Getting to Know You: Building Successful Co-Teaching Relationships
By Sue Land, M.Ed.

When you think of co-teaching relationships do the words So Happy Together by the Turtles pop into your head or do you hear I Can’t Get NO Satisfaction by Jagger and Richards pounding in your brain? Just like the protagonist in the children’s poem by Wadsworth, There Was Little Girl, co-teaching can be “very, very good” or it can be “horrid.”

How can co-teaching partners develop positive and productive co-teaching relationships? Murawski and Dieker (2004) suggest five actions in preparing to co-teach along with questions to ask yourself or others:

• Assess the current environment - What are the faculty’s feelings regarding co-teaching and inclusion?
• Move in slowly - Where do we start as new co-teachers? How do we determine our teaching roles and responsibilities?
• Involve an administrator - How will we plan for and support co-teaching?
• Create a workable schedule - How will we schedule teachers and students in co-taught classes? When will we schedule co-planning?
• Get to know your partner - How will we share our teaching strengths, styles, and skills?

Co-teachers benefit from honest and open discussions of teaching beliefs and philosophy, behavior management systems, classroom routines, lesson design, grading, and assessment practices. Teaching partners may want to use Questions for Co-Teachers to Consider by Walther-Thomas, Bryant, and Land (1996) to help facilitate sharing their teaching styles and preferences. Teachers might choose their top five questions to discuss prior to school beginning and, to expedite the process, jot down their thoughts prior to meeting. Examples of questions may include those on the following page:
1. What are your classroom expectations? Positive consequences for following them? Negative consequences for not following them?
2. How would you describe a typical lesson?
3. How do you monitor and evaluate progress?
4. How do you provide for varied student needs during a lesson?
5. How will we build trust and maintain confidentiality in our classroom?

To continue the conversation, co-teachers benefit from regularly scheduled meeting times to reflect on their co-teaching experiences. Dieker (2006) maintains that “communication and evaluation are the keys to successful co-teaching relationships” (p. 1). These “co-teaching progress check-ups” should occur every 4-6 weeks and at the end of each grading period or semester. Topics for discussion may include:

- A problem-solving process (What process do we use to identify and solve problems?)
- Co-teaching successes (How do we measure co-teaching success?)
- Student achievement (How do we measure student success?)
- Testing and classroom accommodations (What process will we use to determine testing and classroom accommodations? What are reasonable and effective accommodations?)
- Integration of IEP goals (How will we integrate students’ IEP goals into our daily lessons?)
- Co-teaching relationship (How and when will we assess our relationship?)
- Professional development activities (What are our professional development needs and how will we access these activities?)
- Differentiating instruction and assessment (What are ways to differentiate instruction and assessment for all students?)

For a more formal school-level evaluation, Wiggins and Damore (2006) recommend assessing six key elements of collaboration: positive attitude, team process, professional development, leadership, resources, and benefits. Using Wiggins and Damore’s Elements of Collaboration Rubric and developmental levels (initial, emerging, effective) for each element, “a school can determine its strengths and target its energies and resources for improvement” (p. 49). Finally, an action plan can be developed to address areas for improvement, tasks, persons responsible, and completion date. More informally, co-teaching teams can use the six key elements of collaboration as points for conversation and self-evaluation.

As you begin the new school year, remember to take the time to S.H.A.R.E. - share your hopes, attitudes, responsibilities, and expectations with your co-teacher (Murawski, 2003). This sharing will enhance your co-teaching relationships and increase the likelihood of improved student outcomes.

For more information on co-teaching order the Considerations Packet on Co-Teaching at www.wm.edu/ttac.

References
Effective classroom management involves two elements: structure and relationships (Gately & Gately, 2001). Structure is made up of the rules and routines that guide students through the daily activities within the classroom. Positive students-teacher relationships, in turn, motivate students to more readily accept the rules and procedures as well as the disciplinary actions that follow their violations. Without the foundation of a good relationship with the teacher, students commonly resist rules and procedures along with the consequent actions (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003).

Teachers’ beliefs and principles provide the foundation upon which an instructional classroom management program is built. When co-teachers share and practice principles of respect and belief in students’ capacity to learn, they maximize instructional outcomes. Darch and Kame’enui (2004, p. 10) offer the following examples of such principles and beliefs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principle 1</td>
<td>The learner should always be treated with respect.</td>
<td>The teacher makes a profound difference in how, what, when and why students learn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Principle 2</td>
<td>Every learner has an extraordinary capacity to learn.</td>
<td>Teaching involves creating as many opportunities as possible for student learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Principle 3</td>
<td>The learner’s behavior or performance is always purposeful, strategic, and intelligent.</td>
<td>Effective teaching enhances what the learner already knows and enables the learner to do things that could not be done before.</td>
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Co-teaching partners can capitalize on their collaborative relationship in designing and implementing proactive instructional practices for managing both academic and social behaviors. Friend and Cook (2007) suggest that, in addition to determining foundational beliefs and philosophies, co-teachers identify and discuss classroom routines and what constitutes acceptable student behavior.

In developing a classroom management plan, co-teachers should consider broad behavioral categories or expectations that will enable students to be successful adults. Common behavioral expectations include: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Safe. Co-teachers must translate these broader categories into rules by defining for themselves and describing for students what these expectations look and sound like within the framework of their daily routines. For example, co-teachers may decide that when students keep their hands and feet to themselves, they are demonstrating respectful behavior. In turn, common routines to develop and directly teach may include: beginning and ending the school day, transitions between activities in the classroom, transitions between locations in the building, using materials and equipment, handling times when the teacher is interrupted, group work time, seatwork time, teacher-led activities, reporting progress and communicating with parents, turning in work, and morning meetings.

Once co-teachers have reached an agreement on this initial structure, they must design instruction to teach students these classroom behaviors. Such instruction should be differentiated and delivered through careful and clear modeling, visual displays in multiple formats, and frequent verbal prompting to increase the likelihood of students’ successful performance. During the first three months of school, the focus of instruction should be on acquisition of skills. Violation of rules and routines should be framed as the result of inadequate instruction (Darch & Kame’enui, 2004). Reteaching of rules and routines should occur followed by positive reinforcement to encourage successful practice of the expected behaviors.
As teachers assess the outcomes of instruction, it will be evident that some students require more intensive supports. Lesson plans should include co-teaching structures that facilitate the acquisition of skills for students requiring more review. Visual cue cards listing rules and procedures can be made available to these students in addition to more frequent cueing, reinforcement, and opportunities for self-management.

By addressing the principles that underlie their instructional practices; (a) carefully designing instruction to teach behavioral expectations, rules, and routines; and (b) providing frequent practice and reinforcement to students, co-teachers will discover that they are fostering the social behaviors that contribute to increased academic performance. More information on establishing schoolwide, classroom, and individual behavioral supports is provided in the February/March 2008 issue of Link Lines at http://web.wm.edu/ttac/Newsletter/index.html and in the Considerations Packet, Positive Behavioral Supports (2000) at http://web.wm.edu/ttac/packets/consideration.html.

References

Goodbye and Hello
With every new year, change is inevitable. T/TAC W&M must say goodbye to two individuals: Scott Bray and Kristen Holst. Scott supported school teams implementing effective inclusive education practices and is now Director of Instructional Technology Programs at the University of Richmond. Kristen supported the Virginia Transition Outcomes Project and Effective Schoolwide Discipline Project. She is now an Assistant Principal at Ephrata High School in Pennsylvania. We will miss them both, and wish them luck in their new homes and positions.

We are happy to welcome Cathy Buyrn, Elaine Gould, Mary Stowe, and Laura Soerensson. Cathy Buyrn, an Instructional Consultation Team specialist, joined the T/TAC staff in July of 2008. Prior to joining T/TAC she was an Instructional Support Team teacher and worked as a special educator in various settings and grade levels. Contact Cathy for assistance with Instructional Consultation Teams, co-teaching, inclusive practices, and instructional technology.

Elaine Gould, a transition and behavior specialist, joined T/TAC in August of 2008. As a former special education teacher, she provided specialized reading instruction and transition support to elementary and high school students. Contact Elaine for assistance with secondary transition and positive behavioral support strategies.

Mary Stowe, an inclusion specialist, has worked in both the general and special education settings with a focus in acquisition of reading skills and strategic reading instruction. Mary has a broad range of experience with students with learning disabilities and has taught in both co-taught and skill specific classes. Contact Mary concerning issues surrounding secondary reading instruction, collaboration/co-teaching, inclusive practices, and best practices for students with mild to moderate disabilities.

Laura Soerensson, an administrative assistant, joined T/TAC in April of 2008. Laura manages T/TAC W&M’s state data base and supports the efforts of T/TAC’s staff.

We are fortunate to have these talented individuals, and welcome them to our T/TAC W&M team.
The following materials are available to interested individuals in Regions Two and Three, free of charge, from the T/TAC William and Mary lending library. To request materials, please call 1-800-323-4489 and leave a message. The materials will be sent to you along with a postage-paid return mailer. A complete listing of professional resources available through the T/TAC William and Mary lending library may be viewed at http://www.wm.edu/ttac. Simply click on the Library link to view holdings, complete an online search, or order materials.

The resources below are companions to the articles appearing in this issue of Link Lines. These resources will provide more in-depth, expanded coverage of the topics in the newsletter.

**Transition Education and Services for Adolescents with Disabilities**  
By Patricia L. Sitlington, Gary M. Clark, and Oliver P. Kolstoe

This book captures ideas generated by professionals in the field of transition programs. It introduces a model of comprehensive transition services with an emphasis on involving individuals with disabilities in their own education. (TR 74)

**The Active Classroom: Practical Strategies for Involving Students in the Learning Process**  
By Ron Nash

Veteran Virginia Beach teacher and trainer Ron Nash shows educators how to establish an interactive and safe learning environment. This engaging how-to guide for the classroom offers practical, brain-compatible, proven strategies for facilitating active learning that will make learning fun and effective for teachers and students. (TT240)

**Culturally Proficient Inquiry: A Lens for Identifying and Examining Educational Gaps**  
By Randell Lindsey, Stephanie Graham, R. Chris Westpahl, Cynthia Jew

This book provides the information and tools needed to create powerful learning communities in which the academic and co-curricular needs as well as the well-being of all students are addressed through purposeful inquiry and culturally proficient practices. This text is a must-read for all educational leaders who want to make a difference. (CD41)

**Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age**  
By David Rose and Anne Meyer

As a teacher in a typical classroom, there are two things you know for sure: Your students have widely divergent needs, skills, and interests . . . and you’re responsible for helping every one attain the same high standards. This book provides information on how to meet students’ diverse needs. (T238)

**Inclusion: A Service, Not a Place (Video and Book, 2008 Revision)**  
By Alan Gartner, Ph.D., and Dorothy Kerzner Lipsky, Ph.D

This popular resource has been revised to include information about Response to Intervention (RtI) and IDEA 2004. The video and “stand alone” book show how to build an effective schoolwide approach that focuses on special education as a service rather than a location. Highlights include discussion of interventions with major focus on RtI and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Collaboration strategies; differentiation in classrooms; and roles for parents, school personnel, administrators, related services providers, and clinicians are also featured. The book includes “black line” masters for use in staff development or by teachers to help structure inclusive classrooms. COMING SOON!
Making It Happen: The Importance of Self-Determination for Students with Disabilities

Self-determination skills are important for everyone. Children who are self-determined are able to:

- Appreciate their strengths and acknowledge their limitations
- Set demanding, yet realistic goals for themselves
- Create plans to achieve their goals
- Make appropriate choices and decisions
- Accept responsibility for their choices and decisions
- Develop problem-solving skills
- Assert themselves when necessary
- Advocate for themselves
- Achieve their goals

Self-determined children make positive things happen at school, with friends in their community, and in their families. As they enter adolescence, these young people are better able to cope with the academic and social demands of life in middle and high school. After high school, they are more likely to transition successfully to adult life.

Despite the clear benefits of self-determination, Landmark and Zhang, (2006) found that parents of children with disabilities are less likely to teach their children self-determination skills than are the parents of children who do not have disabilities. Specifically, “parents of children with disabilities provide fewer opportunities for their children to make choices and decisions, to engage in trial and error activities, and to set and work on personal goals” (Landmark & Zhang, 2006, p. 4). Opportunities include involving children and youth in activities such as household chores, interacting with salespeople and others in the community, goal setting, and making choices and decisions when dealing with unexpected situations. The more practice individuals receive in developing and strengthening self-determination skills, the more likely they are to make better decisions in school and among their peers. Opportunities to practice skills that support self-determination also lead to greater independence and self-advocacy.

The next three issues of Family Partnerships will offer suggestions for how parents can promote self-determination in their children and adolescents at home, at school, and in the community.

References
Achieving Similar Success for Students with Learning Differences
By Fritz Geissler, M.Ed.

Mention the name Marzano and what comes to mind? Many immediately think about *Classroom Instruction That Works, Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* by Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001). These authors found identifying similarities and differences to be one of the most effective strategies for increasing student achievement. They also defined decision points in designing instruction that incorporates similarities and differences, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The first decision point is whether to deliver the lesson as a teacher-directed activity, with direct and explicit guidance from the teacher or to use a student-centered approach, allowing students to independently identify similarities and differences. Both approaches have been found to be effective; the reason for choosing one or the other should be based on the desired outcome. For example, if a teacher wants students to identify specific similarities and differences, then a direct, teacher-guided approach would work best. However, if the goal is for students to experience identifying different similarities and differences, than a more student-centered approach is recommended (Marzano et al., 2001). Teachers are encouraged to take time at the end of the activities to facilitate discussion that relates to the intended goal of the lesson.

The next decision in designing activities and lessons using similarities and differences relates to choosing which strategies to incorporate. Four research-based strategies that are highly effective in teaching students to identify similarities and differences are comparing, classifying, creating metaphors, and creating analogies. Comparing and classifying are processes for identifying characteristics and organizing information according to those characteristics. For example, examining animal and plant characteristics provides a great opportunity to use similarities and differences to determine an organism’s classification. Teachers may lead students in the process of collecting information for comparison, or students may be given categories to examine independently. Creating metaphors and analogies allows students to interact with information in a more abstract manner, thus increasing the understanding of new information. One way a teacher may use analogies is to have students compare historical figures from different time periods. Such an activity would allow students to examine how and why historical figures were important to their time periods. Developing student skills for creating metaphors and analogies can be very teacher-directed initially before moving towards more student-centered activities and tasks. Each of the identified instructional strategies helps the brain process new information, recall it, and learn by overlaying a known pattern onto an unknown one to find similarities and differences (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2005).

The last decision point involves using graphics and symbols to examine similarities and differences. This type of non-linguistic representation is another research-based instructional strategy (Marzano et al., 2001), and the use of Venn Diagrams, matrices, and charts is supported by that research. Another way to incorporate non-linguistic representation into examining similarities and differences involves the use of pictures or instructional technology in lessons. Students could take or examine digital pictures and organize them according to the instructional goals of the lesson. For example, if students are examining major tribes of North America, they could use photos of the environment and resources for food, shelter, and
clothing to demonstrate their understanding of the similarities and differences among the tribes. Free programs, such as iPhoto (Macintosh) and PhotoStory (PC), allow students to organize, sequence, and narrate pictures to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of content.

Every school year brings new opportunities to find ways to meet the needs of all students. Identifying similarities and differences is a research-based strategy that not only helps students deepen their understanding of content, but also helps them to learn by relating new information to known patterns. Charts, matrices, graphics, and other forms of non-linguistic representation further support the needs of students and increase achievement. As you move into the new school year, consider how you might use these strategies to help your students succeed.

Figure 1: Decision flow chart for similarities and differences

References
Co-teaching is becoming a common service delivery model as schools seek to support students with disabilities in general education settings (Friend & Cook, 2007). School leaders play an important role in helping to ensure that co-teaching meets the instructional needs of students with disabilities. Administrators are encouraged to consider the following elements as they communicate their expectations for student achievement and growth in co-taught classes.

**A Schoolwide Focus on Achievement for All Students**

Maintaining focus is one trait of effective school leaders (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Indeed, “staying focused on student achievement, encouraging and supporting teachers’ efforts, and providing the assistance that teachers need moves the work toward the goal” (Knoll, 2002, p. 3). By placing co-teaching within the larger context of supporting student achievement for all learners at the school, administrators emphasize that co-teaching is simply one method the school uses to support the learning of all students.

**Effective Co-Teaching**

Effective co-teaching consists of “two professionals (who) plan and use unique and high-involvement instructional strategies to engage all students in ways that are not possible when only one teacher is present” (Friend & Cook, 2007, p. 116). It is important for administrators to clearly communicate to co-teachers that differentiating instruction and using effective instructional practices in co-taught classes is essential if all student learning needs are to be met.

**Measuring Results**

Once school leaders have determined that co-teaching is being effectively implemented in the classroom, they can determine how well the needs of students with disabilities are being met in the class. The following questions, adapted from Friend (2007), can guide administrators in evaluating the impact of co-teaching on student achievement:

- How have individual achievement data for students with disabilities been influenced by the implementation of a co-teaching model? (e.g., compare a student’s longitudinal achievement data in a core content area delivered in a non-co-teaching situation to that of a co-teaching situation)
- How do achievement data for students with disabilities compare with the achievement data for peers without disabilities at the school?
- How do achievement data for students with disabilities compare with the achievement data for peers without disabilities at comparable schools?

Cultivating a schoolwide focus on student achievement, implementing co-teaching with fidelity, and regularly monitoring results will increase the likelihood that students with disabilities see academic gains as a result of being in a co-taught class.

For additional information on co-teaching visit, http://www.k8accesscenter.org/index.php/category/co-teaching/ and http://www.specialconnections.ku.edu. For differentiated lesson plans correlated to Virginia’s Standards of Learning, go to http://www.ttaconline.org. Select your region on the map and then click on SOL Enhanced at the top of the page.

**References**


Transition Time
Designing Transition Activities That Prepare Students for Adult Life
By Debbie Grosser, M.Ed., and Dale Pennell, C.A.S.

Definition of Transition Services
(a) Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that—

(1) Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; (Emphasis added)

IDEA 2004 §300.43(a)(1)

Part 1 of the Definition of Transition Services specifies seven domains for which LEAs must consider students’ readiness. O’Leary (2003) defines these domains in the following manner:

1. Postsecondary Education – Coursework at a two- or four-year college in a degree-seeking program
2. Vocational Education - Coursework in a postsecondary vocational school or program that provides entry-level job skills in order to secure employment
3. Integrated Employment (including supported employment) - Employment among people without disabilities, including employment opportunities for which accommodations and additional services, such as job coaching, are necessary
4. Continuing/Adult Education - Classes that enrich personal or professional lives and academic coursework for adults seeking a high school diploma
5. Adult Services - Agencies and organizations that improve quality of life
6. Independent Living - Activities of daily life
7. Community Participation - Activities that relate to mobility, civic responsibility, and volunteerism

Definition of Transition Services
(a) Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that —

(2) Is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests; and includes —
   (I) Instruction;
   (II) Related services;
   (III) Community experiences;
   (IV) The development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and
   (V) If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation. (Emphasis added)

IDEA 2000 §300.43(a)(2)
Part 2 of the Definition of Transition Services requires that services address identified needs in areas in which the student has professed interest, a preference to pursue, and for which the student has demonstrated strengths or aptitudes. Part 2 goes on to list seven kinds of activities that may be designed to address identified needs. These activities include:

1. **Instruction** – Activities that provide explicit instruction in knowledge and skills that students must acquire to be ready to pursue their postsecondary goals
2. **Related Services** – Activities that empower students to access appropriate related services as adults, generally related services they have received during their school years
3. **Community Experiences** – Educational opportunities provided in the community that prepare students to participate in community life, such as government, social, recreational, leisure, shopping, banking, and transportation activities
4. **Employment** – Activities that focus on developing work-related behaviors, job-seeking and - keeping skills, career exploration, skill training, apprenticeship training, and actual employment
5. **Adult Living** – Activities that focus on adult living skills, generally activities that are done once or occasionally
6. **Daily Living Skills** – Activities that adults do almost every day
7. **Functional Vocational Evaluation** – An assessment process that provides information about career interests, aptitudes, and skills

(O’Leary, 2003)

Transition activities are typically “one-time” or short-term events. Although addressing needs identified in the Present Level of Performance (PLoP), they address needs that do not require annual IEP goals. The next three issues of Link Lines will provide additional information and specific examples of transition activities for each of the seven domains of transition planning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>November/December 2008</th>
<th>February/March 2008</th>
<th>April/May 2008</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designing Transition Activities That Prepare Students for Postsecondary and Continuing/Adult Education</td>
<td>Designing Transition Activities That Prepare Students for Postsecondary Training and Employment</td>
<td>Designing Transition Activities That Prepare Students for Independent Living and Community Participation</td>
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**Reference**


For additional information, readers may request a copy of *Planning for a Brighter Future: Designing Transition IEPs for Secondary Students with Disabilities* by visiting the T/TAC William and Mary website at www.wm.edu/ttac.
Please share this newsletter with others. It may be copied. Call 1-800-323-4489 to be added to our mailing list or visit our website.

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