

Co-Teaching and Collaboration

Effective Strategies for Reaching Students
with Disabilities in General Education
Classrooms

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U.S. Department of Education • Teacher to Teacher Initiative • Supporting Success



Session Outcomes

- Discuss the advantages of co-teaching for students with and without disabilities
- Practice the “styles” of co-teaching
- Review the research on co-teaching



Collaboration

- Comes from “co-labor” = to work together.
- Collaboration is a style of interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal (Cook & Friend, 1995).
- The most common goal for teachers is to boost student achievement.
- One model for collaboration is co-teaching.

L. Cook and M. Friend, “Co-teachings guidelines for creating effective practices,” *Focus on Exceptional Children* 28, no. 3, 1995: 1-16.



Co-Teaching

- A teaching relationship in which general and special educators share responsibility for **planning, delivery and evaluation** of instruction for a heterogeneous group of students.
- These teachers work in a **coactive and coordinated fashion** in which they use techniques which allow students of varying abilities to achieve their potential.



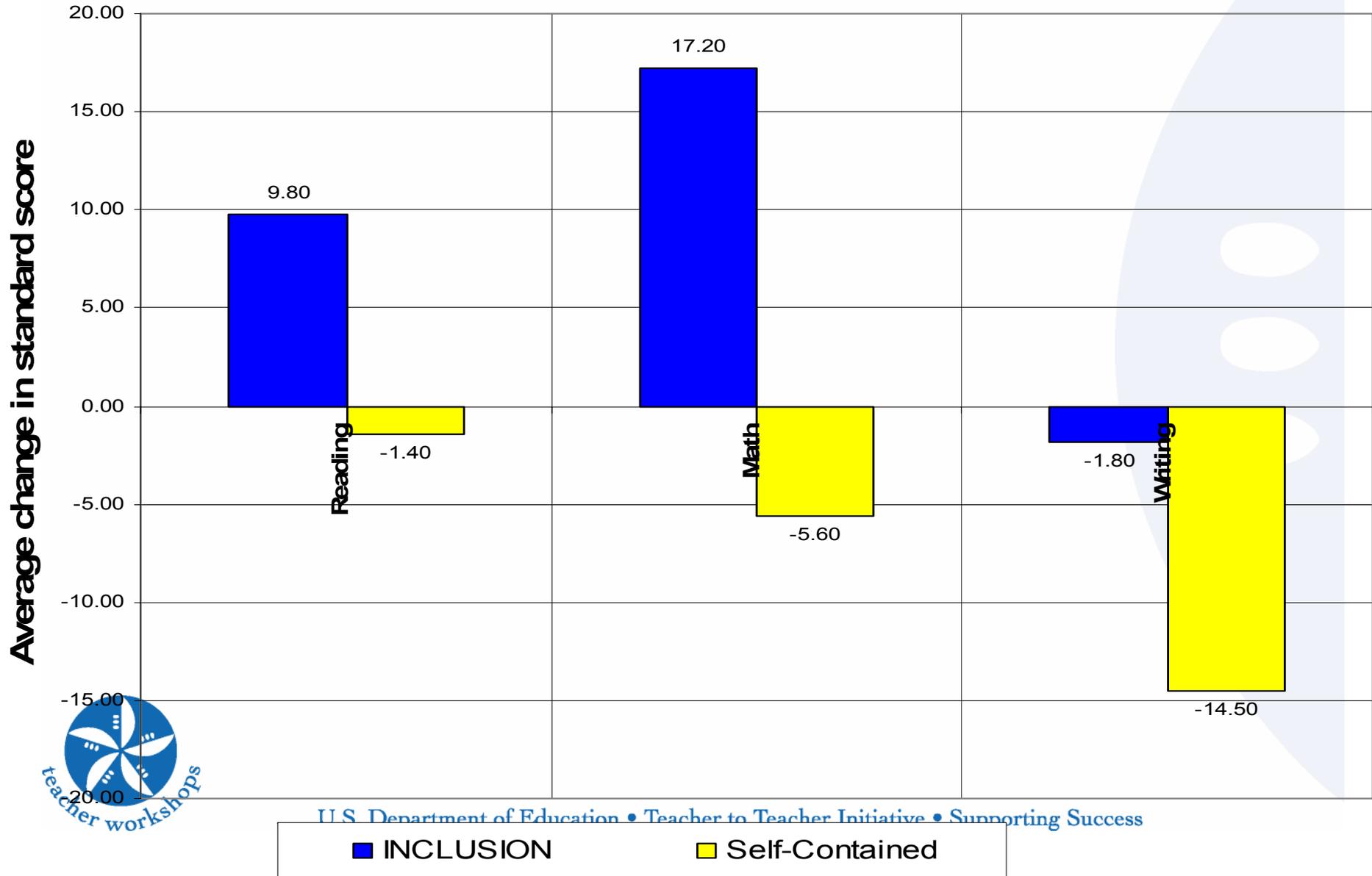
Results of Action Research at Schools in Southern California

- Students with disabilities at Mariposa Elementary, Brea, including those with autism and who were formerly excluded to special classes, are fully included.
- All special education teacher co-teach with general education teachers.



This graph shows average change in standard scores between initial and subsequent administrations of the Woodcock-Johnson achievement tests given between 1st and 6th grades for students in an inclusive school and students in self-contained schools.

D. Miller, 2004, unpublished Masters Thesis



Obviously, the Effects of Inclusion Were Tremendous!

- Students who remained in segregated classrooms not only **did not improve**, they **got worse**!
- However, there was not enough growth in writing for included students. This surprised the staff at Mariposa!
- After this study, Mariposa teachers took a closer look at their writing instruction and have made changes in their instruction.
- This experience illustrates the **critical importance of collecting data on your students** so that you will know what do to do to improve your program!



Benefits for Students Without Disabilities

- Increased time for individualized attention and supervision of low achieving students.
- Increased teacher time and assistance for such activities as student monitoring, individual assistance, student conferences, providing enrichment activities or re-teaching, and guided practice activities
- Possibility that high achieving students can get individualized attention and enrichment

K. Magiera and N. Zigmond N., "Co-Teaching in Middle School Classrooms under Routine Conditions: Does the Instructional Experience Differ for Students with Disabilities in Co-Taught and Solo-Taught Classes," *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice* 20, no. 2, 2005: 79-85.



Evidence

A vocabulary strategy taught in an inclusive classroom benefited both students with and without disabilities.

Mean percentage correct on social studies vocabulary test		
Taught in	Test 1 (before LINCS)	Test 2 (after LINCS Class A)
Students with LD in Class A	53%	77%
Normally achieving students in Class A	84%	82%
All students in Class B	86%	95%

Source: M. Wedel, D.D. Deshler, J.B. Schumaker and E.S. Ellis, *Effects of Instruction of a Vocabulary Strategy in a Mainstream Class* (Lawrence, Kan.: Center for Research on Learning, in preparation).



An Important Note

- Some of the LD students in this study received additional instructional time outside of the mainstream class when they needed it to complete the practice activities.
- This means that students with LD who receive instruction in general education may still need to be pulled-out for additional practice. This has been supported by other research (Glaeser, 1998).
- **This is what special education was designed to be: A continuum of services, not a separate place!**



Components of the Co-Teaching Relationship

- Teachers are equally responsible for what happens in the classroom
- Decisions are made together
- Teachers share all roles
- Student needs determine classroom practice
- Both teachers facilitate learning and impact knowledge



Why Learn to Co-Teach?

- Every general education teacher at some time will have a child with a disability, 504 Plan or Behavior Support Plan integrated into his or her classroom.
- This child may be serviced by a special education teacher or some other specialist, such as a speech therapist.
- Co-teaching allows two adults with different areas of expertise to work together in one classroom for the benefit of ALL children.
- Allows for a wider range of instructional techniques and strategies.

Capitalizes on the training of both teachers. Specialists are available to work with all students, even gifted, and general education teachers learn strategies for working with students with disabilities.



Co-Teaching Benefits

- Increases learning options for all students.
For example, with reduced student-to-teacher ratio, more students can receive one-on-one attention (Magiera and Zigmond, 2005).
- Improves program intensity and continuity.
For example, academic strategies learned in special education can be applied in general education. Special educators can reinforce and encourage generalization of these strategies.



Co-Teaching Benefits

- Reduces the stigma for students with disabilities and learning difficulties.

Because they are included with their normally achieving peers, the stigma of a “disabled” label is reduced and social skills improve (Zigmond & Baker, 1995).
- Increases support for teachers and related service personnel.

Teachers working together feel less isolated and grow from collaborating with another professional (Cook & Friend, 1995).
- Most importantly, co-teaching utilizes the **unique perspectives** of general and special educators who share their **strengths** to create teaching approaches that could not occur if only one teacher were present



Benefits for Students with Disabilities

- Improved self-esteem and self-confidence (Zigmond & Baker, 1995).
- Improved social skills and peer relationships (Zigmond & Baker, 1995).
- Perform better in general education settings than in special education settings (Murawski & Swanson, 2001).
- Increased understanding that general education students often have difficulty learning new concepts as well.

N. Zigmond & Baker, "The Meaning and Practice of Inclusion for Students with Learning Disabilities: Themes and Implications from the Five Cases," *Journal of Special Education* 29, no. 2, 1995: 163-180.



What Does the Research Say About Co-Teaching?

- An analysis of all co-teaching studies by Murawski & Swanson in 2001 indicated that **co-teaching can have a positive effect on student achievement.**

Reading and language arts showed the strongest outcomes. Achievement in **Math and lower referrals** for special education were also noted as moderate outcomes.

- Zigmond and colleagues (2003) watched students in a co-taught classroom and found that **students received more interactions with a teacher**
 - This meant more individual attention, more time on-task, and less student responding off-task.
 - The results seemed subtle but added up: 2 minutes more per period, 5 periods per week x 36 weeks, = 360 minutes or **6 hours more of paying attention for a student with a disability.**



W. Murawski & L. Swanson, "A meta-analysis of co-teaching: Where are the data?" Remedial and Special Education 22, no. 3, 2001: 258-267

Additional Components That Support Co-Teaching:

- Common planning time
- Flexibility
- Risk taking
- Defined roles and responsibilities
- Compatibility
- Communication skills
- Administrative support



Structures for Working Together in the Classroom

- There are many ways that teachers can work together to make the lesson easier to understand for all students.
- One teacher can take the lead, with one supporting the other and focusing on individual or groups of students
 - Lead/support
 - Alternative or pull-aside groups
- Both teachers can lead lessons so the teacher/student ratio is reduced.
 - Team teaching
 - Parallel teaching
 - Station teaching



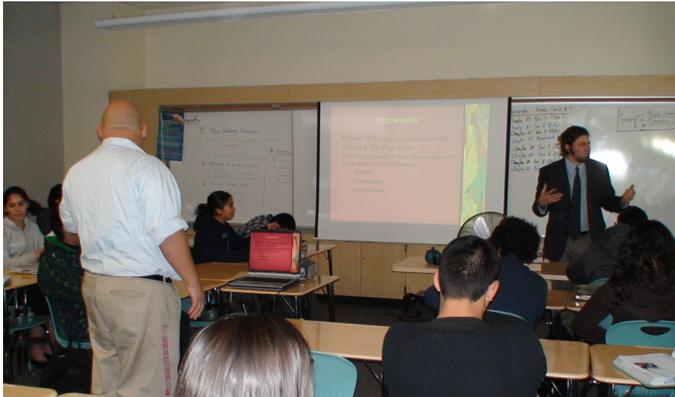
Lead-Support

- One teacher can have primary responsibility for teaching while the other:
 - Observes particular student behaviors
 - Assesses individual students
 - Circulates through the room providing unobtrusive one-to-one assistance
- Avoid the “paraprofessional trap,” where the special educator becomes a paraprofessional, merely an “assistant” in the GE classroom

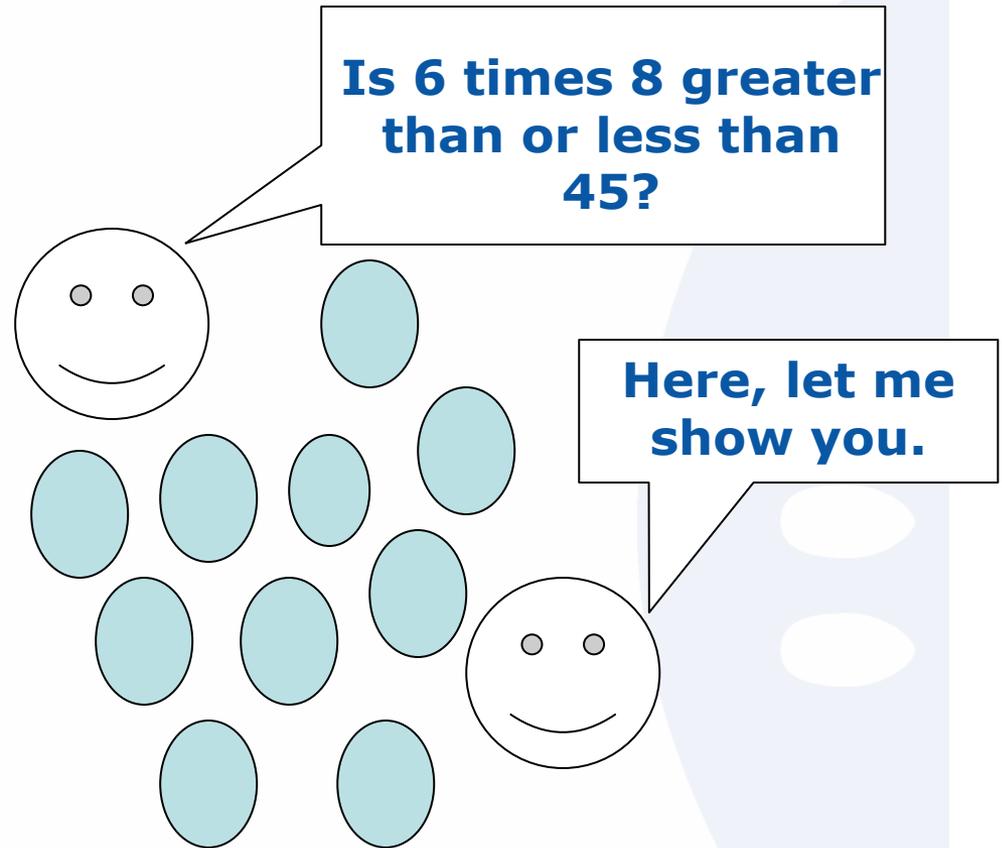


Lead-Support

One teacher leads the lesson, while the other helps individual students.



Mr. Shimasaki, special educator, leads a lesson on Japan with Mr. Berger, the history teacher, providing support to the group and to individual students.

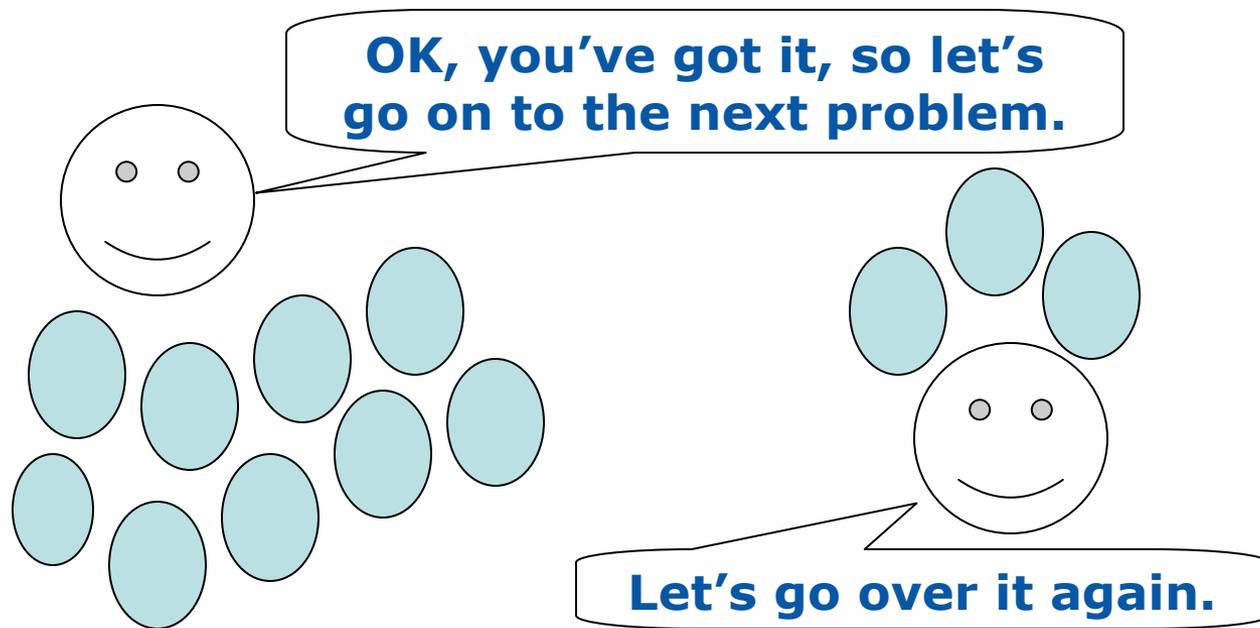


Alternative Teaching

One teacher works with a small group needing re-teaching while the other provides enrichment or alternative activities for the rest of the class. This can be used for pre-teaching, enrichment and/or assessment.



Alternative or Pull-Aside Groups



Once students understand a concept or procedure, one teacher goes on with the lesson while the other re-teaches them to a small group.

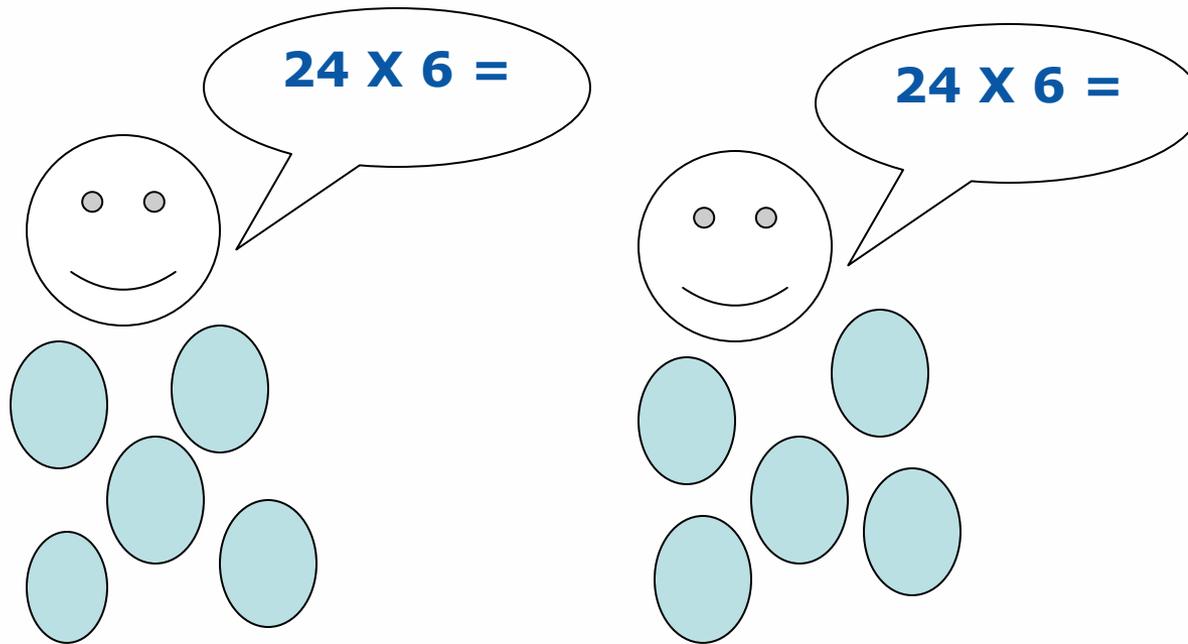


Parallel Teaching

Both teachers teach the same information, but they divide the class group and do so simultaneously



Parallel Teaching



The class is divided into two groups. Each teacher teaches the same topic to one group.



Parallel Teaching at Mariposa Elementary School, Fifth Grade

100 percent of SDC students included

GE 5th grade teacher

SDC teacher



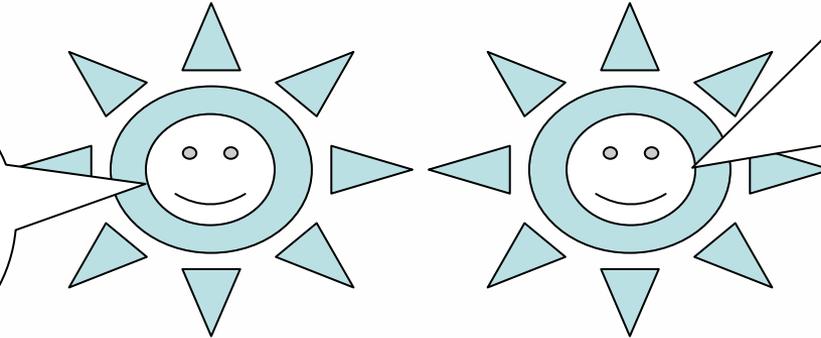
Station Teaching

Teachers divide content and students, each then teaches the content to one group and subsequently repeats the instruction for the other group. Sometimes there is another “station” for independent work or computer work.



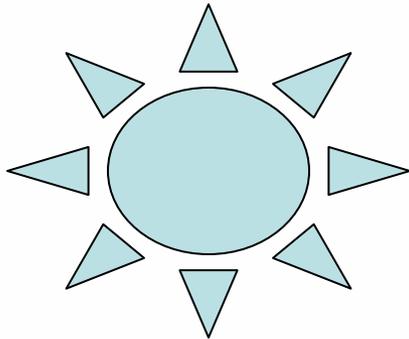
Station Teaching

Look at
the first
problem,
 $8/4$



Teacher-led groups

If you have
eight pieces of
pizza and you
need to give it
to 4 children,
how many does
each child get?



With a partner, cut out the
pizzas and paste them onto your
paper to show the expressions
on this list: $8/4$, $2\frac{1}{2}$, $3/3$

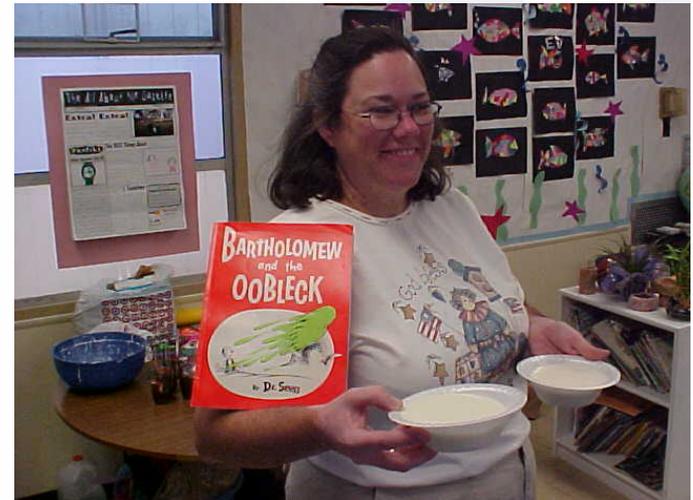
Independent group



Station Teaching



- Amy, the general education teacher, listens as Erin, the special educator, explains the stations they have planned to teach an integrated science-literature lesson.
- **Station 1:** Students will work independently writing short stories based on Dr. Seuss' *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*. High achievers start at this station because they will have little supervision.
- **Station 2:** Students will work with Amy to bind books in which they will cut and paste their stories. Average achievers will start with this station.
- **Station 3:** Students will work with Erin to make Obleck. Low achievers and wiggly students will begin here. Students then rotate, with the most needy students working at the independent station last.



Team Teaching

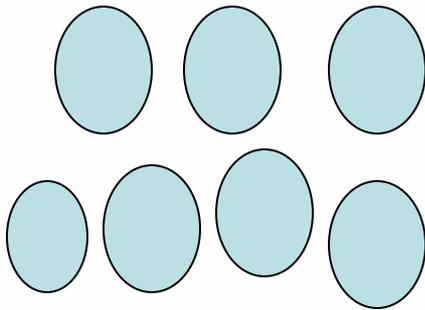
Both teachers are delivering the same instruction at the same time. One may model while the other speaks, one may demonstrate while the other explains. The teachers role play, or they may simply take turns delivering instruction.



Team Teaching

We are learning how to multiply two-digit numbers by one digit.

$$\begin{array}{r} 16 \\ \times 2 \\ \hline \end{array}$$



Teachers share teaching tasks.



Mrs. Mumford, special educator, teams with Mr. Swift, ninth grade earth science, at Valley High School, Santa Ana, Calif.

Implementation Suggestions

- During the planning process, discuss your views on teaching and learning, and especially, your views on children with disabilities
- Discuss behavior management and other practices so you can come to an agreement
- Let parents know about the benefits of co-teaching
- Agree to be equal partners:
 - Plan ways to talk out disagreements
 - Proceed slowly in designing, implementing, and evaluating the co-teaching process



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