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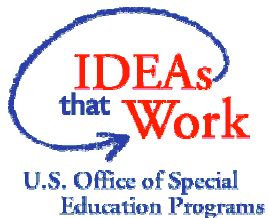
Elementary & Middle Schools
Technical Assistance Center

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EMSTAC Extra

Answering the question.....

What are the common qualities and structures of interdisciplinary teams in today's classrooms?



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A Qualitative Description of Collaborative Teams in Today's Classroom

Classroom teachers recognize the advantages of using resources outside of their own classrooms and often seek to collaborate with professionals from their building (Jorgensen, 1998; Kennedy & Itkonen, 1994). An advantage of collaboration acknowledged by educators is the pooling of resources and knowledge to address the diversity of students that are in today's classrooms. Ethnic diversity and students using English as a second language has increased dramatically (Orfield et al, 1997). Likewise, nearly three-fourths of students receiving special education services receive most or all of their educational programs in general education classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Because of this, teachers are seeing the necessity and advantages of working together, often as an interdisciplinary team.

This report will provide a description of team characteristics, including purpose and organization of teams, characteristics related to problem-solving and relationship building, and environmental factors that surround the team situations. To complement the information we were able to find in the literature, we conducted qualitative interviews with seven teams of professionals in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. This report is not a study about the impact of team characteristics on student achievement, nor does this analysis make claims about the relationship of any of these descriptor attributes to outcomes or factors related to student success. Rather, this ***EMSTAC Extra*** is intended to describe and inform the reader about the qualities associated with the use of teams in today's classrooms based on a small sample of team interviews.

Background Information:

Team teaching arrangements were used in the 1960s (Villa & Thousand, 1990) in an attempt to reach a wider range of children with diverse learning needs, particularly those at risk. Although these collaborations changed in name and purpose over time as policy and legislation evolved, these teaming relationships can have benefits for both the professionals and students involved.

Benefits of Collaboration

Researchers cite that an important benefit of collaboration is that it improves instruction. Collaboration allows teachers with varying expertise to capitalize on each other's knowledge (Bradley, King-Sears, Tessier-Switlick, 1997). Peterson states, "collaboration is a key factor (of best practices) because a central goal is to reduce fragmentation of knowledge and learning across typical school subjects and to reduce isolation of learners in school and the community." (Stainback & Stainback, 1996, p. 289). Therefore, collaboration and teaming makes sense. Karagiannis, Stainback, and Stainback (1996) indicate that collaboration breaks down the walls of isolation involved in traditional theories of pedagogy and increases professional growth. Other benefits can include:

1. Shared decision-making appears to yield better decisions and results.
2. Both teachers and administrators appear to be motivated by the increase in shared decision-making and power.
3. Collaborative teaming is reported to enhance teachers' satisfaction with their jobs; they enjoy the regular exchange of resources and expertise, the sense of belonging, the freedom from isolation, and the intellectual stimulation.
4. When team members have been instrumental in forming a plan, they report that they are committed to the plan's implementation and success.
5. Communication and collaborative skills are viewed as essential abilities for being effective in most jobs today.

(Snell & Janney, 2000, p. 14)

Structure of Teams:

Various models of collaboration exist in schools. According to Friend and Cook (2000), collaboration exists in two different dimensions and is characterized by structure or purpose (Exhibit 1).

Characterized by Structure

Teams can be structured as multi-, inter-, or trans-disciplinary teams. While *multi-disciplinary* teams are the most loosely formed "to implement evaluation and placement procedures for students with disabilities"(Friend & Cook, 2000, p. 33), they include a wide variety of individuals (special educators, general educators, related service providers, administrators, parents and, when appropriate, students). Each member works independently and the team meets only when necessary.

Inter-disciplinary teams also involve special educators, general educators, related service providers, administrators, parents and, when appropriate, students working independently. However, the members of an interdisciplinary team unite more frequently to share information related to the students or services they provide. An example may be a team that shares a common prep period to discuss students' needs and progress.

The *trans-disciplinary* team includes special and regular educators and related service providers. Their work is interactive and dynamic. They may blend or share roles. In "role-release, professional roles are combined, at least in part, and one or two team members may be responsible for delivering all interventions to a student." (Friend & Cook, 2000, p.35)

Exhibit 1: Models of collaboration:

- Structure
 - Multi-disciplinary
 - Inter-disciplinary
 - Trans-disciplinary
- Purpose
 - Service delivery
 - Problem solving
 - Instruction
 - Co-teaching
 - Teaching Teams
 - Grade-level Teams

Characterized by Purpose

Teams can be formed for various purposes. The purpose of the team can often impact the way in which the team is structured. They may be special education teams whose duties are limited to ensuring that services are being delivered within the parameters of IDEA. They "may be referred to as a child study team, school assessment team, placement team, planning team, or multi-disciplinary team." (Friend & Cook, 2000, p.36)

Teams may be developed solely for the purpose of solving problems related to students. Three types of these teams are Teacher Assistance Teams (TATs), Intervention Assistance Teams (IATs), and Prereferral Intervention Teams (PITs). The TATs developed by Chalfant, Pysh, and Moultrie (1979) offer support to teachers working to accommodate students within the classroom (Chalfant, Pysh, and Moultrie, 1979). IATs pull together all available resources in a school to address student issues (Ibid). PITs, developed by Graden, Casey, and Bonstrom (1985), use a stage approach to address teacher concerns regarding student performance or behavior. PITs often are able to offer recommendations and provide interventions that can prevent the student having to be referred for special education services (Graden, Casey, and Bonstrom, 1985).

Finally, teams may exist to provide instruction to children with special needs. They work together on all types of classroom practices involving planning, executing and assessing lessons. They may be organized as co-teaching, teaching teams, or grade-level teams (Graden, Casey, and Bonstrom, 1985).

Interviews with Teams:

In the following section, seven teaming situations will be described based on information received through interviews with the teams. The open-ended interview

questions focused on the development and function of the team, the team characteristics, and team relationships (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2: Themes for Interview Questions

1. How were teams chosen? (Were members assigned to teams or was their participation voluntary?)
2. What purposes do teams serve?
3. What qualities do teams have that help develop positive relationships and build consensus?
4. What structures or organizational mechanisms do teams use to maintain positive relationships?

Interview Format:

The information collected from each of the seven teams was based on a face-to-face interview composed of 17 open-ended questions involving topics under the following four categories: implementing and developing teams; organizational structures used by teams; maintaining positive teaming relationships; and strengths/weaknesses/recommendations regarding teaming. The questions were developed from readings in *Teacher's Guide to Inclusive Practices: Collaborative Teaming*, by Martha E. Snell and Rachel Janney, and *Collaboration for Inclusive Education: Developing Successful Programs*, by Chriss Walther-Thomas (Ed.), Lori Korinek, Virginia L. McLaughlin, and Brenda Toler Williams.

Description of the Teams

Interviews were conducted with 21 teachers working on seven different teams in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Selection of this convenience sample was based on peer recommendation and the willingness of each team to participate. The teaching settings included professionals from elementary and middle schools serving children in a single grade level or multi-age classroom. Each team was comprised of a general educator and at least one special educator. Additionally, two teams had an English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher. Although most of the teachers were female, three male teachers participated in the teams. If paraeducators were part of the team, they also participated in the interview.

In the forthcoming section, each school and teaming situation will be described and will be accompanied by a diagram depicting the relationships among teams. Following the descriptions, a section with an overall synthesis and analysis of the team characteristics of findings will be discussed. Finally, we will offer recommendations based on our interviews regarding the structure and composition of teams and will also provide information regarding school and district characteristics that we found prevalent in our interviews.

Teaming Descriptions:

Team One

School and District:

Set in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, this elementary school began as an early childhood center consisting of pre-kindergarten through second grade. The school is six years old and began as a “limited-choice school” meaning that students from five overpopulated neighborhood schools could elect to come to this school in lieu of attending their neighborhood school. The school’s philosophy has encouraged an inclusive, multi-age curriculum that has led to teaming by all staff. Within the last three years, third, fourth, and fifth grade classes were added to the school, necessitating age-group reorganization within the existing kindergarten and first grade classes.

This school attracts a large percentage of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, including Latinos, Africans, Middle Easterners, and African-Americans. Students in all classes have a wide range of learning needs. The multi-age grouping of the classrooms within this setting enables students to be taught with their same-age peers while ensuring that instruction is individualized to meet their unique ability-levels.

Teacher Characteristics:

This team has developed over the last three years. The two General Education Teachers and Assistant Teacher have been members of the team for all three years, while the English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher and Resource Teacher (Special Educator) joined the team this year. One of the classroom teachers is only in the classroom for half days because she also serves as the Reading Recovery Teacher for all kindergarten/first grade classrooms in the school. All of the teachers working on this team have been teaching for less than five years.

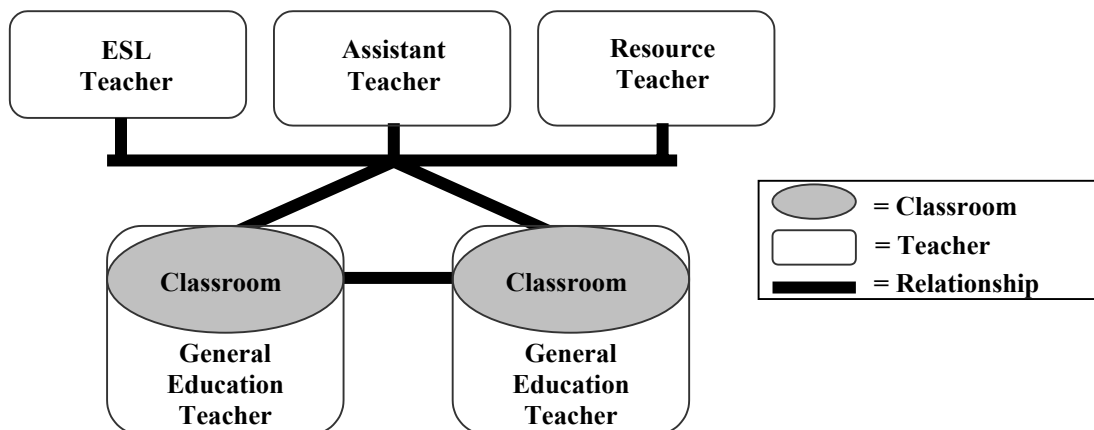
Team Organization:

This team was developed to meet the diverse student needs within the classroom. The team instructs two kindergarten/first grade classrooms. Approximately forty students are assigned to the team and split so that there are an equal number of students in each classroom. Team members are responsible for planning and carrying out of lessons and may assist diagnostic professionals to identify children with special needs.

The classrooms are located in pods of four rooms. Another kindergarten/first grade team occupies two of the classrooms that are located in their pod. The team's classrooms are across the hall from each other; thus, interactions and communication between the teams is common.

The two classroom teachers, the ESL Teacher, and the Resource Teacher provide instruction in all academic subjects to students in small groups. The small groups are divided by ability for math and reading, but remain grouped according to multiple abilities for science and social studies. One of the classroom teachers and the Resource Teacher co-teach math, while the ESL Teacher and the other classroom teacher are responsible for reading. The Assistant teaches handwriting and leads activities for small groups of children when they are not engaged in other academic topics.

Team One Model



Team Two

School and District:

Team Two is in the same school and district as Team One and therefore, the district and school characteristics are similar to what was described in the previous section. The difference between these two teams is the grade level for which the team is responsible. Whereas Team One was responsible for two kindergarten/first grades, Team Two is responsible for two second/third grade classrooms.

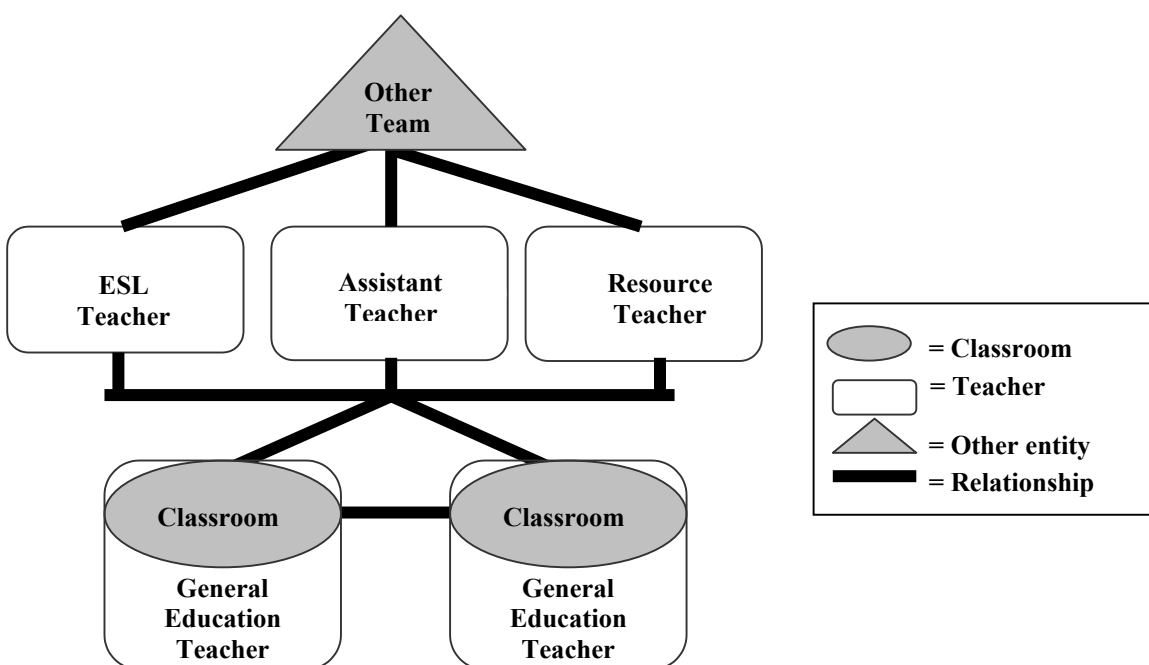
Teacher Characteristics:

The two General Education Teachers have been teaching for less than five years while the Resource Teacher and the ESL Teacher have over five years of experience. The ESL Teacher, a former military officer, was new to the teaching profession when he started teaching at the school when it opened nearly six years ago. Although the Resource Teacher has been a special educator for many years, she started working at this school within this past year. Similar to Team One, this team's primary function is planning and delivering services to a diverse student body. They also participate in prereferral meetings and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings as necessary.

Team Organization:

The structure of the team necessitates that the Assistant, Resource Teacher, and ESL teacher support both teams within their pod. Students are grouped based on subject. Typically, smaller groups are formed within each classroom for reading and math. In these inclusive classes, reading and math lessons are provided to small groups of students based on their ability. The Resource Teacher, ESL Teacher, and Assistant offer support to teachers and students as needed. The team provides instruction and conducts activities in both classrooms, the hallway, and in other vacant rooms throughout the building as necessary. Educators also have access to an external blacktop area of the building that can be used as appropriate.

Team Two Model



Team Three

School and District Environment:

Team Three works in a school located in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. This public elementary school is the site for a unique approach to teaming that is targeted at including students with autism in general education classrooms. The school is culturally and linguistically diverse and reflects the cultural differences apparent in the larger Washington, DC community. The school benefits from the cultural richness that the setting can offer.

Teacher Characteristics:

This team consists of three teaching professionals including a Resource Teacher, a General Educator, and an Assistant. The Resource and General Education Teachers have over five years of teaching experience in a variety of educational settings. The Assistant is new to teaching, but hopes to earn her Master of Arts in education. This is the first year all of these professionals have worked together as a team. The team was developed to address the specific academic needs of children with severe disabilities, including students with Autism. The emphasis of the team is on ensuring that children with autism receive educational services in the least restrictive environment.

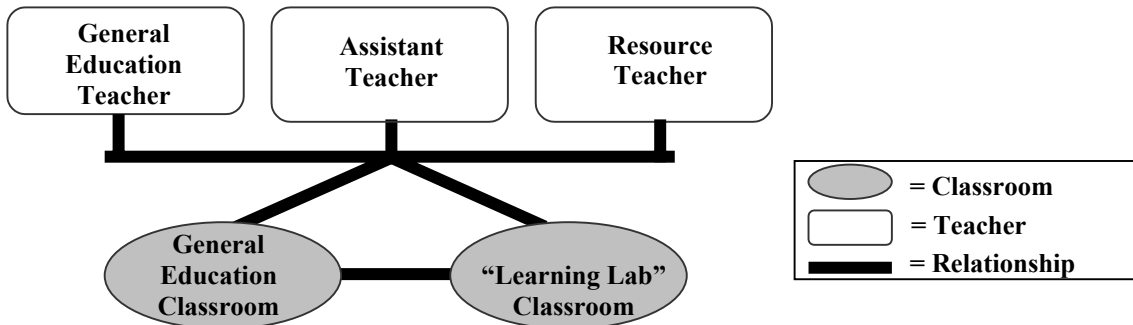
The experiences of the individuals on this team have been beneficial to their role and their performance. The General Education Teacher is a seasoned professional with an interest in working with children with autism, while the Resource Teacher has extensive experience teaching in self-contained and inclusive settings. These experienced professionals came together to collaborate and with the support of an Assistant are able to

face the challenges of teaching students with severe disabilities in an inclusive setting. The team is responsible for lesson planning, student assessment, and the delivery of educational services. As a group, these professionals participate in student IEP meetings.

Team Organization:

A Resource Teacher, with experience working with students with autism, teams with a General Educator and an Assistant. The class consists of five children with Autism and approximately 15 students without disabilities. The team uses two rooms that are across the hall from each other. One of the classrooms is called the "Learning Lab" and is available for the team to provide specialized services to students. Most lessons are conducted in the general education classroom. Decisions based on where students will receive their lessons depend on individual lessons and student needs. For example, if the team determines that a small group of students need remediation they may receive instruction in the Learning Lab. The Learning Lab is also used as extra space if the activity planned involves small group work or cooperative learning experiences.

Team Three Model



Team Four

School and District Environment:

Located in Southern Maryland, this elementary school serves students from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. Four years ago, the school began an effort to restructure the entire school to maintain student groupings according to grade levels. Students with behavioral, cognitive, auditory and visual disabilities are included in these student groups. The school uses various instructional grouping methods to sustain its inclusive environment.

Teacher Characteristics:

The third grade team interviewed consists of four General Educators and a Resource Teacher/Special Educator. The team provides instruction to approximately 100 students. Members of the team have various levels of teaching experience.

- The Team Leader (a General Educator), one of the other General Educators, and the Resource Teacher have been teaching for over ten years;
- One of the General Educators has been teaching for less than five years; and

- The final General Educator is new to teaching.

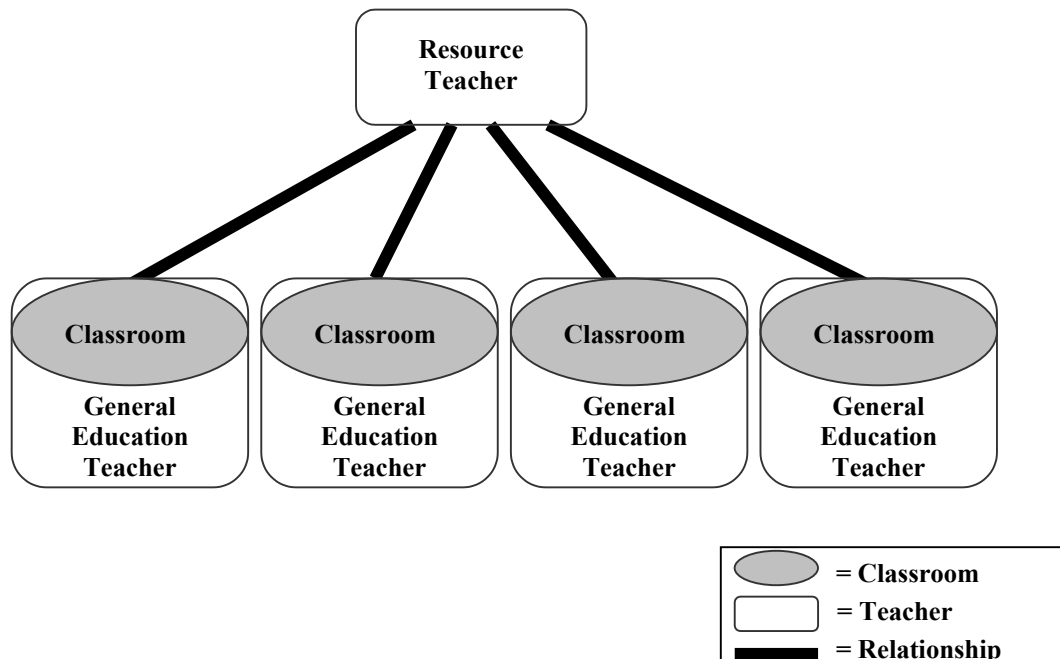
The various levels of experience of the team allow for the development of mentoring relationships between seasoned staff and new staff. These supportive relationships help the team since as a whole; the team has only been working together for one year, although some of the professionals have had opportunities in the past to work together on school committees and interdisciplinary projects.

Team Organization:

The team describes its primary responsibility as planning and implementing curriculum for all students including children with disabilities. Team members collaborate to plan and adapt all materials to individualize curriculum to meet student needs. Professionals use structured curriculum, such as thematic units and various types of classroom groupings, to ensure that the instructional needs of all students are being met.

While all of the team professionals teach reading, two of the General Educators teach math and two of the General Educators teach science and social studies. The Resource Teacher is responsible for teaching her own reading group and teaching an instructional lab twice a week. She uses various instructional grouping strategies to deliver instruction to groups of students with disabilities and their same-aged peers. The Resource Teacher provides support to faculty and students in all subjects and is responsible for following the progress of students with disabilities in her own class. The four classrooms are located close together so that children are able to move easily from class to class. The instructional lab is located in a nearby room.

Team Four Model



Team Five

School and District Environment:

This team works in the same school as Team Four and is responsible for teaching the fourth grade. The five members of this team, including four General Educators (responsible for academic content) and one Resource Teacher, serve 80 to 100 students among the four classrooms. The team uses many of the same instructional grouping practices described in the previous section to maintain an inclusive educational delivery setting.

Teacher Characteristics:

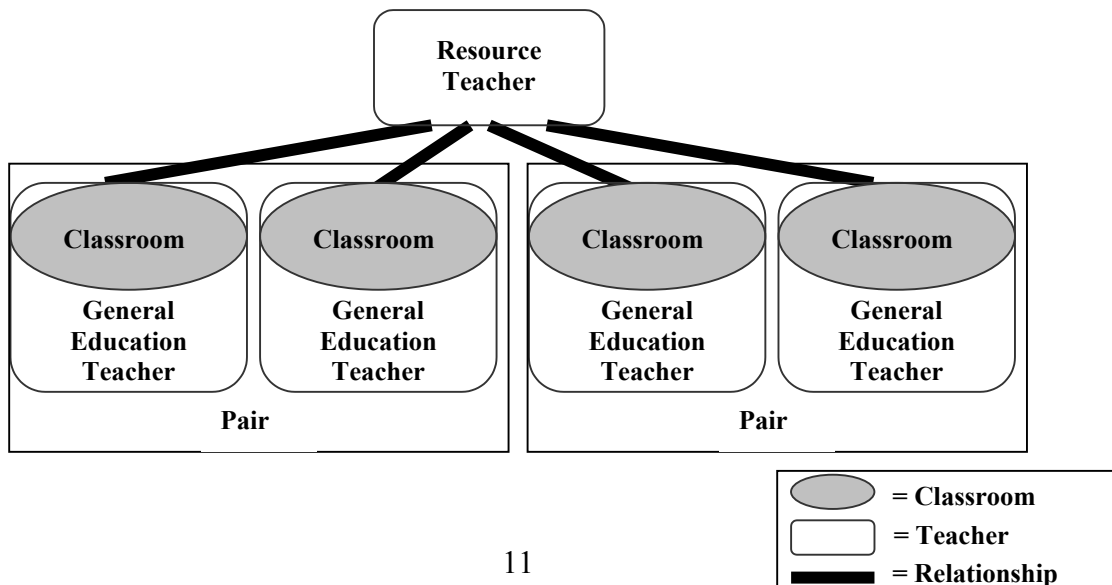
The Team Leader is a General Educator and began working at this school before it was restructured four years ago. All of these teachers have at least five years experience. The fourth General Educator joined the team this year. Again, the varying levels of teaching experience presented by team members serve to facilitate the development of mentoring relationships among professionals.

Team Organization:

Similar to the third grade team, this team works together in order to plan and implement curriculum for all children in an inclusive setting. Through their collaboration, professionals are able to plan and adapt lessons in order to make curriculum accessible to all of their students. As part of their responsibilities, team members may also participate in identifying and evaluating of students with special needs.

Students are grouped in classes heterogeneously. Each class is then divided into groups according to subject. Language Arts is the only subject that is grouped by ability. All teachers teach all subjects. When they began, planning occurred jointly across all four classrooms. This year, to determine whether the planning process would be more efficient, the team decided to plan in pairs of classrooms rather than as a whole team (all four classrooms). To make instruction more efficient and practical, students with disabilities remain in one of the pairs (two classrooms). This grouping enables the Resource Teacher to concentrate her efforts in two classrooms rather than four.

Team Five Model



Team Six

School and District Environment:

This team is also in the same school as Team Four and Team Five. The team differs in that it is a Special Education Team that is responsible for providing instruction and support to students with severe disabilities in one class. The self-contained, heterogeneous class is comprised of five students in grades two through five. Students who are in this class are brought to the school from all over the Southern Maryland County in which the school resides. This team contains one Lead Special Educator and two Paraprofessionals. Team members frequently meet with the school's grade-level General Educators, since these are the professionals who provided instruction to this team's students before their placement in this self-contained setting. Communication between the Special Education Team and the Grade Level Teams is important, since students within this team also receive instruction in the general education setting when appropriate.

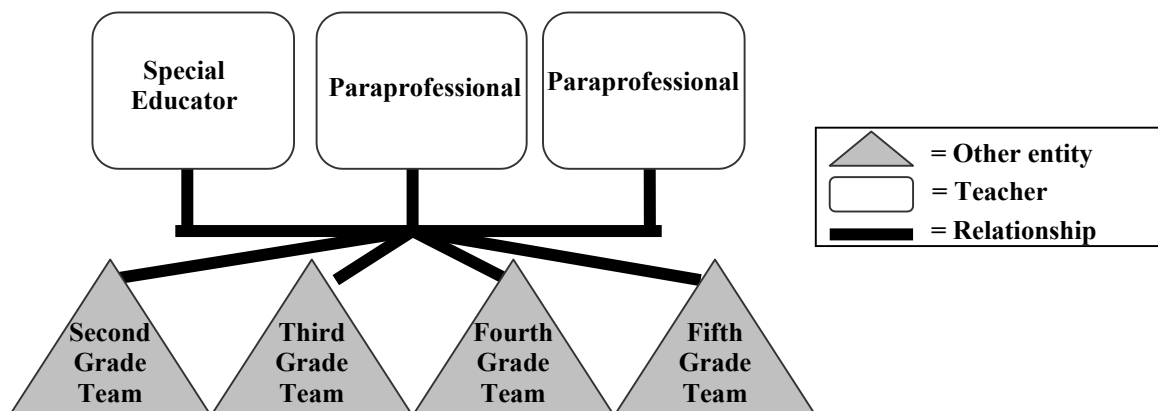
Teacher Characteristics:

The Lead Special Educator on this team has over ten years of experience and has been at this school since it reorganized. This experience is important for the Special Education Team, since, the Paraprofessionals with whom the Lead Special Educator works are new to the profession. A supportive, collegial environment exists within this special education setting.

Team Organization:

The team works in a classroom that is located in a central part of the building. When children are included in general education classrooms, they are sent to classrooms all over the school. To ensure ongoing communication and oversight when students with severe disabilities are included in general education classrooms, the team's Paraprofessionals accompany the children. The Special Education Team is responsible for teaching all subjects and has frequent interactions in planning and program meetings with grade-level professionals. The Lead Special Educator on this team has additional responsibilities that include leading the school-wide special education team, consisting of all of the Special Educators including Resource Teachers and educators, who work with students who are visually/hearing impaired, emotionally disturbed, and/or profoundly disabled. The Lead Special Educator is able to use much of the information and resources that she acquires through her participation in the school-wide special education team for her work on the Special Education Team.

Team Six Model



Team Seven

School and District Environment:

This team works in a middle school setting. The school serves children in grades six through eight from Central Virginia. The school was started nine years ago to implement inclusive practices for children with disabilities by using the team approach. Each team is comprised of six General Educators and three Special Educators. To facilitate communication, each team is divided into three sub-teams, consisting of two General Educators and one Special Educator. One of these sixth-grade sub-teams was interviewed for this paper.

Teacher Characteristics:

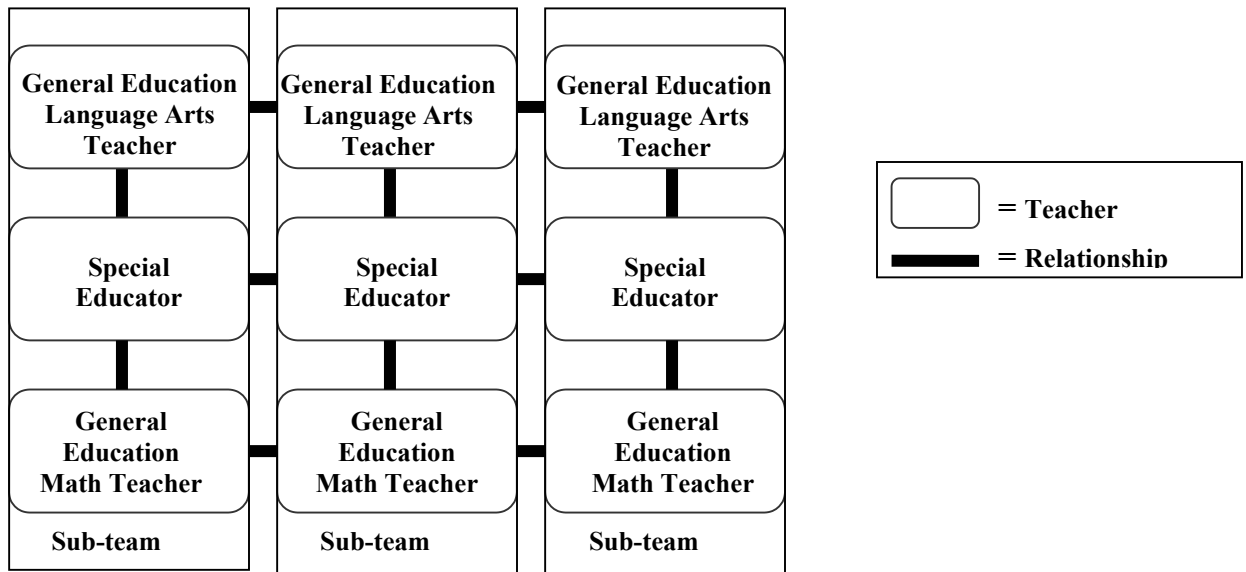
The teachers in this sixth grade sub-team have been working together for nine years. When the team developed, one of the General Educators was new to the teaching profession, while the other General Educator and the Special Educator each had over ten years of teaching experience with the majority of this experience in elementary school settings. Most of the students who require special services from within this team are identified as severely learning disabled. Many of these students are included in the general education setting for social studies, science and if appropriate, for math. However, most of these students receive language arts instruction in a self-contained setting.

Team Organization:

On this sub-team, one of the General Educators specializes in math and the other in language arts. All the General Educators, from all sub-teams, who specialize in math, plan together. There is also a great degree of collaboration and cross sub-team planning by General Educators who specialize in language arts, social studies, and science. Special Educators, one of each comprises each sub-team, also plan lessons and communicate regarding student programs. Each sub-team as a whole is responsible for assessment and instructional delivery.

This sub-team team is located in a hall in the school that separates it from the rest of the school. The sub-teams have separate classrooms that share a moveable wall. Students who require special services receive their instruction from the sub-team Special Educator in a classroom located close to the sub-team other sub-team members with whom they work. Students are able to move within the classrooms with ease and feel that all rooms are available to them. The physical setting of the sub-team facilitates a student's ability to use the services of the entire team.

Team Seven Model



Synthesis of Findings:

How did the overall school setting appear?

All teams interviewed work at schools where teaming was part of a school restructuring project and was part of the school's mission. The focus of the teaming structure in all of these settings was at developing inclusion within the school. Six out of seven of the teams worked exclusively with each other at a single or combined (e.g., kindergarten/first or second/third) grade level while one team worked across teams in the school (depending on the level of disability and mainstreaming of their students). One of the teams worked at a middle school, while the other six teams teach in elementary schools. The middle school serves approximately 500 students. One out of the six elementary schools has over 700 students, while the rest of the elementary schools maintained a student population of approximately 400 students. All schools serve children with mild to moderate disabilities, while one school serves children with severe disabilities.

How Were Teams Chosen?

All seven teams were placed together by their district's administration, yet, members of three teams chose to be together and were placed with other teammates. The teams felt they would have adjusted to anyone who might have entered the team upon assignment, though three teams explained the team would be more successful if teammates were able to choose each other. All seven teams mentioned that there was only limited participation from administration, parents, and students in meetings to plan and problem-solve. Participation from

All of the teams mentioned the importance of administrative support (by means of funding, personnel, or physical space), whether they lacked it or were fortunate enough to have it.

members outside of the core team occurred only on an as-needed basis. Only the team who serves students on a school-wide basis mentioned conducting meetings across disciplines on a regular (monthly) basis. Otherwise, administrators and other school community members only attend team meetings to disseminate information. All of the teams mentioned the importance of administrative support (by means of funding, staff, or physical space), whether they lacked it or were fortunate enough to have it. Each team mentioned the importance of alerting the administration to their needs.

What Purpose Do Teams Serve?

For all of these schools, establishing teams was part of an attempt to include children with special needs in the general education setting. Two teams spoke against

...several of the students with special needs in their class had to be separated from each other and integrated into the general classroom population in order to control behavior issues. They used co-teaching as one way to address behavioral issues in their classroom and found it was very successful in reducing student behavioral problems.

full-inclusion (students with special needs in the general education setting all-day, every-day), and they recommended that students should be included when they are likely to be successful within the class (both academically and socially). Three of the teams explained that full-inclusion was part of the school or program mission and that the team was designed to ensure that those children

who were included would be academically and socially successful. One team did not explicitly state a preference in support of or against full-inclusion, but mentioned that several of the students with special needs in their class had to be separated from each other and integrated into the general classroom population as one means of addressing behavior issues in their classroom. They used co-teaching to do so and found it was very successful in reducing student behavioral problems. Finally, one team did not make any specific comments regarding children with special needs or full inclusion, but mentioned that all of the students' scores on the state assessment tests had improved since they began teaming.

What Qualities Do Team Participants Believe Have Helped Them Develop Positive Relationships and Build Consensus?

Teams spoke of various factors related to developing and maintaining positive relationships. All teams spoke about the importance of flexibility and compromise, but four out of the seven also mentioned that it was one of the greatest challenges. When coming to consensus on issues, four out of seven teams said they do not encounter disagreements. To come to agreement, two teams mentioned using majority rules and one team indicated that they "agree to disagree" (allowing each member to do something different but balance each other out). Six out of the seven teams discussed the importance of developing a friendship, but one of the six mentioned the importance of knowing the boundaries of that friendship as well. All seven teams discussed respect. In four of the

All seven teams expressed concern about being sensitive and supportive to other teammate needs, while also putting students' needs before professional squabbles.

teams, the special educator spoke of the importance of not passing judgment on the general educators and trying to create a smooth transition into the teaming situation. These teams also discussed the importance of sharing lead roles so that one teacher does not consistently feel like an assistant. Four of the teams also discussed the importance of distancing personal feelings from professional interactions. Team members explained the importance of "not taking things personally." All seven teams expressed concern about being sensitive and supportive to other teammates' needs, while also putting students' needs before professional squabbles.

Six models of co-teaching:

- One teaching, one observing: one person watching students as the other leads the class
- One teaching, one drifting: One person is offering assistance to students as the other leads the class
- Station teaching: teaching several lessons at various stations or centers - some independent
- Parallel teaching: teaching the same lesson to two separate groups
- Alternative teaching: one teacher teaches large group while other teaches small group with accommodations
- Team teaching: teaching the same material at the same time together

(Friend & Cook, 2000, pp.54 - 61)

What Structures or Organizational Mechanisms Do Teams Use to Maintain Positive Relationships?

Six out of seven of the teams planned, problem-solved, and evaluated children jointly. Teams varied in their levels of co-teaching. While all seven teams worked with more than one style of co-teaching, they varied in the types of co-teaching they combine. Two of the seven teams divided subject areas so that

teachers were able to teach their specialty and children switched teachers and/or classrooms for subjects. All teams taught using thematic units.

All seven teams met to share information on an informal basis. Four out of the seven teams meet on a formal basis at least once a week. They, as well as the others, meet daily for quick checks on what was occurring and problem solving issues. None of the teams use formal action plans but within the team they discuss problem-solving techniques and follow-up in informal ways. Three of the seven teams create master lesson plans that are shared among the group. Four out of the seven discuss planning and problem-solving issues outside of school on the phone or on the weekends, but six out of seven spend time with other teammates outside of school. Three of the teams have extra planning time set aside as professional development time each week, while two of the teams spend long hours after work planning. Two of the teams plan together during a class period called "specials," which is when students have art, music, and physical education classes. They also meet to plan before school begins or during lunch (one of these teams also plans outside of school and the other is a school-wide team that plans on an as-needed basis). Each characterized the manner in which they communicated with one another as immediate and relaxed conversation.

Each characterized the manner in which they communicated with each other as immediate and relaxed conversation.

Conclusions:

As we explored the characteristics of teams through the team interviews, we learned several important lessons. Most importantly, administrators use teaming structures as a means to include children in the general education classroom. Yet, the administrative supports for teams and the teams' formation influence the way in which teams function. Many of the teachers in the teams interviewed also explained that teacher preferences should be considered. Also, team members indicated the importance of financial support, physical space, and paraprofessional support in teaming situations.

...administrators use teaming as a means to include children in the general education classroom.

The results of the interviews indicated that while teams seem to make the best of their situations, sometimes the lack of these resources or the incompatibility of teammates makes teaming more of a burden than a support.

Teachers also discussed another interesting lesson. The comfort and the flexibility of team interactions impacts upon its underlying structure. While communication and meeting styles maintain an informality, the roles and responsibilities laid out for planning, problem-solving, and executing lessons are very clear to teammates. Each teammate is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of all other team members and attends to his/her role accordingly. The team members seemed to have discovered how they fit in the team, some taking longer than others to figure it out. It is not necessary to have a formal plan for team members to feel that the team works.

Also meaningful, yet predictable, are the qualities seen by these teams as essential for positive teaming relationships. "Trust", "respect", "flexibility", "understanding", and "support" are all terms each team used to describe qualities. These essential qualities

"Trust", "respect", "flexibility", "understanding", "support" are all terms each team used repeatedly.

evolve as teammates become friends (another element to which teams referred). By learning how to communicate with one another and by sharing each others' lives, teammates have taken their interest in teaching and let it expand outside the classroom doors. This comfort and ease with one another helped develop the support needed by teammates to juggle the complexities of their days.

In conclusion, teaming is a means for teachers to grow as professionals, gain support and derive motivation to do their best, and meet the needs of various learners in inclusive or mainstreamed settings. There is no particular formula or training for team teaching, yet there are various models and lessons learned. Most importantly, successful teaming is dependant on the support of an administration through financial, personnel and material resources, as well as the willingness of individuals to be open-minded, cooperative, and respectful.

Recommendations:

The qualitative information derived through the team interviews yielded interesting and informative data. The descriptors can be used to develop recommendations regarding the development of teams and factors that influence them. The following are recommendations and suggestions indicated from the research conducted:

1. Teams should be self-selecting if possible but, if not, team members should be open and flexible to each other's needs and personalities.
2. When developing a team, activities that establish trust and open communication should be encouraged.
3. If possible, teams should be encouraged to develop a friendship as well as a partnership to increase job satisfaction and help cope with problems that may arise.
4. Teammates should try to work out differences for the benefit of all students but, if everything has been attempted and all has failed, the teammates should be excused from the experience.
5. Administrators should offer fiscal, personnel, and material support for teams in order to deal with the increased complexity (scheduling, sharing space and materials, time for planning, etc.) brought about by team teaching.
6. Teams should be encouraged to use styles that best suit their personalities. Teaming models should be taught so that teachers know the options available, but should have the freedom to use styles that match their strengths.
7. Teachers should have the opportunity to observe other teams in action in order to see how they organize and manage their teaming situation.
8. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly understood and communicated. Teachers in teaming situations should be careful to communicate with each other regarding progress and problems on a daily basis in order to decrease duplication of efforts and stay "on the same page".
9. Teammates should have the same core philosophies regarding teaching and education. If disagreements occur at this level, they may be difficult to overcome.

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