

This is a transcript of the T/TAC William and Mary podcast titled "Marilynn Friend".

Donni Davis-Perry: Today VDOE T/TAC William and Mary is welcoming Dr. Marilynn Friend. She is the author of many books, articles, and resources on co-teaching and inclusive practices, including the video series "The Power of Two". Dr. Friend, will you speak with us about what some of the facilitators to effective co-teaching are?

Marilynn Friend: Thank you Donni. Now you know of course, I could spend an entire day on this topic. But for those of you listening, don't worry I won't. We have a session to do today. So I guess what I would say - I would prioritize some, and you might be surprised at the first. I would tell you the first facilitator for effective co-teaching is very strong administrative support.

Donni Davis-Perry: Okay.

Marilynn Friend: Best at the district level, but has to be there at the school level because co-teaching is more than just what goes on in a classroom. Administrators are the problem-solvers who can ensure that schedules are set up properly, that the class composition has been addressed in a way that's reasonable, can problem-solve with teachers when something is not going well, and really can also step back, look at an overall program, and provide some measure of whether or not it's being effective. And of course administrators are also the leaders on data collection and I would put on their shoulders the responsibility of judging the quality of a co-taught program by having data related to it. A second facilitator I would give you is very strong ongoing professional development for the teachers and that includes both the general ed teacher and the special ed teacher. Still, too many general ed teachers do not really seriously learn about co-teaching in their teacher prep programs. Some do, but not many. Co-teaching is a complex expectation. Teachers need continued work to deepen their professional relationship and understand who is responsible for what. They often need assistance to understand that the special ed teacher is not in the classroom to be a helper or to become another general ed teacher, but that they have very clear responsibilities. Both partnerships really need to tackle the issue of: how do you make it work when you're sharing "territory", and I think it means face-to-face professional development or online professional development, but also coaching so that someone can come in and help teachers set goals and then they can work on those goals. I guess I would give you just one more.

Donni Davis-Perry: Okay.

Marilynn Friend: And that would be appropriate attention to the instruction in a co-taught class. You know, I met a principal in Illinois and he said, "you know, the teachers are comfortable, the kids are all in small groups, they're doing a lot of activities, and nothing's happening with outcomes". I suspect that's because what was happening within those wonderful groups done by those comfortable teachers may not have been effective in addressing the needs of students with disabilities, and so the more recent emphasis on specially designed instruction in co-teaching is necessary and I don't know, it's a facilitator of co-teaching that only recently has gotten the attention it deserves and when it is in place appropriately, the outcomes will be there for kids and of course, that's what professionals want.

Donni Davis-Perry: Okay, well thank for your time and for supporting teachers in Virginia.

Marilynn Friend: Thanks.