

Co-Teaching Update 2016-2017

As many are already aware, all of our district's schools have been implementing co-teaching. Last year, we had some information sessions and we wanted to follow up this year to continue to share about co-teaching. It is our intention to have this short article provide you with some key points about co-teaching.

Co-teaching is an instructional model whereby specially designed instruction is provided in the general education classroom. The two teachers, the general and special education teachers, have equivalent licensure with different areas of expertise. The teachers share instructional responsibilities and negotiate their roles. The teaching partnership is most effective when the teachers are provided with time for collaboration and planning. In Amherst, the building administrators have created schedules to provide the co-teachers collaboration time in addition to their individual planning times. We have learned that some have wondered if co-teachers need to be working together throughout the school day. This does not need to be. Many times, teachers are teaching together for only some portion of their day, and this model can still be considered co-teaching. In addition, there are a number of approaches to co-teaching and teacher teams will frequently shift from one model to another at various times based on their planning and student need.

There is a growing body of evidence to support this instructional model yet by no means do we think that this instructional model is meant to meet the needs of all students. Class composition is carefully considered when creating the co-teaching classroom so that there is a heterogeneous grouping of students in each class. All of our schools have co-teaching classrooms. The decision about where and when to create a co-teaching classroom is made based on the needs of the students. Our teachers are provided with ongoing coaching and high quality professional development to enhance their teaching practice and to create the most meaningful learning experiences for their students. Dr. Renee Greenfield, our district Specialized Instructional Coach, is continuing to work with the co-teaching pairs and will continue to monitor and assess the development of this instructional model.

At the end of last year, co-teachers reported that they valued mutual planning time, administrative support of co-teaching, teaching aids and supplies to support diverse learners, and professional development. Over 85 percent of co-teachers reported that they worked well with their co-teaching partner and over 75 percent of co-teachers reported that co-teaching improved their teaching practice. Both general and special educators reported that additional work is needed in this area.

Students in co-taught classrooms drew pictures of their classroom at the end of last year. Students' drawings suggest that the three main elements in their co-taught classrooms were the teachers, the students and the board. Students' perceptions suggested the use of varied co-teaching instructional models (i.e. team teaching, one teach/one observe). Students' perceptions also indicated that teachers are engaged in whole class instruction (whether they

are in the front of the room, or at opposite sides, or one at a desk/one teaching) more often than small group instruction.


Of the over 900 surveys sent out to families, 153 were returned.

- 44.4% of families reported that they had received information about co-teaching before their child entered the co-taught class and 55.6% reported they did not receive information
- 84.5% of families reported understanding the rationale of co-teaching, while 15.6% did not
- 73.8% of families considered both teachers as their child's teachers, while 24.2% did not
- 80.1% of families reported that their child's academic needs were being met, and 19.9% reported they were not being met
- 77.3% of families reported that the co-taught classroom promoted a positive climate that support their child's social and emotional health, while 22.7% did not

We are looking forward to the ongoing development of the co-teaching instructional model as a design to provide enhanced access to the general education curriculum for our students. We are fortunate to have many talented teachers and excited to continue to support their efforts to deliver instruction that creates positive learning outcomes for our students.

If you have any questions about the co-teaching instructional model, please feel free to contact your child's teacher, Principal, Renee Greenfield (greenfieldr@arps.org), or Faye Brady (bradyf@arps.org).

Wishing you a wonderful and successful school year!


Faye Brady, Director of Student Services