

BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ARMONK, NEW YORK

Author: Laura Borneman, Nicole Cavalieri, Julie Calemmo, Mary Beth Devery, Dr. Yvette Thompson, & Peggy McInerney

Title of Project: *Co-Teaching within the Consultant Teacher Model*

Year: 2014-2015

School/Grade: Coman Hill/ Kindergarten & Second Grade

SUMMARY OF *INVESTIGATORS OF PRACTICE* ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Context:

We are a group of two special education teachers, two general education teachers (kindergarten & second grade), one psychologist, and the building principal at a K-2 school.

❖ **Peggy McInerney & Dr. Yvette Thompson**

As a building principal and psychologist/chairperson for the committee on special education, our group has had a number of conversations over the past three years on how to best meet the changing needs of our special education students in their least restrictive environment. We have focused on supporting and developing the skills of the teachers who are working in partnerships and have focused on increasing the pro-social skill set of students who are identified as having special needs.

The district has committed to an exceptional standard for building level supports. The belief in our system is that we want our students to be successful. Failure is not an option. In so doing, we have created a successful and comprehensive Response to Intervention (RTI) system. An unintended consequence of our comprehensive efforts has been providing an extended level of support to unidentified students. Our effective scaffolding has resulted in intensive supports of RTI levels and our special education mandated services. We needed to look at the continuum of special education services provided at Coman Hill.

❖ **Nicole Cavalieri & Laura Borneman**

We are currently co-teaching one 45 minute period a day in a second grade classroom . One teacher is a Second Grade Mainstream teacher and one is a Special Education teacher. We have 22 students. Seven students have IEPs (Individual Education Plans). One student received building level support for reading, writing and mathematics. All students, with and without special education needs and/or building level needs receive a variety of support. This is our third year teaching together. For our first year our focus was on getting to know each other as individuals, teachers and instructors. The second and third year we wanted to explore more about co-teaching together. We are limited in our teaching and planning time together and wanted to research the most effective and efficient ways to meet the needs of our different learners.

❖ **Mary Beth Devery & Julie Calemmo**

We are currently co-teaching one 45 minute period a day in a Kindergarten classroom . One teacher is a Kindergarten mainstream teacher and one is a Special Education teacher. We have 21 students. Two students have IEPs (Individual Education Plans). Two other students are receiving building level supports through Kindergarten Academic Support Program, which is also provided by the same special education teacher. All students, with and without special education needs and/or building level needs receive a variety of support. This is our second year teaching together, however they have not been consecutive years. During our first year, we were getting to know each other as instructors. This year has focused more on exploring co-teaching elements that can be successfully integrated into our teaching time together. We are limited in our teaching and planning time together and wanted to research the most effective and efficient ways to meet the needs of our different learners.

BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ARMONK, NEW YORK

Action Plan:

Related Research Questions

We developed the following research questions to frame our study.

- How do we measure success in the Consultant Teacher Model using co-teaching approaches?
- How do we define success? Are student outcomes measurable to the grade level standards?

We chose these research questions to foster a common understanding of what co-teaching is and to give names to the models we were currently utilizing. In addition we were interested in learning if there were other valuable models we could implement. We also wanted to explore the various models and how they could help meet the needs of all of our students in an efficient and effective way.

Literature and Research Gathered to Support Our Inquiry:

We began our research by reading the literature below:

- *A Guide to Co-Teaching: Practical Tips for Facilitating Student Learning.* Villa, Thousand, & Nevin. 2004.
- *Co-teaching that Works, Structures and Strategies to Maximize Student Learning.* Beninghof. 2012.
- *Exploring Co--Teaching Models in the Elementary Classroom.* Borneman & Cavalieri, 2014.

We continued our research by participating in certain workshops and activities and creating the following documents:

- Attending the Marilyn Friend workshop at H. C. Crittenden Middle School.
- Role switch between a special educator and their general education partner.
- Created *Tiers of Support* chart (Appendix A) for all Special Education programs at Coman Hill.
- Created *Co-Teaching: Special Education and General Education Norms.* (Appendix B)

What is important to note in the literature?

- In *A Guide to Co-Teaching: New Lessons and Strategies to Facilitate Student Learning*, the authors define co-teaching as “two or more people sharing responsibility for teaching all of the students assigned to a classroom” (Villa, Thousand & Nevin. 2013; p. 119).
- Villa, Thousand and Nevin (2013) further note that students and educators benefit when co-teachers are given the time to collaborate, decide on predictable co-teaching roles and responsibilities, and are able to form trusting relationships.
- Beninghof provides a synopsis based on the co-teaching literature, *Co-Teaching That Works*, (p. 52) that clearly defines descriptions, benefits and consequences of different models.
- In the text, *Co-Teach! Building and Sustaining Effective Classroom Partnerships in Inclusive Schools*, Friend posits that co-teaching is a service delivery option through which children with disabilities can be largely educated in general education settings. She writes that co-teaching “enables educators to more readily determine students’ strengths and weaknesses, to deliver instruction and assess learning more efficiently, and to tailor activities to the exceptional needs that some students have” (2014).

Results:

This year those of us involved in the Investigators of Practice process focused on our foundational learning. We referenced research done last year by Cavalieri and Borneman (2014) and continued to explore our understanding of what the Consultant Teacher model at Coman Hill currently looked like so we ensure that our students are receiving the appropriate level of support and instruction that they need according to their

BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ARMONK, NEW YORK

disabilities. We know and we continue to deepen our knowledge that student success cannot solely be based on pure academic success. Students need to develop their social, emotional, and behavioral skills in order to successfully grow and develop.

We learned that:

- We needed to reference the expertise of the faculty so we can strengthen our toolkit for managing student behaviors so that student's social, emotional, and academic needs are nurtured. We did this through the 'Problem of Practice' protocol where teachers led group conversations about specific student behaviors and how best to meet their needs.
- We needed to identify the continuum of special education programs in Coman Hill.
- We needed to reference the special education team at Coman Hill to gather their input and feedback if the continuum of special education programs at Coman Hill fit the students' needs. We did this through Special Education meetings that focused on current student's needs.
- We needed to study the current students with disabilities to assess the models for the next school year. We did this through conversation with the special education team and studying individual student needs.
- Co-teaching techniques and models may look differently from classroom to classroom and from grade to grade, yet are still effective and successful.
- Our building does an exemplary job at creating programs that best address student needs.
- We needed to employ a high degree of cognitive flexibility to respond effectively to the complex needs of our students while incorporating the different perspectives of the multiple stakeholders of our building team.
- We needed to create special and regular education [Norms for Co-teachers](#) (Appendix B.)
- We needed to communicate with the faculty about the continuum of special education programs at Coman Hill to build a shared understanding of these programs. We did this through a faculty meeting so every faculty member understands the [Tiers of Support](#) (Appendix A) offered to our students including the continuum of special education programs.
- Most of the students in each Consult Teacher classroom met or exceeded their target academic scores as measured by their district created assessments.

Co- teaching strategies that worked based on the setting and curriculum focus.

Implications:

Through collaboration among our group we created the following set of co-teaching norms to use as a framework for our co-teaching. While the implementation of these norms in each classroom community looks different, they are effective and successful. (Appendix B)

New Questions

- How do we continue to help students develop their social, emotional and behavioral skills in order to be successful in school?
- To what extent do teachers engage in scaffolding students' social skills and problem solving development?
- Are we able to meet increasingly complex behavioral and learning needs of our students through this collaborative approach?

Bibliography

Beninghof, A.M. (2012). *Co-Teaching That Works: Structures and Strategies for Maximizing Student Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ARMONK, NEW YORK

Borneman, L. & Cavalieri, N. (2014). *Exploring Co-Teaching Models in the Elementary Classroom*. Byram Hills Central School District. Retrieved from <http://www.byramhills.org/files/filesystem/BornemanCavalieriACTIONRESEARCHSUMMARY.pdf>

Friend, M. (2014). *Co-Teach!: Building and Sustaining Effective Classroom Partnerships in Inclusive Schools-Second Edition*. Greenborough, N.C.: Friend.

Villa, R.A., Thousand, J.S., Nevin, A.I. (2013). *A Guide to Co-Teaching: New Lessons and Strategies to Facilitate Student Learning-Third Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ARMONK, NEW YORK

APPENDIX A
Tiers of Support

Access [Tiers of Support](#) document here.

BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ARMONK, NEW YORK

APPENDIX B

Co-Teaching Norms

Co-Teaching: Special Education and General Education Norms

1. Communication with Parents
 - a. What is being communicated to parents needs to be inclusive to all members of the team.
 - b. How communication is done is left up to individual teams (At the minimum there should be a CC on the email).
 - c. Phone Calls
 - d. Behavior Plans
2. Communication with Administration:
 - a. Vice Versa
 - b. Done together
3. Communication with Partnership:
 - a. Physical Space
 - i. Respect to environment ie: "Good Morning"
 - b. Vested and part of classroom
 - c. Management system
 - d. Behavior Plan Consistency
 - i. Classroom environment
 - ii. Flexibility and Response:
 1. Try different materials and approaches
 2. Pull this kid and use a different strategy
 3. Know when to push in and pull out
 4. Be responsive to the needs of all students
 5. Flexibility in changing a way we prompt or speak to children to build consistency amongst the teachers to create a common language.
 6. Special Ed Teacher- "Wearing a different hat" in each classroom.
 - iii. Dealing with conflict
 1. Forum to speak- collab with entire team.
 2. Go to the source and have an honest conversation
 3. Facilitator
 - a. Psychologist
 - b. Administrator
 4. Be forgiving and be forgetting.
 - iv. Collab. Time
 1. Wednesday through Friday 9:10 AM - 9:30 AM (Aides)
 2. Same aide in each classroom
 3. Teachers start at 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM on Wednesday
 - e. Managing Student Behaviors
 - i. Utilizing our faculty to see in action how student behaviors are managed.
 - ii. The student needs to know:
 1. You like them

BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ARMONK, NEW YORK

- 2. You are not frustrated by them.
- 3. To establish a caring connection with them.
- iii. Faculty- "Inquiry of Instruction" Meeting
- iv. Establish time to get to know the child.
- v. Limit the 'cooks in the kitchen'.
 - 1. Talking to all of the people in the room: Aides, OT, PT, etc....
- vi. Gen Ed Teacher: Be open, be consistent.
- f. Aides:

Survey/Feedback Gen Ed Vs. Special Ed.

General Ed	Special Ed