

This is a transcript of the T/TAC William and Mary podcast “Self-Reflection Tool – Bowling Green Elementary School ”.

[MUSIC: T/TAC William and Mary Podcast Intro]

Mary Stowe: Good morning! We're here with Ms. Kody and Ms. Rogers and Daria Lorio-Barsten and Mary Stowe. We have in the past worked with Ms. Kody and Ms. Rogers and their capacity as co-teachers. They have used the framework that was developed to improve practices around co-teaching and they would like to share with us their experience with co-teaching and then their use of the framework to help improve their practice.

Daria Lorio-Barsten: So ladies - what were your co-teaching celebrations from the last school year?

Jessica Kody: So as co-teachers we worked really well together. We collaborated. We were able to have open communication in the classroom and were able to work with our students in a way that they needed to be the most successful that they could be. We focused on specifically working together to plan and to create a classroom environment that was suitable for our students.

Elizabeth Rogers: I would also say we were successful because the previous year we really couldn't, actually couldn't co-teach. We were successful at like implementing that co-teaching model and being able to do it to fidelity because before we were kind of like picking and choosing when we could do it. The schedule just allowed for it to be a lot more successful as well. We were also very successful with the students. They made a lot of growth. We had a very low group to start and they made a lot of growth based off of what we did with co-teaching to get them there.

Daria Lorio-Barsten: Great, so it sounds like it was a very successful partnership. How did we know that it was successful other than the feeling? How do we measure that?

Elizabeth Rogers: We have very similar teaching styles. I think that helps, but we also, we knew because of the observations that we had from our principal, assistant principal, and we had one student who mastered all of his IEP goals. He was found ineligible for services, so we were, we were really excited about that. I think a lot of that came from how much we were doing with the co-teaching. He was getting it in small groups and it allowed him to reach his goals.

Jessica Kody: And I think as well – we were able to break the groups up into smaller groups, which for the students that we had, that was what we needed to do. They were all able to see both Ms. Rogers and myself, which in turn, led to them being successful, and then also led to us being able to work on their IEP goals in a smaller group setting and really focus on their needs.

Mary Stowe: And as I'm recalling, you all were very good at collecting data around student progress. Could you tell us a little bit about how you did that when you were working with students because I do seem to remember that you were always collecting some kind of data. You had something besides where you were always collecting data. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

Elizabeth Rogers: Well sometimes we would just collect it with like tally marks on like a little piece of paper or a little sticky note and then we would put it like into Ms. Kody's IEP, like in her goal progress form. So it would just be easy for us to do it there instead of having like this whole big thing, you know. While we're reading, I can just quickly tally, or while we're doing math. But you also collected data differently when you had them, right?

Jessica Kody: Yeah, and so I had a worksheet for each student that had their goal, along with the expectation for mastery for that goal. A lot of times I would do the same thing as Ms. Rogers and just have a sticky note on the paper and tally mark or write a quick note about it. Then I would go back after and put it into my data sheet, just because it was easier to do – to see a quick visual and quickly write chicken scratch opposed to just taking time and writing the whole thing out – or I would make mental notes about what this student could do opposed to this student and then I would go back in the end and take care of the actual goal part of it.

Mary Stowe: It sounds like you really developed a quick, easy system for you to constantly take data, which is what we would hope that many co-teachers would be able to do. So thank you for sharing that.

Daria Lorio-Barsten: So now let's talk about some barriers. What were some barriers that you have experienced as a team, and how did you overcome them?

Elizabeth Rogers: I think the biggest one was that Ms. Kody was working with kindergarten and first grade last year, so we had to split her time between our classes. We just overcame that by making the most out of the time that we did have and making sure that we could fit the groups that we wanted to meet with during that time. So we made sure that the kids that really needed us were getting me and her within the time that she was in the room, and then when she had to leave we would make sure that those kids weren't with her...that needed it...would be with me, so they were still getting that. So a lot of people with scheduling stuff, but that is like hard to make sure that everybody gets what they need when she's not in there all day long.

Jessica Kody: And I think another thing that was a barrier for me, and I know it was also a barrier for Ms. Rogers as well, but the fact that we didn't have a co-planning time. So being able to set aside a time to plan together and decide how we were going to do our lessons was difficult, but we made it work after school. We found other times that we could do it. A lot of times we would spend Sunday nights on Google Drive sending messages back and forth, and collaborating that way and we would both be in our lesson plans writing down. So we found times to collaborate in other way, but that was definitely one of our bigger barriers.

Elizabeth Rogers: Yeah, and I think we also had some behavior issues that were kind of a barrier to making co-teaching work, but we tried so many different things. We just kind of kept trying intervention after intervention, doing this and doing that, and getting y'all two to give us input, getting administration to give us input. I felt like we kind of got to a place where those things were kind of managed, so that we could do the most co-teaching possible.

Mary Stowe: So you found a good match and from understanding your data collection, I'm sure that you all collected data on each of those approaches and then which one was the most successful.

Elizabeth Rogers and Jessica Kody: We did.

Mary Stowe: Excellent. Excellent. So part of what we would like to talk about is your use of the self-reflection tool that we provided, sometimes provided information, or data around different areas of the framework. The article that this podcast will be included with is highlighting that particular tool, so we really would like to know – how did you engage in self-growth and was the self-reflection tool helpful to you and how was it helpful?

Jessica Kody: I definitely think it was helpful for us. It gave us a guideline to kind of reflect on our co-teaching and our individual teaching as well. We were able to kind of look at it and see where on the scale we kind of fell and then change things, implement new strategies. I think it gave us kind of an eye-opening experience for us just to then reflect on our teaching, reflect on our co-teaching, and be able to make those changes or continue to grow in certain areas.

Elizabeth Rogers: I think it was really helpful too, to see where the end point was. Like where we are now and kind of what we're doing in the beginning, and then where we want to go. If you think about where you want to go and kind of think about what you're doing and what you can change to help you get there. I think that was kind of helpful. We also didn't really need to set roles, but we did kind of use it to see like what practices we were doing, like evidence-based practices. What was working in our classroom and what could kind of get us to the end goal and then also what we wanted to change or wanted to try different approaches for co-teaching, different models. We wanted to do different stuff to make sure that we were kind of growing in that area.

Jessica Kody: And I think too, we had such similar teaching styles that we kind of flowed in that sense. So it was just tweaking the things that we knew we had trouble with. We had some major behaviors and so kind of reflecting on how we could change our teaching and modify our teaching to help the classroom become a successful classroom.

Mary Stowe: It sounds like in your use of the tool, with the first item, where you were building a relationship - it sounds like you all did take to heart that understanding of each other's pedagogical philosophies. It also sounds like you were really student-centered and if something wasn't working that you were doing, that you were willing to, you know, collect the data and then change the practice to fit the needs of the student.

Elizabeth Rogers: Yeah, we were always about the kids and what's best for them.

Daria Lorio-Barsten: That brings us to the last question. What advice do you have for other co-teaching partners who wish to engage in self-growth, and is there a way that they can use the self-reflection tool and if so, how?

Elizabeth Rogers: We were talking about this one yesterday, but we would say that mostly you have to be very flexible and you have to trust each other. You have to trust that the other person

is doing the best that they can do, that you're doing the best that you can do, and that you can work together to make the co-teaching work. We also talked a lot about how the communication is a big part. You know, you have to talk about those things and I think using the tool, using that framework as a guide, it helps you kind of start those conversations. Like I said, we didn't have to assign roles, but I know there was one on there that you could come up with a contract, so if you were having a problem, you know, deciding who is supposed to do what...you could use it to help you start those conversations with your co-teacher about you know, who's going to do this and who is going to do that.

Jessica Kody: I think too, getting to know your co-teacher on a more personal level and like really knowing how they teach and knowing about them, leads to you guys being able to be successful in the classroom. When you know their teaching style and when you know their classroom management style, makes for a much more successful classroom and so being open and communicating, like Ms. Rogers said, is huge. I know we were in constant communication and I think if anything, like being a successful co-teacher, you need to communicate. If you're not communicating, it's going to be difficult to be successful in this job.

Elizabeth Rogers: I would also say too, that we tried lots of different things. We weren't afraid to change something. Sometimes people get stuck, like this is what I've been doing for all of these years and it works, but sometimes especially with that group...they taught me a lot that we had to change things. What I've been doing wasn't going to work and what we changed worked so much better, so I'm glad we changed it.

Jessica Kody: Yeah.

Elizabeth Rogers: Sometimes it's hard for people to be flexible to change.

Jessica Kody: I think we definitely...it was an eye opening experience for us as co-teachers because we had to learn a lot of different strategies that we wouldn't have learned otherwise had we not co-taught together...being flexible, being in constant communication, and being able to, like Ms. Rogers said, change things and do what's best for the students.

Mary Stowe: It sounds a little bit like you all supported each other in those changes and because you had each other's support you were able to then launch that growth because you had each other's back. But it also sounds like you had those hard conversations that sometimes need to happen when you're co-teachers. Even though you had maybe had hard conversations, the ultimate goal for you all was what was the best avenue for the students to make growth.

Elizabeth Rogers: Yes.

Daria Lorio-Barsten: Alright, well we wanted to thank you so much for being here with us, and for you, thank you for listening to this wonderful podcast...and just say this has really been a privilege and an honor to observe you in your practice and watch your growth.

Elizabeth Rogers: Thank you.

Jessica Kody: Thank you.

Mary Stowe: Well thank you for joining us and letting others know about the tool that you used and about your success as co-teachers, so thank you very much.

[MUSIC: T/TAC William and Mary Podcast Outro]