

QVTHS: *The School Change Scoop*

Newsletter #1

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Project Introduction

Last summer, five QV teachers – in collaboration with professors from The New School – began work on a “school change” project. We worked to identify an area of focus, and our chosen area of study is improving the co-instructional environment (CTT, push-in, etc.) for both students and teachers. Our mission is to foster more holistic and effective collaborative teaching relationships at the school. We believe that improved co-instruction can lead to an improved work climate, more frequent contact with parents, increased teacher job satisfaction, and higher levels of student achievement.

Together, our goal in this project is to produce more effective partnerships among teachers, paraprofessionals, and other service providers in various Instructional Support classrooms. If we achieve our mission, then teachers, paraprofessionals, and others will increasingly be paired based upon their willingness to work together, subject-area consistency, and/or a judgment that their teaching styles will mesh. Ultimately, we expect that more effective teaching relationships will lead to greater fulfillment of Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, and better outcomes for all students in the class.

At QVTHS, over 200 students have an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which means that they have an identified disability. The needs of these students are addressed in a variety of settings. Presently, the majority of special education services are delivered to students in a collaborative teaching environment, such as Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT), or via push-in related services.

We believe that becoming highly effective teachers in co-instruction is based on a number of assumptions. One is that an effective co-instructional environment can lead to improved outcomes for both general education and special education students. Based on this premise, the project’s strategy will be to review co-instruction best practices and utilize that research to foster an improved collaborative educational experience.

Other assumptions we have include:

- The ICT model is highly effective in instructing students receiving instructional support services and ELLs.
- Teachers collaborating effectively increases student outcome. The students are closely monitored and able to ask questions and express concerns on an individual level.
- ICT is a more effective way of educating a class that includes general education and special education students. The individual attention that the teachers provide allows them to better identify the strengths and weaknesses of the IEP and ELL students. ICT increases the ability to initiate and maintain parent outreach for students receiving instructional support services.
- ICT is easier for both teachers. The workload (i.e., lesson planning, grading, parent outreach, etc.) can be fairly divided and effectively planned.
- ICT is a partnership as opposed to separate individual work. Both teachers have equitable responsibilities.
- If teachers are given professional development on the ICT model, they will be able to implement learned strategies in the classroom and better instruct their students.

Co-teaching classrooms are increasingly the norm in schools. It is our hope that through our work, we will become better individual co-teachers, as well as providers of useful information, workshops, and research-tested practices to help the QV community best implement co-teaching possibilities.

We look forward to sharing our work this year through our project blog, accessible at <http://qvcoin.wordpress.com> and periodic newsletters. Please also follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/qvcoin.

Regards from QVTHS’ Change Plan Team,

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Co-Teacher Survey Results

The results of the teachers that participated in the anonymous Co-Instruction Survey given in the 2010-2011 school year were very enlightening.

Areas that teachers felt were successful included:

Open communication between educators, common educational experiences for our students, and common goals of the everyday classroom

Areas where teachers felt improvement was necessary included:

Co-planning time, students accepting both teachers as equals, and general education teacher as having the primary responsibility in the classroom

Another anonymous survey helped to aid in the scheduling of classes in the 2011-2012 school year. Many of the general and ISS education teachers were able to anonymously disclose the teachers that they had successful relationships with in years previous. Those surveys were taken into great consideration in the hopes of improving the classroom experience of our students this school year.

The areas teachers feel improvement is necessary is a focus of the change plan team. The thoughts expressed will help us to engage in further planning to better all of our experiences!

Co-Teaching Planning Tips

Planning for the Partnership!

Teachers, please keep in mind all the opportunities for partnership in a shared class. Here are just a few areas to think about when planning:

- Behavior management / discipline
- Class materials
- Homework
- Modifications for individual students
- Grading
- Noise level/Cooperative learning
- Giving & receiving feedback
- Parental contact

Planning for the Partnership, continued

- Ways to “interrupt” each other
- Rules you can’t live without in a class
- Assessments
- Physical classroom layout
- Movement/transitions
- Classroom rituals
- Crisis/management/emergency procedures
 - Regents review/ test prep

Planning throughout the Year!

Communication & Co-planning are Keys to Successful Co-teaching!

- You should have one overlapping block free to co-plan. Schedule it and stick to your co-planning sessions.
- Successful co-teachers who’ve been teaching together for more than a year report that they spend AT LEAST 10 minutes planning every lesson before they divide their duties.
- Use planning time only to plan. (There is a time and place for reflection and discussion of specific problems. It is not during your limited planning time.)
- Agree on a system and schedule for critical reflection, discussion, and revision of lessons (separate from department meetings).
- Agree on a primary and secondary mode of communication when meeting is not possible: email, text, on-line class website, etc.
- Schedule a meeting to review, discuss, and plan for students with IEP’s and related services.
- Divide duties equitably. This includes preparation of writing daily lessons, locating/modifying texts, visuals, and other resources, the selection of important or difficult vocabulary, and the creation of differentiated activities and assessments.
- Play to each other’s teaching strengths, teaching styles, educational philosophy, and skill sets. Identify your own areas of growth, and create opportunities to broaden your pedagogical framework.
- Share your calendar with your co-teacher to include any planned (or potential) absences.