Increasing Student Engagement Through the Co-Teaching Model

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Co-Teaching: Traditional Model

- Traditionally, co-teaching involves two individuals jointly instructing a class session (Cook & Friend, 1995)
- Different established models of co-teaching (Bacharach et al., 2008)
  - One Teach, One Observe
  - One Teach, One Drift (Floating Co-Instructor)
  - Station Teaching
  - Parallel Teaching
  - Alternative (Differentiated) Teaching
  - Team Teaching
Variety of Co-Teaching Models

- One Teach, One Observe (Team Observations)
- One Teach, One Drift (Floating Co-Instructor)
- Station Teaching
- Parallel Teaching
- Alternative (Differentiated) Teaching
- Team Teaching

Adapted from Image Source: https://www.pinterest.com/explore/co-teaching/

Background of Peer Instructor Education Course (PIE)

- Co-teaching implemented into Peer Instructor Education course since Fall 2011 (first year)
  - Offered through the Learning Centers
  - 300-level, 3-credit, 3-hour course
  - Began with two sections taught only in fall
  - Required for Learning Assistants (undergraduate peer leaders)
Background of PIE Course

• Pedagogy Dynamics
  – Active learning environment and flipped classroom
  – Advantageous for co-instructors

• Flipped classroom
  – Students read articles outside of class each week
  – In-class group activities based on readings
  – Reading guides for quizzes

Feedback on Active Learning Components

• 21 of 25 students from Spring 2018 “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the reading guides helped them to more fully understand the content and to prepare for in-class discussions.

• “I learned that instructors are not the center of the class, instead students are expected to be the center. Additionally, group activities should be thought highly of due to their effectiveness in enhancing students’ exchange ideas & constructing proper mental models & facilitating conceptual changes. Also, I valued the group discussion during this course…”
Background of PIE Course

- Structure and curriculum changed over last seven years
  - Up to 7 sections offered in fall and up to 2 sections in spring
  - Now open to all peer leaders at Rutgers and students interested in peer education

First Semester of PIE Course
Progression of Co-Teaching in PIE Course

Identifying Teaching Strategies Activity

- Brainstorm at least 1 – 2 different teaching strategies that you currently use in class.
- How could your strategies be implemented with two co-teaching instructors? What co-teaching model would you use?
- What would be the benefits of having two co-teaching instructors? Limitations?
Student PIE Course Evaluations

• Fall 2017
  – 1 team-teaching section (consistent each week)
  – 4 single-instructor sections (floating co-instructor in class once during semester)
  – New question added to student evaluation: *Specifically for the weeks that were co-taught (by two or more teachers), describe the benefits and drawbacks of this form of instruction.*

• Spring 2018
  – 1 team-teaching section and 1 single-instructor section

Fall 2017 & Spring 2018 Student Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2017 Students</th>
<th>Spring 2018 Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed Course</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Course Evaluations</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team-Teaching Sections</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Instructor Sections with Floating Co-Instructor</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Instructor Sections</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>9</td>
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</table>
Fall 2017 & Spring 2018 Student Evaluations

• Question: *Specifically for the weeks that were co-taught (by two or more teachers), describe the benefits and drawbacks of this form of instruction.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Number of Students</th>
<th>Identified Only Benefits</th>
<th>Identified Both Benefits and Drawbacks</th>
<th>Identified Only Drawbacks</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>No Answer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team-Teaching Section</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single-Instructor Sections with Floating Co-Instructor</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Feedback for Fall 2017 & Spring 2018 Team-Teaching Sections

- Overall positive experience
- Multiple instructor perspectives and increased student engagement
- More stability in having same co-instructors week-to-week and time for connections to deepen

- “Both instructors kept each other on track, offered different ideas and interpretations, and were able to effectively help the small groups.”

- “Because the co-teachers worked together with a lot of synergy, co-taught sessions felt more cohesive, comprehensive, and complete, co-teaching also helped to model how LAs might coordinate with instructors.”
Constructive Feedback for Fall 2017 & Spring 2018 Team-Teaching Sections

• Having two instructors may take more time to share same material but in different ways
• Floating co-instructor felt more chaotic since there were three instructors in the room at once

Feedback for Fall 2017 Single-Instructor Sections with Floating Co-Instructor

• Positive
  – Different instructor perspectives and varied class pace
  – More attention given to students with at least 2 instructors in room

• Constructive
  – Felt disjointed or unorganized when new instructor joined; unsure of what to expect
“Having the instructors was nice because we got more time with an instructor in our small group discussions. The drawbacks is sometimes the instructors operate differently and it's weird to have two instructors with very different styles or sometimes contradict.”

Advantages & Cautions of Co-Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Instructors</th>
<th>Coordinators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More interaction with instructors</td>
<td>More support in classroom</td>
<td>More Instructors to call upon in case of emergency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposed to varying perspectives among instructors</td>
<td>Can more closely monitor student engagement</td>
<td>Instructors can provide more specific feedback about students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience different teaching styles</td>
<td>Break up a long class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cautions</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Instructors</th>
<th>Coordinators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must adjust to different teaching styles</td>
<td>Important to coordinate lesson ahead of time</td>
<td>Need a deep talent pool to staff course</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential for mixed messages</td>
<td>Need compatible working styles</td>
<td>More instructors to coordinate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in control of lesson</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased staffing costs</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Future Thoughts & Suggested Improvements

• Informal observations conducted in Fall 2016 & Fall 2017
  – Using a feedback form may help to standardize what elements of
    the classroom environment and dynamics we are focusing on
    • Identify strengths & areas of improvement of instructor’s
      teaching
    • Observe student responses and reactions
    • Analyze the structure of activities, group structures and
      outcomes
  – Need to consider if course coordinators will view team observation
    reports

• Student evaluations (at the start and end of the course)
  – More targeted questions related to the co-teaching
    experience & to the presence of a floating co-instructor
  – Specifically for co-taught sections: “What is your definition
    of co-teaching? Provide an example.”

• Integration of the floating co-instructor
  – Examining most beneficial co-teaching model to use
    during class sessions
References


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  – First co-instructor for Peer Instructor Education
Questions?

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