

RUNNING HEAD: Co-teaching vs. Singular Teaching

CO-TEACHING VS. SINGULAR TEACHING AND THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES ON
STUDENT'S READING GROWTH

By

Michelle Brooker

Submitted to

Professional Education Faculty

Northwest Missouri State University Missouri

Department of Professional Education

College of Education and Human Services

Maryville, MO 64468

Submitted in Fulfillment for the Requirements for

61-683 Research Paper

Fall 2014

February 20, 2015

Introduction

Background, Issues and Concerns

There have been increasing demands on schools and teachers to differentiate for the needs of several diverse students. In order to successfully help all students, schools are looking for alternative and creative approaches such as co-teachers. It is important for students to receive individual instruction and feedback, but with large class sizes and diverse needs, it can be difficult for one teacher to address each student with adequate attention. Having two teachers in a classroom can increase teacher to student interaction and more individualized instruction.

An issue that has been identified is that having two teachers causes leadership and power struggles. If there is not adequate communication, the teachers may not be aware of the role that they have and be unsure of their responsibilities. Students may also struggle with knowing which teacher is the appropriate teacher to help them. Roles and responsibilities need to be clearly laid out.

The financial burden of having co-teachers is also a concern that school districts will have. With the budgets becoming increasingly tighter, finding money for two teachers in one classroom may prove difficult.

A concern with having a co-teacher is building a strong relationship with the co-teacher in order for it to be successful. There needs to be open communication, reflection, and constructive feedback between both teachers.

Practice under Investigation

The practice under investigation will be looking at Fountas and Pinell reading levels. There will be an investigation to see if there is a difference in students' growth in their reading

levels after receiving instruction in classroom with one teacher compared to students' growth in their reading levels in a classroom with two teachers co-teaching.

School Policy to be Informed by Study

Each school and each grade level has benchmark reading levels that students need to reach before moving on to the next level. If there are significant increases in student growth when having a co-teacher, the school administrator will be notified to increase co-teaching opportunities.

Conceptual Underpinning

In a classroom of students, no two students will be alike. They will not all need the same instruction and they will not all need the same amount of attention from the classroom teacher. With having so many differences in a classroom, it can be incredibly difficult for one teacher to meet the needs of each student in the room. While a teacher can use several different strategies to help meet the needs of different students, such as small group instruction, the other students must be actively engaged in an activity that they can complete without constant direction from the teacher. When there are two teachers in a classroom, students have the opportunity to gain more personal, individualized instruction because of the shared responsibilities and more growth in a shorter amount of time. In theory, students should show a greater amount of growth when they are in a classroom with two teachers.

Statement of the Problem

If there is a difference in the growth of student's reading levels when having a co-teacher, teachers and school administrators need to know so co-teaching could become a common place practice.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to see if there is a relationship between having a co-teacher and the increase in student reading levels. I want to see if students' reading levels increase with having two teachers, each leading small, differentiated reading groups.

Research Question(s)

Is there a significant difference in reading levels between students taught with a co-teacher and students not taught with a co-teacher?

Null Hypothesis(es)

There is not a significant difference in reading levels between students taught with a co-teacher and students not taught with a co-teacher.

Anticipated Benefits of the Study

The anticipated benefits of the study are higher student reading levels in a shorter amount of time and more use of the co-teaching model in several classrooms.

Definition of Terms

Fountas and Pinnell - Reading test given at certain times of the school year to measure students' growth in reading

Co-teacher – two equally qualified individuals delivering instruction to a group of students

Differentiated Instruction – providing instruction to meet the individual needs of students

Summary

A study was conducted to see if there was a significant difference in students' reading growth with having a co-teacher. If the t-test concludes that there was significant difference, more teachers and school administrators should be open to the opportunity of co-teaching. Since classrooms have several diverse students that have each have different instructional needs,

creative approaches should be used to help students become successful. After the study is completed, school administrators can benefit from looking at the data and to create more co-teaching opportunities.

Review of Literature

Co-teaching has made appearances in education since the late 1980s as a support to inclusion. It was not the most popular choice at the time and self-contained classrooms or resource rooms continued to be the preferred strategy (Pugach & Winn, 2011). As time passed, a study in 2007 found that performance and attendance were higher for both general and special education students in a co-taught classroom than an individually taught classroom (Jones, Jones & Vermette, p. 49)

The IDEA Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, in 2004, stated that students with special needs preferred placement is in the regular classroom. Since then, schools have looked for different strategies to help meet the diverse needs of students that were now a part of the general education setting. Co-teaching became one of those strategies (Magiera et al., 2006). According to Bronson and Dentith (2014), “Team teaching, co-teaching, collaborative teaming and partner-teaching are some of the terms associated with the practice of teachers working together with the same group of children in common settings” (p. 507). While Co-teaching can go by a variety of names, the purpose of co-teaching varies as well. Inclusion of students in the regular education setting, lowering the teacher to student ratio, or novice teachers gaining experience from veteran teachers are all examples of how co-teaching can be used (Bronson & Dentith, 2014).

The strategy of co-teaching can take many forms. Alternative teaching is when one teacher is giving instruction to the whole class; the second teacher pulls a group of students out of the whole class. The small group of students is then provided with enrichment or intervention depending on what the students’ need. One teach/One assist involves a lead teacher instructing

the whole class and the second teacher works around the room, addressing students as needed. Team teaching is when both teachers deliver instruction at the same time. (Jones, Jones & Vermette, p. 49). When team-teaching is being utilized, teachers should develop a signal that lets the lead teacher at the time know that they have something to add or explain. (Forbes & Billet, 2012). One teach/One observe is used when one teacher is delivering instruction, the second teacher is purposefully observing the class, or a particular student. The observer might also be collecting data to be used in the future. Station teaching involves each teacher leading their own station with a small group of students while other students are independently working. In parallel teaching, a class is divided into two groups and each group is instructed with the same lesson plan with one of the co-teachers (Conderman, 2011).

Seymour and Seymour have been looking at how to use co-teaching since 2006. They took note of the benefits and limitations of co-teaching, or team-teaching, over a four year period. While their findings were largely positive, the faculty's responses were much more positive than the students'. Both students and faculty believed co-teaching to be effective and helpful, however; Seymour and Seymour state that "there is little concrete evidence to demonstrate that co-teaching is more effective than individual instruction" (Seymour & Seymour p. 42).

Greg Conderman (2011) also took a look at co-teaching and compiled three components that teachers need to address when they are in a co-teaching situation; co-planning, co-instruction, and co-assessing. During co-planning, both teachers need to contribute ideas about the lesson as well as modifications for diverse learners and have an agenda to work from. Co-instruction is when the two teachers deliver instruction using a method that was discussed during the co-planning. Co-assessing happens after instruction when the two teachers look at academic

and behavioral data to determine the effectiveness of their lesson. While looking at student achievement, Conderman also looked at feedback from students. “The most frequent favorite aspect of co-teaching, as noted by 57 students, was the amount of help they received.” (Conderman p. 30).

Co-teaching is not a strategy that can easily be jumped into without any forethought. While planning is an important part for an individual teacher, it becomes even greater when there are two teachers involved. Flexibility, collaboration, and compromise are each useful in creating a successful co-teaching experience. Co-teaching involves a lot of planning that takes place over a matter of time. It’s important to plan the lesson, the assignments, and the roles of each of the co-teachers. (Graziano & Navarrete, 2012). Increased planning time is not the only challenge that threatens the success of co-teaching. Co-teachers may find it difficult to find a balance of power. However, if co-teachers are careful to avoid potential problems, unique learning opportunities are often then available to students (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013). Communication can also pose a potential problem. It’s important for co-teaching partners to understand what their partner is thinking or feeling and what they bring to the partnership. (Conderman, Johnston-Rodriguez, & Hartman, 2009).

While there are risks involved with using any strategy, there are often several benefits for the students as well as the teacher. Co-teaching provides growth, personal development, increased teaching competence, and skills, especially for novice teachers. (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013). In a co-teaching setting, there is an opportunity for feedback and reflection on lesson plans. There is another person, another perspective to improve or change instruction.

By educating teachers in the different forms of co-teaching, giving educators opportunities to practice the different models of co-teaching can translate into lower student to

teacher ratio. By having lower student to teacher ratio, students then have the opportunity to receive more direct instruction, specific feedback, and instruction to meet the student's needs.

Research Methods

Research Design

This experimental research was conducted over a period of time of about 5 months to compare a traditional methodology of a singular teacher in a classroom to a newer methodology of having two teachers in a room. Students were chosen from the school year, 2013-2014, to work in small groups. Those students' reading levels and their reading growth was closely monitored and represents the control group. Students were also chosen from the school year 2014-2015 to work in a class with a co-teacher and receive additional small group instruction. This group represents the experimental group. The independent variable is the status of the student, whether they had a co-teacher or not. The dependent variable is the reading achievement of the students.

Study Group Description

The study was completed at a Midwestern rural elementary school that is a Pre-K through 4th grade building with 352 students. 71% of the student population is white, 1.4% is Indian, 8.5% is Hispanic, 12.5% is Black, and 1.7% is Asian. The free and reduced lunch rate is 65.2%. There are four first grade classes, each with 18 to 22 students. The students have homeroom teachers, but for reading, students are moved throughout the entire grade level to be with students at the same reading level. The research will take place in the basic reading group that has 22 students at this time.

Seven students were randomly selected from a first grade reading classroom with one teacher during the Fall of 2013 to be compared to seven randomly selected students in the same first grade reading classroom that now has a co-teacher in the Fall of 2014.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Fountas and Pinnell reading levels were recorded at the beginning of the school year in 2013 and 2014 and then again at the end of the second quarter.

Statistical Analysis Methods

A t-test was used to find the difference in student's reading levels when they have had a co-teacher and student's reading levels when they had a singular teacher. The information was broken into two categories: students that were in a co-taught reading class and students that were not in a co-taught reading class. The mean, mean D, t-test, df, and p-value were concluded from this test. The Alpha level was set to .25 to test the null hypothesis: There is not a significant difference in reading levels between students taught with a co-teacher and students not taught with a co-teacher.

FINDINGS

A t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in the growth of students' reading levels based on if the students were in a co-taught classroom or not. The following tables and charts will display the data from a first grade reading class in 2013 with a singular teacher compared to data from a first grade reading class in 2014 that was co-taught.

Figure 1

t-Test Analysis Results for the Differences in Students' Reading Levels with a Co-Teacher

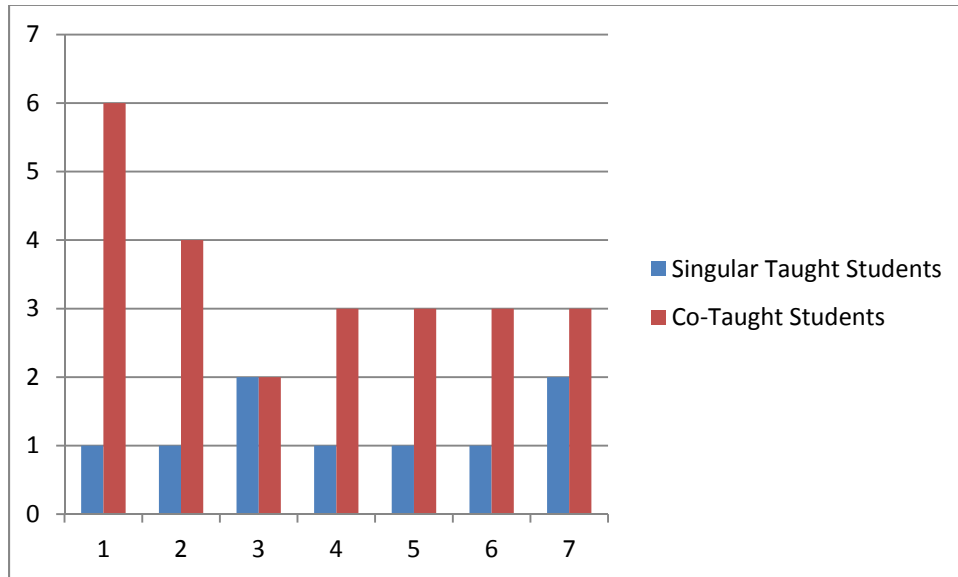
Source	Mean	Mean D	<i>t</i> -test	df	<i>p</i> -value
Singular Teacher	1.29				
Co-Teachers	3.43	-2.14	-4.16	12	.0013

Note: Significant when $p \leq 0.25$

Seven students were randomly selected in 2013 from a first grade reading class that was taught by a singular teacher along with seven randomly selected students selected in 2014 from the same first grade reading class that was now being co-taught. The data collected on these students for the last two years showed the growth of students' reading levels according to Fountas and Pinnell reading tests. The mean of students' reading growth taught by a singular teacher is 1.29 and the mean of student's reading growth taught by a co-teacher is 3.43. The Mean D, the difference between the two groups, is -2.14. The t-test was -4.16 and the df was 12. The null hypothesis states there is not a significant difference in reading levels between students taught with a co-teacher and students not taught with a co-teacher. This null hypothesis is

rejected because the p-value, .0013, is less than the alpha level, 0.25. This shows that there is a significant difference in reading levels between students taught with a co-teacher and students not taught with a co-teacher. Students that were taught by co-teachers were able to achieve more growth in their reading levels.

Figure 2



Students in the Singular Taught class and students in the Co-Taught class were given the Fountas and Pinell reading test at the beginning of 2013 and 2014. This reading test measures accuracy, fluency, reading rate, and comprehension. Throughout the first and second quarter of the year, students were instructed by whole class lessons and small group instruction. The students from the 2014 Co-Taught class received direct, small group instruction from two teachers, two to three times a week. This allowed them to receive small group instruction from a teacher every day. Students from the 2013 Singular Taught class also received direct, small group instruction two to three times a week; however, from only one teacher. This allowed students to receive small group instruction from a teacher about every other day. At the end of the second quarter, students from both groups were given the Fountas and Pinell reading test to

see the number of reading levels the students had grown. The above chart compares the number of reading levels students grew when they had a singular teacher to the growth of student's reading levels who were taught by co-teachers. The chart shows that while students from both categories showed growth, the students that were in the Co-Teaching group consistently grew more levels than the students in the Singular Teaching group.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcomes found from this study conclude that students taught in a Co-Teaching format grow more reading levels than when taught by a singular teacher. The findings show that there is a significant difference in the growth of students' reading levels when they are taught by two teachers rather than when they are taught by one teacher. The t-test results indicated that the p-value was .0013, which is much lower than the alpha level of .25. The null hypothesis that there is not a significant difference in reading levels between students taught with a co-teacher and students not taught with a co-teacher is rejected. There is a significant difference in reading levels between students taught with a co-teacher and students not taught with a co-teacher.

The theory that students should show a greater amount of growth when they are in a classroom with two teachers is supported by these findings. Students are able to receive more direct instruction from two different teachers and possibly, with two different teaching styles. By implementing the co-teaching strategy, the varieties of students' needs are easier to meet and more students are able to work with a teacher every day. In this study, the benefit of higher reading growth by using the Co-Teaching strategy outweighs the familiarity and comfort of having one teacher. Teachers should implement a more wide-spread Co-Teaching strategy.

After concluding this study there are further studies that can be conducted. This study was only concluded in a first grade classroom, in a basic reading level classroom. The Co-Teaching Strategy could be looked at across grades at the elementary level, kindergarten through fourth grade. Different levels of reading groups, such as below basic or advanced could also use the Co-Teaching strategy to see if it makes a difference on student's growth.

Questions have also been formed about growth in other areas. Research shows that Co-Teaching increased students' growth in reading, but what about other areas? Scores could be tracked in different areas other than reading, such as math, science or social studies to see if scores increase when in a Co-Taught setting in different academic areas.

If the Co-Teaching strategy is going to be implemented extensively, proper training will need to be given to ensure successful partnerships. Teachers will need to practice communicating with a Co-Teacher as well as sharing responsibilities. Different Co-Teaching styles should be modeled, practiced and a plan put into place.

REFERENCES

- Bronson, C. E., & Dentith, A. M. (2014). Partner Teaching: a Promising Model. *Education*, 134(4), 506-520. Retrieved from EBSCO.
- Chanmugam, A., & Gerlach, B. (2013). A Co-Teaching Model for Developing Future Educators; Teaching Effectiveness. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 25 (1), 110-117. Retrieved from EBSCO.
- Conderman, G. (2011). Middle School Co-Teaching: Effective Practices and Student Reflections. *Middle School Journal*, 42(4), 24-31.
- Conderman, G., Johnston-Rodriguez, S., & Hartman, P. (2009). Communicating and Collaborating in Co-Taught Classrooms. *TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus*, 5(5). Retrieved from EBSCO.
- Forbes, L., & Billet, S. (2012). Successful Co-Teaching in the Science Classroom. *Science Scope*, 36(1), 61-64. Retrieved from EBSCO.
- Graziano, K. J., & Navarrete, L. A. (2012). Co-Teaching in a Teacher Education Classroom: Collaboration, Compromise, and Creativity. *Issues In Teacher Education*, 21(1), 109-126. Retrieved from EBSCO.
- Jones, J., Jones, K., & Vermette P. (2010). Co-Teaching in the University Setting: Promise and Practice in Teacher Education. *National Teacher Education Journal*, 3(3), 49-57. Retrieved from EBSCO.

Magiera, K., Lawrence-Brown, D., Bloomquist, K., Foster, C., Figueroa, A., Glatz, K., & ...

Rodriguez, P. (2006). On the Road to More Collaborative Teaching: One School's

Experience. *TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus*, 2(5). Retrieved from EBSCO.

Pugach, M. C., & Winn, J. A. (2011). Research on Co-teaching and Teaming. *Journal Of Special*

Education Leadership, 24(1), 36-46. Retrieved from EBSCO.

Seymour, M. W., & Seymour, D. (2013). Are Two Professors Better than One? Student and

Faculty Perceptions of Co-teaching. *International Journal Of Learning*, 2039-52.

Retrieved from EBSCO.