

Team teaching

[Profession](#), [Teacher](#)



Team teaching, also known as collaborative teaching, is where two or more teachers take responsibility for the planning, teaching, and/or monitoring of the success of a particular group of students (Flanagan, 2001; Main and Bryer, 2005). Team teaching can and does have many forms. It may be as simple as two teachers sharing the same physical space, working on and from the same curriculum, collaborative teaching with the whole class or teaching where teachers take different combinations of students from the class for different lessons. It may also be shared resources and collaborative planning and sharing of assessment tasks between classes. Mr. Klein, a teacher and principal of over 20 years, has had many experiences in the area of team teaching. One of these experiences was the combination of a year 5, 6 class with a year 6, 7 class. Together these teachers opened up the partition between their classes and worked in collaboration. Their planning was initiated at the beginning of each term with a collaborative expansion diagram looking at what they were going to cover. This formed a basis for their planning. For most lessons the classes worked as one. For specialist subjects like maths they did separate out, but for most lessons the teachers worked together and supported one another. Benefits that Mr. Klein found in this team teaching role was it allowed better time management, there was a reduced planning workload, and better use of school resources. Having two teachers' present in the classroom also meant that there was two times the expertise in a classroom. The reduced workload also allowed more time with the students. This idea is supported by Thousand & Villa (1990) when they discuss the interdependence between team teachers and how the combining of one's own expertise with that of other can result in better outcomes for

students. He said it also gave flexibility to the classroom environment and while one teacher was teaching the other one could be preparing for the next task or working with other students. One particular benefit that Mr. Klein found in this instance was having both a male and a female teacher in the one class. That provided an opportunity for students to work with both a male and female teachers. It also gave alternative outlooks on tasks, and apart the benefits this had for the students, as a teacher working with someone of the opposite sex, brought different approaches to the planning and teaching in a classroom. The most important thing Mr. Klein outlined in regards to team teaching is the need for shared ownership of the class. The class is not just the one teachers, and following from this they both need to take responsibility for their class. Other important points he mentioned in regards to team teaching is the need for a clear structure and outline. All members of the team need to be aware of what is happening and how. He felt team teaching allowed a greater focus on the student and their needs. If a student was struggling, while one teacher took the class the other could work one-on-one with the student who required help. It also was a huge opportunity for professional development. Having another teacher watching and able to critically analyse your teaching styles and the way you operate allows you to have continual feedback and continually improve the way you teach, interact and operate. Team teaching can be applied in many different classroom situations. It can be utilised in areas where there are special needs students where one teacher may present the information aurally, while the other one may use sign language or supplement what is being presented in some other way to enhance learning. The classroom could even

have two different activities run simultaneously (Flanagan, 2001; Team Teaching, 1996). It can even be applied outside of the classroom. One prominent example is where teachers collaborate materials together when they are teaching the same course. For example one teacher may write the tests for the subject while the other writes the practical activities (Klein, 2008). Special needs is an area when team-teaching seems to be the most prominent. When there is a student who requires specialised help or assistance in understanding and comprehension such as English as a Second Language (ESL) students, having a second teacher in a classroom means the classroom can function more effectively and allows a greater focus on these students and helping them to grasp concepts being presented by the teacher (Team Teaching, 1996). The two teachers involved in this kind of activity need to co-operate and plan curriculum and lessons together to try and ensure the greatest success for all students in a class. Team teaching can be successful between teachers of both similar and distinctly different expertise and teaching styles. Team teaching allows a teachers strengths to be utilised, it gives teachers is the opportunity to work with someone else who may have complementary knowledge and skills and who can act as a sounding board or mentor (Team Teaching, 2008). Teaming has been noted to have many positive effects – these include reducing teacher isolation, increased co-operation and affection between teachers, increased sharing of ideas and resources, and it allows teachers to use their strengths and draw upon those of other teachers. The benefits however do not stop there. There are also significant benefits seen in regards to students in areas of academia and attitudes towards school and learning (Erb, 1997). There can be issues

with team teaching. When it is not approached correctly, or teams are not cohesive, problems can easily arise. One teacher can easily take on all the work and feel burdened. There can be disagreements in areas such as grading criteria, or when differences in grading appear. One teacher may be more competent than the other or responsible which may cause conflict (Schafer, 1983). For the reasons above there needs to be careful consideration when people are paired up to take on team teaching. Some people would find working with someone else intensely frustrating and unjustifiably hard work. Other people greatly appreciate having someone else to sound out ideas and concepts and to operate alongside of. Personalities and attitudes need to be taken into account and as previously mentioned, compatibility of the teaching styles is important in team teaching. Given this, team teaching needs to be structured - the individuals to be working together need to be compatible and agreeable to the situation. There needs to be procedures in place to equally divide up the tasks, to make sure assessment is consistent and that all tasks to be presented to classes are understood, properly approached and presented (Schafer, 1983). Team teaching can be applied in all subject areas and it has great benefits in all, but in highly specialised areas such as upper level sciences where many different topics are covered in depth it can mean the people who are most knowledgeable teach the topics (Tan, 2002). When there are two teachers with a larger group of students there is a greater diversity in learning and teaching techniques. So learners have the opportunity to learn in a wider variety of ways and when needed seek help from a party they can best understand (Dover, 1994). In some ways, the teachers in high schools are all

part of team teaching on a grand scale. All the teachers of the year 9 classes for example need to have some form of collaboration, particularly when thinking about the more social and discipline side of affairs. Within the science faculty of a school there needs to be collaboration and discussion and planning on what topics need to be covered in what grades, what content needs to be covered. The important point to remember is that collaborative teaching, like any worthwhile educational endeavour, takes a team commitment to be creative, thoughtfully planned, and continually monitored and team efforts adjusted depending on students' performance (Flanagan, 2001). Team teaching when approached in the right attitudes can be a significant in creating a positive experience for both students and teachers involved. References - Dover. W., (1994), *The Inclusion Facilitator, The Master Teacher* - Erb, T. O., & Dickinson, T. S. (1997). *The future of teaming. We gain more than we give. Teaming in middle schools* (pp. 525—540). Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association. - Flanagan. F., (2001) *Collaborative Teaching 101*, http://www.vclid.org/pages/newsletters/00_01_spring/coll_teach.htm, *The VCLD Newsletter*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Spring 2001 - Klein. M., (2008) *Practical Teaching Experience* - Klein. W. C., *Principal and Teacher in Western Australia*, Interview, 29th October 2008 - Main. K. M., and Bryer. F. K., (2005) *What Does a " Good" Teaching Team Look Like in a Middle School Classroom?*, Griffith University, School of Cognition, Language and Special Edition - Schafer. I. H., (1983), *Team Teaching: Education for the Future*, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, <http://www.usao.edu/~facshaferi/teamteaching.htm>, last revised Jan 2001 - Tan. B. C., (2002), *How Best To Conduct Team Teaching:*

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