

This transcript of the T/TAC William & Mary podcast *A Mother and Daughter Co-Teaching Team's Story: A Unique Partnership at Lee Jackson Elementary School in Mathews County, VA* (2016)

Donni: Hi, I'm Donni Perry from the College of William and Mary's Training and Technical Assistance Center and I'm here talking today with an interesting pair of co-teachers. Chris Long and Chandler Rogers who are third grade teachers at Lee Jackson Elementary School in Mathews County Virginia. Chris and Chandler thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. Can you each tell us a little bit about your teaching and co-teaching experience so Chris can we start with you?

Chris: Well I have been teaching for over thirty years. I started out the first half of my career as a speech language pathologist in North Carolina and then when we relocated to Virginia I was able to get a position as a teacher for special ed students with learning disabilities. So for the last fifteen years I've been doing that. I feel like my background in speech pathology has been a very good advantage especially when it comes to teaching reading and spelling so that has been very helpful.

Donni: Ok and how about you Chandler.

Chandler: I've taught for six years. All at Lee Jackson and all in the third grade.

Donni: Ok great.

Chandler: I teach all subjects. I teach it all.

Donni: So how about co-teaching? Was this your first year?

Chandler: This was my first year co-teaching and teaching inclusion. Ms. Long you've been teaching inclusion

Chris: Ever since I've been here it's been kind of evolved from 15 years ago it was more pull out and then as the trend changed to collab classrooms. I was in the classroom more and more until it was pretty much a fulltime collaborative situation.

Donni: Ok. So one of the things that is unique about you two is that you are a mother and daughter co-teaching team. So what is it like teaching together?

Chandler: I really enjoyed it. I was a little nervous about it at first, but she is an excellent special education teacher, she is very professional and she knows what she is talking about and she helps those students with disabilities work on their goals. She is very knowledgeable about what she does and it has really been great.

Chris: I feel honored to also be... I mean who gets to do this. Who gets to see their child at work. It's very special to me. I would say that we are kind of... we balance each other out.

Chandler: I agree.

Chris: Her style is much more structured and I am much more individualized. I take liberties as far as speaking with kids independently. Like what's wrong today. Can you tell me what's up? And she is more managing the class in that way. They know and they can trust me and can come to me and that's all of them not just the students that I have on my list. We don't go in saying we are a mother/daughter team.

Chandler: Yeah, we don't tell them.

Donni: So the students don't know?

Chandler: Some of them might know from siblings so little by little. Sometimes if someone is having a bad day, Ms. Long will let them in on our secret. She has a wedding of me in her room.

Chris: Yeah they start connecting the dots a little bit and we say "who told you that".

Chandler: It's a little game we play. It's fun.

Chris: One time I read a book to the class and I said this was my one of my daughter's favorite books and I'll show how she scrolled her name in the front and some of them don't get it, but some of them are like oh, Mrs. Rogers is your daughter.

Chandler: It's really fun to hear their reactions and for some of them it's easy for them to believe and some of them are like "no way", "no way". So that's something fun we have done. She has been in third grade for three years.

Chris: I was in second grade before that.

Chandler: This is the first year we have co-taught together, but that is something fun we like to do.

Chris: I want to say that I really since I have so much experience seeing the teaching styles change so much and it's just different now. They come out of college doing it differently and the trends in education change so I have seen a real variety of teaching styles and some more effective than others.

Donni: So I'd like to ask you what do you think you can accomplish teaching together in the classroom that you couldn't accomplish if it was taught with just one teacher?

Chandler: One thing is classroom management. It just makes it easier if there is another adult when I'm teaching whole group, but mainly she is used to pull groups. We are able to individualize instruction more. Instead of just one person pulling groups. If there is two people in here we are able to seek double the amount of students which is really effective.

Chris: The station teaching you can assign them. It's a lot like small group, but more adult directed. You can see what they are doing more.

Chandler: We help each other differentiate activities whereas it is harder when there is only one person in here.

Chris: You might have a variety of.. if you have a worksheets. Do you think your students could do this one or would this one be better.

Chandler: Right and she's got more resources that I may not have and that makes it easier.

Donni: Ok. So tell me a little more about your co-planning? What's that time look like?

Chandler: Unfortunately that... Ms. Long is a wonderful special ed teacher and she has used in so many ways in our school and during my planning time she teachers system 44 which is a special reading program to 4th graders and then her planning time I have recess duty so when we do get to plan together it's before school or after school.

Chris: The third grade does team planning so Chandler does the math plans and another teacher does reading, social studies, and science. So the plans are kind of there so I will look at the plans and then modify it or bring something else to it that may not be in the formal plans.

Donni: So you talked a little bit about your co-teaching variations so what other things do you do? I heard station teaching.

Chandler: A lot of the times if I'm teaching whole group it would be more team teaching where I say something and she will jump in and add something that I wouldn't have thought of or another way that she knows how to present the information. Once in a while we will do parallel teaching where I will take half the class and I'll say you take half the class where it's a mix of general ed students and students with disabilities. So we kind of do a little bit of everything. Mostly I would say station teaching though.

Donni: Ok. And to end our time today I'm wondering what advice you could give to new co-teaching partners to help ensure they are effective?

Chandler: One piece of advice I would give is to make sure you are proactive you can educate parents because some parents are not always excited that their regular education students are in a classroom with students with disabilities. Just know what you are talking about and be proactive. Help educate the parents and most of the time after that they are excited to hear that another teacher is in there. The more hands the better. I would also say read those IEPs and know those accommodations because with.. I have seven student with disabilities it's better to go in the year knowing before you meet them what accommodations they are going to need. So you have it figured out and not worrying about that the first day of school.

Chris: I would say to be respectful of each other's style. In your head you might be saying "why is she explaining it that way" and I'm not going to say that in class. We are very professional in class, but she's offered me a lot of respect.

Chandler: And likewise. We know each other very well so if I was someone new going into co-teach with someone else, I would just get to know them very well. Because the better you know each other the better you are able to teach effectively I think.

Chris: Enforce classroom rules consistently. Be on the same page doing the same thing. So the children know what's what.

Chandler: And explaining to the students that Ms. Long is a teacher just like Ms. Rogers is and she is going to tell you things just like I am and you need to give her the respect and really we haven't had any issues.

Chris: Right and I think sometimes teachers want to know you can take this test without your multiplication sheet and I might have to say no, that's on their IEP.

Donni: Ok. Well thank you for your time today and all you do for your lucky student's here at Lee Jackson Elementary School.