Two are better than one: Improving outcomes through co-teaching

Presenters: Tammy Barron, Brad Witzel and Malinda Pennington (Western Carolina University, US)

Rationale

To cultivate more inclusive educational environments, many countries have increasingly emphasized the adoption of practices designed to promote inclusion and integration, such as co-teaching. The global push for inclusion has led to more complex instructional demands, making co-teaching a compelling service delivery model for addressing the needs of students with disabilities and those from marginalized groups in general education settings.

Theoretical Framework

The effectiveness of co-teaching, as a model of service delivery, can be evaluated and enhanced using Friend's Co-teaching Framework as a lens to examine the fidelity of implementation of high-yield approaches and ensure key characteristics are embedded in the co-teaching design (Barron & Friend, 2024; 2016).

Research Design

The presentation will include results of a mixed-methods study of co-teaching in secondary education. We have preliminary results and continue to investigate the impact of co-teaching compared to solo teaching in a high school district located in the northeastern United States. Our primary analysis uses a regression model that exploits variation in student exposure to co-teaching over time.

Results

Initial findings indicate promising performance increases, particularly for students identified with persistent math difficulties. In this multifaceted research, we compare student progress learning Algebra 2 logarithms across high-yield co-teaching approaches versus solo teaching with students who require intensive support. The two co-teaching approaches implemented were station teaching and alternative teaching. Statistical analyses will be reported. Teachers reported improved potential for meeting the needs of students; however, students did not necessarily prefer co-taught instruction. Interestingly, those with disabilities realized the instructional benefit, revealing self-determinism in some students. Additional outcomes derived from these practices across several schools in the United States as well as schools in South America will be shared.

Conclusion

Many educators now recognize that improved academic outcomes for all students can be achieved by leveraging the combined expertise of general educators, special educators, multilingual educators, psychologists, and other specialists as they designed specially designed instruction (SDI) to address the instructional and curricular demands in the general education classroom. The implementation of inclusive practices has faced both successes and challenges, raising critical questions about sustainability and scalability. Only through continuous reflection, assessment, and professional growth can co-teaching become a sustainable and effective approach to fostering inclusion in schools (Friend & Barron, 2024; 2020; 2014).

The tool used and the results found will be explained and will afford practitioners a structure to analyze their quality of co-teaching practice as they implement or reflect on implementation. As shown in this session, through targeted coaching and the use of an evidence-based co-teaching framework, all students in the math classroom benefit and academic proficiency can increase. Participants of this session will:

1. Explore Friend's Co-teaching Framework and discuss the elements of effective co-teaching practice and outcomes of the study.
2. Receive specific examples of roles teachers take in the planning and implementation of high yield co-teaching models and effective SDI.
3. Develop a plan to enhance their co-teaching implementation using the framework tool as a self-reflection or coaching mechanism that is based in research.