask questions geared just to one level (to the middle or "watered down"). 1 = Adults use closed and open questions at a variety of levels in a general manner. 2 = Adults used closed and open questions at a variety of levels in a way that demonstrates they are able to differentiate for specific students in order to ensure maximum (appropriate) levels of challenge.			

Figure 4. Listen-for items

Co-Teaching Observations

Many administrative observation guides are designed for the single-teacher classroom and are often inappropriate for classes that are co-taught. By following the guidelines in this column, observers will know what to ask for, look for, and listen for in the co-taught classroom to better support those teachers working with children with disabilities in an inclusive setting. Naturally, as with typical observations, it is recommended that supervisors engage in multiple visits prior to making any final judgment on a teaching situation.

Observing co-teachers in an effort to provide feedback can be very helpful in aiding improvement. The checklists in this article were originally created by the first author and subsequently included by both authors into a software system designed to more effectively collect and analyze this type of data (Murawski & Lochner, 2007). Regardless of whether a school chooses to use an electronic or paper observation system, it is critical that data be collected, analyzed, and discussed so that schools can continue to identify the best practices for serving the needs of students with disabilities

in their inclusive settings. Without data, results are merely conjecture.

With NCLB (2001) and IDEIA (2004) demanding both accountability and individualization, teachers more than ever before are struggling to provide high-quality content instruction for diverse groups of students. By engaging in co-teaching, these teachers have the opportunity to meet those diverse needs in ways that they have not been able to in the past. However, administrative support is key to ensuring that teachers (a) know what co-teaching is, (b) know how to engage in best practices related to co-teaching and differentiation, (c) have sufficient time to co-plan, and (d) receive quality feedback in how to improve in their co-teaching practices (Murawski, 2008). This column is a first step for administrators and supervisors to truly know what they should be asking for, looking for, and listening for as they observe the co-taught classroom and give feedback for improvement to those teachers desperate for support. The result of this support will be teachers more able to collaborate and differentiate effectively and students who are now better able to access general education standards-based content because of their teachers' improved skills.

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