

**Minnesota Principals Academy – Action Learning Project
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Is Co-Teaching Increasing Academic Performance For All Students?

Abstract

Several years ago, Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) launched Strong Schools, Strong Communities Strategic Plan that outlined expectations regarding improving academic achievement and closing the racial disparity gap for students. SPPS collaborated with colleges and universities on strategies and teaching mythologies on improving teacher effectiveness and the use co-teaching as a model for inclusion and differentiated instruction.

My Action Learning Project involved a shared vision of a 9-12 urban high school. The project involved me in gathering information and analyzing data for the purpose of determining if students who are in co-taught classes are improving academically and are completing more CORE Class credits towards graduation. Co-teaching is described as two teachers (a content teacher and a special education teacher) working together in a classroom with students, sharing planning time, organization, and instruction and assessment. I focused my project on the 9th and 10th grade students in Co-Taught English Courses as an indicator for academic success or improvement. The SPPS Secondary Education Collaborative Continuum created a guideline for secondary schools that entails general co-taught classes should consist of seventy percent (70%) of general education students and thirty percent (30%) of students that receive special education services. At Harding High School, the co-teaching model is aligned with the district strategic plan in improving the graduation rate for all students.

Vision: We are committed to challenging the minds of all who enter our school community. Our students prepare for life beyond high school with a six-year plan that sets goals for post-secondary education.

Current Context: Harding Senior High School is a traditional high school located on the eastside of Saint Paul. Harding is also one of three International Baccalaureate Diploma Program schools in Saint Paul and about 50% of the students participate in the IB Diploma Program. There are 35 different languages spoken at Harding. Student enrollment is usually around 2,100 students and the student population demographics is as followed (2016-17): 56% Asian American, 24% African American & African, 11% Hispanic, 2% American Indian, and 7% Caucasian; Free and Reduce Lunch 93%; Students who received specialized services is 18.3%; Students who received ELL Services is 39.8%. The District implemented the Co-Teaching Model in phases four/five years ago and Harding was one of first high schools that started the implementation process. Currently, there are 31 co-teaching sections/classes that include special education teachers and multiple language learner teachers.

Background: The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Co-Teaching Model at Harding Senior High School and to determine if students are authentically receiving opportunities to access the support for higher achievement. Currently, almost 42% of the students at Harding are taking at least one (1) co-taught class. There is a total of twenty-one (21) teachers that make up the thirty-one (31) sections of the Co-Teaching classes Harding. There are eleven (11) English sections, eight (8) Mathematic sections, six (6) science sections, five (5) history sections, and one (1) elective section. In our Special Education Department, there are total fourteen (14) teachers that make up of eighteen (19) sections of co-taught classes; six (6) English class, six (6) math classes, four (4) Social Studies, two (2) science class, and one (1) elective class.

What we did: My Special Education Instructional Coach and I reviewed and analyzed the special education passing rate in mainstream and co-teach classes eight (8) times during the 2016-17 SY. The following information were the action steps we took in gathering the data:

- Teacher Professional Development – August 2016
- Quarter 1 Progress Marks Review – September 23, 2016
- Teacher Planning Meetings, PLC Teams Visitations, and One-on-One teacher meetings – September & October 2016
- Quarter 1 Final Marks Review – November 4, 2016
- Quarter 2 Progress Marks Review – December 2, 2016
- Met w/ PLC Teams, December 2016
- Quarter 2 Final Marks Review– January 20, 2017
- Met w/ PLC Teams, January 2017
- Repeated the same process for Quarter 3 & 4

Implication for Practice:

1. Administrator and Special Education Instructional Coach met with PLC Teams for data analysis and interventions
2. When interventions were put into place for a specific teacher team, other concerns developed with a different team.
3. The Special Education Instructional Coach and an administrator spent a great deal of time developing specific teacher teams.
4. Continuous work with the master scheduler to align PLC time with content teacher and special education teacher
5. Keeping students at the center in making decisions based on student data
6. There is are great deal of work ahead for teachers and administrators in this work centered around inclusion and co-teaching.
7. There was evidence that supported a slight increase in students passing more classes in co-taught classes