Transform Learning With Tech Co-Teaching

Teaching often resembles a tennis match when technology specialists and classroom teachers co-teach at Prairie Crossing Elementary School in Parker, Colorado. Teachers toss the ball back and forth from one teacher’s court to another and occasionally go to “the net” to revise their lesson plan in the moment. Both teachers use their unique talents to make sure that all students stay in the game.

In Douglas County School District, co-teaching with technology specialists is on the rise. Approximately one-fifth of the technology teachers across the district allow students to gain deeper understanding and to wait less time to have questions answered. Jake, a second grade student, describes it this way: “It helps kids learn new things. It also helps the teacher learn new things, too.”

Benefits

Prairie Crossing’s experience reveals many advantages of co-teaching the technology curriculum.

Professional Growth. While students may be digital natives, most teachers are not. Busy with day-to-day teaching demands, they may feel that they don’t have the time to learn new technology, along with the emerging research in the traditional content areas. A gap may exist between teachers with the design and provision of instruction so that all students’ styles and needs are addressed.

Making It Work

Principal McDeevel won an expectation that each teacher will work with the technology teacher to develop six technology projects during the year, depending on emerging needs. The technology teacher meets with each grade level throughout the school year to plan projects based on the content they are adding in the classroom. Integrated projects focus on national technology standards as well as content standards.

Rather than providing instruction once per week, the technology specialist might feel that an intense infusion of technology instruction and practice over the course of several consecutive days will be most effective. Project-based scheduling allows for large blocks of intense instruction to occur in each classroom at least six times per year.

Ripple Effects

Success with co-teaching at Prairie Crossing caused a buzz among local technology specialists and principals. As professionals engaged in conversations around the district, more schools adopted a co-teaching approach. While some schools have struggled with the budgetary implications, most recognize the benefits of having the technology specialist co-teach.

The program’s success even impacted the district central office. Mark Blair, who works in the Douglas County School District IT department, was intrigued by the idea of collaboration among “techies” and classroom teachers. He suggested that the IT department pilot a co-teaching approach.

Co-Teaching Evolution

As more technology specialists delve into co-teaching, challenges and solutions will emerge. This arrangement will require solutions for budget limitations, guidelines for co-grading, and common planning time. Many resources exist from the experiences of co-teaching in other specialty areas. These resources, along with positive experiences found at schools like Prairie Crossing, will inspire educators to embrace co-teaching as a positive tool for transforming learning.

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