

QVTHS: *A Culture of Collaboration*

December 2011

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“People are always looking for the single magic bullet that will change everything. There is no single magic bullet...I cannot emphasize the importance of a good teacher. A good teacher is worth his or her weight in gold.”

— Temple Grandin

Announcements

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. Our goal with this newsletter is to share useful information and best practices that we have discovered in our work. We hope that you find this helpful; please share your feedback!

- L. Elbettah, M. Esguerra, E. MacDonald,
C. Rejalaga, J. Toliver

INTERVISITATION BEGINS!

Teachers! Are you interested in visiting a colleague's classroom or having a colleague visiting you? Are you excited about building best practices at QV? This month, look for an announcement and sign-up sheet in your mailbox for intervisitation options.

Co-Teaching Models

There are five models of co-teaching to be considered when planning instruction. There is no one size fits all solution to planning and co-teachers should choose one or a combination of these models based on content as well as student need.

One Teach, One Support

One teacher takes the lead role in presenting instruction to the whole class while the partner assumes a supportive role by circulating around the classroom to collect data or assist students.

Station Teaching

Several learning stations are set up in the classroom with groups of students moving from station to station. Each co-teacher coordinates a station with remaining stations being independent.

Parallel Teaching

The class is equally divided in two and each teacher teaches the lesson to half the students. Both teachers use the same lesson plan to ensure that students in both groups are exposed to the same information.

Alternative Teaching

One teacher takes the lead in instructing the large group while the other works with a smaller group off to the side for a special purpose. Teachers should take turns as the lead and the alternate co-teacher.

Team Teaching

Both teachers take a lead in active instructional responsibilities. Both teachers co-present a lesson. Both teachers are viewed as equal partners in instructional planning and delivery.

Questions for Creating a Collaborative Working Relationship

It is helpful for potential co-teachers to discuss their teaching philosophies, routines, and student expectations throughout the school year. These questions are designed to serve as a starting point for co-teaching discussions. Depending on previous experiences working together, some questions may not be relevant. Review the questions in advance and plan to spend about an hour together discussing these items. Remember that differences of opinion are inevitable; differences are OK and perfectly normal. Effective co-teachers learn and grow professionally from their work together. Competent professional skills, openness, and interest in working together are more important than perfect agreement on classroom rules.

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TOPIC	QUESTIONS
INSTRUCTIONAL BELIEFS	How do your instructional beliefs affect our instructional practices? What instructional methods do you like to use, e.g., lectures, discussions? What are your biggest hopes for our work as a team? Biggest concerns?
PLANNING	How do we divide our responsibilities for planning and teaching? How much joint planning time do we need?
PARITY	How can we ensure a sense of parity during instructions?
CONFIDENTIALITY	What information about our teaching do we want to share with others?
NOISE	What noise level are you comfortable with in the classroom?
CLASSROOM ROUTINES	What are the instructional routines for the classroom? What are the organizational routines for the classroom?
DISCIPLINE	What is acceptable and unacceptable student behavior? Who is to intervene and at what point in the students' behavior? What type of intervention do you use?
FEEDBACK	What is the best way to give each other feedback? How will you ensure that both positive and negative issues are raised?
PET PEEVES	What aspects of teaching and classroom life does each of us feel strongly about? Do you have any pet peeves?

Cook & Friend, (1995)

“At the core of co-teaching is determining what instructional techniques will be most efficient and effective in helping all students meet academic standards.” — Murawki & Dieke

Ten Tips for General Educators

With collaboration and focused efforts, all students can actively participate in the classroom.

Share your lessons and plans.

You are not alone. When you share your teaching plans, the special education team can modify the content to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Vary your instructional methods.

Make learning an active experience for ALL students. Create cooperative learning groups and encourage partner learning. Provide a variety of resource materials, workshop formats, and experiential activities. Have students demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways. When students respond to content questions they are practicing social and communication skills as well as learning the content. Your informal assessments and teaching observations can provide useful insights into possible curriculum modifications.

Ask content questions daily.

Expect ALL students to learn and participate in your classroom. Tell students what you expect. Adjust the demands of activities or assignments to match the student's abilities.

Expect success.

Work with the special education team to clarify learning goals for students with IEP's. Check to see that your students are continually working toward their learning objectives. Assess student knowledge no matter their level of ability.

Treat students equally.

Set clear behavior expectations and disciplinary methods for ALL students in your classroom. Share your expectations with other adults.

Share ideas and feelings.

Express your fears and opinions. Phrase concerns in specific terms. Instead of saying, "I don't think this student belongs here!" Try, "How can I make Shakespeare meaningful for this student?"