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Jennifer L. Frett
University of Northern Iowa

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Roles and reflections : using team teaching to improve literacy teaching

Abstract

This article describes the development of a team teaching model by a first grade team consisting of classroom and Title 1 teachers. This project grew out of a study group designed to look at best practice in literacy education and evolved in response to student achievement data. Four factors influenced the progress of the project including peer collaboration and demonstration, professional reading, reflection by teachers and the facilitator, and leadership roles. The role of the facilitator receives special attention, as – unlike most efforts at classroom change involving a grade level team – this effort began within the team, and without an external facilitator.

Roles and Reflections:
Using Team Teaching to Improve Literacy Teaching.

A Graduate Research Paper
Submitted to the
Division of Literacy Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By
Jennifer L. Frett
April 26, 2007

This Research Paper by: Jennifer L Frett
Titled: Roles and Reflections: Using Team Teaching to Improve Literacy Teaching

has been approved as meeting the research requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Education.

4-26-07
Date Approved

Penny L. Beed
Graduate Faculty Reader

4/27/07
Date Approved

Rick C. Traw
Graduate Faculty Reader

4/27/07
Date Approved

William P. Callahan
Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Abstract

This article describes the development of a team teaching model by a first grade team consisting of classroom and Title 1 teachers. This project grew out of a study group designed to look at best practice in literacy education and evolved in response to student achievement data. Four factors influenced the progress of the project including peer collaboration and demonstration, professional reading, reflection by teachers and the facilitator, and leadership roles. The role of the facilitator receives special attention, as unlike most efforts at classroom change involving a grade level team this effort began within the team, and without an external facilitator.

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Introduction

Description of the project

During the 2006-2007 school year, the first grade team at my elementary school was very new to first grade. The team consisted of three first grade teachers, a part-time Reading Recovery teacher, a full-time Title 1 teacher, and me. I taught Reading Recovery for half the day and Title 1 groups the other half. Of the team, the full-time Title 1 teacher and two of the classroom teachers were new to the school and new to their roles. The third classroom teacher, the part-time Reading Recovery teacher, and I were in our second year in the building.

During the first part of the school year, the Title 1 staff attempted to support the first grade teachers by making ourselves available to them for problem-solving and limited collaboration about shared students. As part of my literacy studies, and in response to ideas and based on discussions the previous year with the past first grade team, I suggested engaging in a study group as a first grade team.

Two of the first grade teachers chose to take part in the study group as it was first envisioned. I planned to open the study group with a survey to determine what the teachers were doing in guided reading and how they were using assessment in the classroom.

After the initial phase of the study group, once we had filled out the survey and begun to discuss some literacy instruction, our mid-year assessments showed that many of our students were performing at a lower level than expected at mid-year. This led me to introduce the idea of team teaching as a way to increase the support for both the students and the classroom teachers. This article tells the story of the model of team-

teaching that evolved from our experience with most attention focused on my experience teaming with Jean, one of the first grade teachers. It also features four of the factors that influenced this evolution including collaboration, professional reading, negotiation of roles, and reflection.

Rationale

The passing of the “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) legislation (2002) included calls for schools to improve instruction, especially for children in disadvantaged situations, by using scientifically based instruction, quality assessment, and by “significantly elevating the quality of instruction by providing staff in participating schools with substantial opportunities for professional development” (NCLB, 2002, p. 16).

In my school, the mid-year assessment data from the 2006-2007 school year, along with teacher input, supported the need to make changes in how literacy instruction and planning were done to better serve the students. Teacher input from the survey administered prior to the beginning of the team teaching experiment indicated a desire to learn more about the best practices in teaching reading in order to support all learners.

In order for change to take place, it was apparent that someone needed to take on a leadership role in guiding the change. I assumed that role. One of my first duties in that role was to consult research for suggestions for effective team teaching results. I searched professional literature for information on team teaching and peer collaboration and how to structure these within a school. I found that while there is much research on peer collaboration and planning (Kinnucan-Welsch, Magill, & Dean, 1999; Morrow & Casey, 2004; Picard, 2005; Schnorr & Davern, 2005) and on how to lead professional

development initiatives (Bussell, 2003; Le Fevre, & Richardson, 2002; Mehigan, 2005; Tatum, 2004), there is relatively little research on how to begin this process from within the school team (Picard).

Purpose

The purpose of this project was originally to explore the use of a study group to expand first grade teachers' understanding of teaching emergent readers and how to use assessment to guide instruction. Following the needs of the team during the process, the focus of the project altered to include work on a team teaching project. The team teaching project aimed to support the classroom teacher by providing a collaborative partner from the Title 1 staff.

Importance

As noted earlier, NCLB (2002) mandated that schools provide opportunities for professional development to increase student achievement. While much of this professional development is provided outside the classroom and brought back by the teachers (Bussell, 2003; Le Fevre & Richardson, 2002; Mehigan, 2005), this project explored the possibility of creating change from within the existing school structure. The difficulties of negotiating roles and responsibilities are explored, as well as future implications to make a team teaching model more effective and viable.

Methodology

Guidelines

I chose to write my paper in the format appropriate for the professional journal *The Reading Teacher*. The following are the guidelines required for manuscript submissions to this journal:

- Full-length manuscripts should have a 6,000 word limit including references and other material.
- Manuscripts must be double-spaced throughout in a 12 point font, saved as a Microsoft Word document. Graphics should be available in TIF or JPG format.
- Submissions should also include the following documents: cover letter, abstract, one full copy of the manuscript, one blind copy, and tables and figures as needed (included in total word count).

Approval from advisor

I originally presented to my advisor, Dr. Penny Beed, the idea of beginning a study group with the first grade teachers in my building. This project included presenting teachers with a pre-survey and a post-survey about the effectiveness of the study group in assisting with their teaching. With the assistance of Dr. Beed, I prepared both the surveys and a proposal for the Internal Review Board (IRB) to gain permission to do research with human participants. Following the approval from the IRB, I proceeded to start my research.

Gathering data

The data gathered from this project took the form of a survey (see Figure 1) that was prepared to be administered prior to the start of the study group, and a reflection

journal that I kept throughout the course of the project. A post-survey instrument was designed to follow the study group format originally intended, but as the project shifted to include more demonstration and collaborative teaching, rather than a strict study group, informal interviews were used as follow-ups to the project.

Writing process

Following the completion of a majority of the research project, I began the writing process. As an initial step in the process, I wrote a complete literature review and a description of the project following basic research paper guidelines.

After submitting this to my advisor for approval, I then began the task of reorganizing the paper following the guidelines of my chosen journal, *The Reading Teacher*. This involved pulling apart my literature review and weaving it into the description of the project.

I also chose to organize my paper around four main points that were strong themes in my reflection journal. The points were collaboration, roles, professional reading, and reflection. I discussed these points in relation to both the literature and the project. I determined these points by rereading my notes and coding recurring terms for frequency occurrence. I then reviewed the list to see which terms could be combined under broader headings.

I followed this portion of my paper with a section detailing some of my plans to improve and change the model used for the next school year. These plans took into account the need for scheduling choices early in the year to provide more time to collaborate, providing more professional literature to classroom teachers throughout the

year, and a discussion with school administrators about my role as the facilitator in order to provide time for me to plan for the professional development portion of team teaching.

Results

The results of this work are contained in the attached manuscript, entitled: “Roles and Reflections: Using Team Teaching to Improve Literacy Teaching.”

Conclusions

The process of writing an article for publication is a different process from writing most other papers for classes. Unlike traditional research papers, there are often particular differences in how a journal article must be formatted, especially those published for the use of classroom teachers rather than researchers.

I found that it was still helpful to write certain parts of the paper, such as the literature review, in traditional format even though my chosen journal, *The Reading Teacher*, does not publish articles with specific literature review sections. Writing the literature review helped me to pull my ideas and my resources together to make them more accessible when I began writing my actual article.

Writing some portions of my paper first and submitting them to my advisor gave her the chance to point out holes in my writing and research before I had all parts finished. I was able to go back to the literature and find resources to support my statements and to fill out my research.

After I had written some of the important parts of the paper using traditional format, I was able to take parts of my sections and weave them together into the format favored by my chosen journal. It helped at this point to reread some of the other articles from the journal to review the structure of most of the articles written for *The Reading Teacher*.

Having the different parts of the article already written helped me to make sure that even though I was not writing a traditional research paper, all the important information was included.

Submission Letter to *The Reading Teacher*

April 30, 2007

D. Ray Reutzel
Judith Mitchell
Managing Editors, *The Reading Teacher*
International Reading Association
800 Barksdale Road
PO Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139 USA

Dear Editors:

Attached please find two copies of our manuscript entitled "Roles and Reflections: Using Team Teaching to Improve Literacy Teaching," which I would like to submit for review for publication in *The Reading Teacher*. The manuscript has not been submitted to any other publication.

I have been a Title 1 and Reading Recovery teacher for five years. This year, the first grade team at my school was new to first grade. As part of my Master's program, I designed a study group and team teaching experience to support the classroom teachers and to build a stronger first grade team.

I would like to submit the attached manuscript to your editorial review board for consideration. I believe that the manuscript shares a side of professional change that is not explored in the literature, that of initiating changes from within a school team.

I look forward to the response of the reviewers. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer L. Frett
8083 Kalb Ridge St.
Peosta, IA 52068
jjsfrett@msn.com

Abstract for

Roles and Reflections: Using a Team Teaching to Improve Literacy Teaching

This article describes the development of a team teaching model by a first grade team consisting of classroom and Title 1 teachers. This project grew out of a study group designed to look at best practice in literacy education and evolved in response to student achievement data. Four factors influenced the progress of the project including peer collaboration and demonstration, professional reading, reflection by teachers and the facilitator, and leadership roles. The role of the facilitator receives special attention, as unlike most efforts at classroom change involving a grade level team, this effort began within the team, and without an external facilitator.

Roles and Reflections: Using Team Teaching to Improve Literacy Teaching

by

Jennifer L. Frett

Submitted for consideration

April 30, 2007

Roles and Reflections: Using Team Teaching to Improve Literacy Teaching

How do you initiate change from within? This is the question I faced as a Title 1 and Reading Recovery teacher during the 2006-2007 school year. The entire first grade team, both classroom teachers and Title 1 staff, was relatively new to my school and it was apparent that we needed some focus and direction to form a cohesive team.

I was in the final stages of studies to complete my Master's degree in literacy education, and it occurred to me that a study group might be an effective way to provide direction to our team concerning the teaching of emergent reading. With the approval and support of my university advisor, I began to explore this as an idea to present to my colleagues.

During the first part of the school year, the classroom teachers had been focused on learning curriculum and procedures in our school, as two of the three teachers were new to the building. It seemed advisable to give them time to acclimate themselves to the school and to their classes, as both were also new to teaching first grade. As they developed routines and procedures for the classroom, we were able to begin focusing on academic concerns, such as how to teach reading more effectively.

In December, I invited the first grade team to join a study group aimed at expanding the team's understanding of literacy instruction and opening up more dialogue between teachers. As our team was so new to our school, we had not yet developed an effective way to communicate as a team about student needs; we wanted more connection and a forum to discuss instructional practices. Study groups are an effective way to expand literacy thinking and shift classroom practice (Rock, & Wilson, 2005; Socol, 2006). My plan was to begin with a survey (see Figure 1), which I developed with the

help of my university advisor. I planned to use this survey to help pinpoint areas of interest. Those areas would become the starting point for the study group. It was our intention to then engage in professional reading and discussions and, possibly, demonstration lessons.

However, our sense of urgency for change was increased as the mid-year assessment data showed a large number of students who were not performing at expected or desired levels in reading and writing. As a response to the need for more intense change, I suggested exploring a team teaching model similar to that discussed by Kinnucan-Welsch, Magill, and Dean (1999), in which the Title 1 teachers in a school engaged in team teaching with first grade teachers to support the development of strategic reading processes in first grade students.

In this article, I describe the development of this team teaching model, with a focus on the development of my team teaching with Jean, one of the classroom teachers. The description of our work includes an analysis of the factors that make for successful change in the school context, including the role of the facilitator.

Importance

The passing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (2002) included calls for schools to improve instruction by using scientifically based instruction and quality assessments, as well as “significantly elevating the quality of instruction by providing staff in participating schools with substantial opportunities for professional development” (NCLB, 2002, p. 16).

In order for change to take place, it was apparent that someone needed to take on a leadership role in guiding the change. I chose to take on this role as a way of helping to

improve instruction in my school. One of the challenges that I faced as I began this initiative was that I was functioning as a member of the team and as a person providing professional development. While there is much research on peer collaboration and planning (Kinnucan-Welsch, et. al., 1999; Morrow & Casey, 2004; Picard, 2005; Schnorr & Davern, 2005) and on how to lead professional development initiatives (Bussell, 2003; Le Fevre & Richardson, 2002; Mehigan, 2005; Tatum, 2004), there is relatively little research on how to begin this process from within the school team (Picard).

Background

The school in which I work is an elementary school in a small, Midwestern city. The school ethnic make-up includes 74% European American students and 26% minority students, mostly of African-American descent. Nearly 70% of the students in the school qualify for free or reduced lunch. The school experiences a moderate rate of mobility. During the first half of the school year, 6 out of 66 first grade students moved out of the district and 8 new students moved in.

I am one of three Title 1 teachers in the school. This was my second year in the school, although I had previously had five years of experience as a Title 1 teacher. I am trained in Reading Recovery (Clay, 2006a) and spend half of my day teaching individual first grade students Reading Recovery lessons. The other half of each day I spend teaching small groups of first and second grade students, as well as serving on a district-wide reading team. The district-wide reading team includes helping to lead in-service training several times each month for all the teachers in the school, as well as attending monthly meetings during school hours to analyze assessment data for the school and receive further training in reading comprehension strategies adopted at the district level.

The other teachers involved in the team teaching effort were one of the other Title 1 teachers and three first grade teachers. This was the first year in our school for both the other Title 1 teacher and two of the first grade teachers; the third was a second year teacher who had taught one year at this school. All teachers were white, middle class women.

Procedures for Initiating Change

Once we decided, based on assessments, that we needed to look for stronger measures to support literacy teaching than those a study group could offer, we began to discuss team teaching to strengthen our literacy teaching. Team teaching is one way that teachers can create or strengthen a collaborative community in the school (Kinnucan-Welsch, et. al., 1999; Schnorr & Davern, 2005). Kinnucan-Welsch and her colleagues engaged in a team teaching model that paired Reading Recovery teachers and classroom teachers for one hour of the literacy block each day to support the literacy learning of all students in the classroom. The Reading Recovery teacher and the classroom teacher collaborated in making instructional decisions about literacy throughout the year.

The first step in our process was a grade level look at team teaching procedures. The idea of team teaching arose during a grade level meeting and this sparked some interest with the team. At first, we began to discuss ideas as a team, but it quickly became apparent that we needed support to pursue this idea. Questions were raised regarding the roles and responsibilities of each team member in the team teaching effort, the scheduling of a common planning time, and the negotiation of other responsibilities, such as my work with second grade students and Reading Recovery.

I proposed reading Kinnucan-Welsch and her colleagues' (1999) work on team teaching as a group to help us to determine how we might shape our team teaching. This research helped us to articulate and clarify the roles of the Title 1 staff and classroom teachers (Kinnucan-Welsch, et al.; Tatum, 2004). We decided to pair one Title 1 teacher with each of the classroom teachers. Because part of my duties required me to work with pull-out students in Reading Recovery for half of the day, I paired with only one teacher, Jean (a pseudonym), while the other Title 1 teacher paired with the other two teachers.

The next step was for each Title 1 teacher and her classroom partner to discuss how to develop classroom routines. In addition to setting up a classroom schedule, Jean and I also discussed what "best practice" meant in literacy education. We discussed scaffolded writing (Clay, 2006b) and guided reading (Fountas, & Pinnell, 1996; Pinnell, & Scharer, 2003),

Since one of the practices that we all believed was important was guided reading (Cole, 2006; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Pinnell & Scharer, 2003), Jean signed up for and attended a guided reading workshop provided by the school district to review guided reading procedures. I also offered to model guided reading instruction with each of her reading groups. Jean observed the teaching, and we discussed those aspects of my teaching that were different from what she had used or seen in the past, such as my methods for using sound boxes in writing (Clay, 2006b), the focus of my book introduction during guided reading (Clay, 2006b; Pinnell & Scharer, 2003), and the support and feedback that I gave during the first reading of the book (Clay, 2006b, Cole).

Finally, I provided all of the classroom teachers with articles and resources to focus discussion about best practice in teaching literacy, such as Cole's (2006) work on

reading prompts during guided reading and Kinnucan-Welsch, et. al.'s (1999) work on team teaching. Creating time to discuss these articles as a whole group was difficult, as it required all Title 1 and first-grade staff to be able to meet at the same time. However, when we managed to meet as a team to discuss our reading, we saw how useful it was to use professional literature as starting point for discussing our teaching.

Throughout this process, I kept a reflection journal to aid me in deciding what direction to take our work, both as team teaching partners, and as a grade-level team. In this journal, I recorded discussions with Jean and with the whole group, suggestions by teachers about areas they wanted to pursue, areas where I noticed gaps in understanding that we could address, and overall feelings about the team teaching process.

The Team Experience

A variety of factors influence successful change in literacy frameworks and practices in schools, including teacher desire to change (Le Fevre & Richardson, 2002; Mehigan, 2005; Tatum, 2004), resources to facilitate change (Tatum), and time to facilitate change (Picard, 2005). In addition to these factors, there are others that showed themselves, through my observations and the comments and reflections of Jean, to be important factors in the process of moving toward a team approach. The four main factors dealt with here are as follows: collaboration, professional reading to form a common base of knowledge, the role of the leader in change, and reflection on practice. In the following sections I will discuss each of these factors and how they affected the work that my team did with team teaching.

Collaboration. Teacher collaboration is a key feature of successful teacher learning and change (Kinnucan-Welsch, et al., 1999; Mehigan, 2005; Morrow & Casey,

2004; Picard, 2005; Schnorr & Davern, 2005; Tatum, 2004). Teachers new to teaching and even some who have taught for several years but are introduced to a new way of teaching or new curriculum may experience a lack of understanding of the underlying concepts of the new practices (Mehign; Picard, 2005). For example, while they may follow the standard lesson format for guided reading lessons, they may not have yet learned or internalized the information about the types of supports required by young readers before, during and after their reading.

Collaboration can help to expand this understanding and open a dialogue through which teachers might discuss and eventually understand where they would like to make changes (Mehigan, 2005; Morrow & Casey, 2004; Picard, 2005; Tatum, 2004; Socol, 2006). Collaboration in the form of team teaching requires teachers to work together and articulate goals and educational theories as a team (Schnorr & Davern, 2005). Schnorr and Davern found it was not enough for the two teachers to simply have a common planning time or to teach in the same room. If the teachers did not have focus and clear common goals, the teaming experience resembled traditional pull-out programs.

Jean and I sat down together to discuss what our goals and plans would be for our team teaching. Our ultimate goal was to increase student achievement in reading. Part of this goal involved developing a classroom climate where Jean and I felt most able to support the literacy learning of a wide range of students.

Our first concern was determining what classroom procedures would best support team teaching. Drawing on Kinnucan-Welsch, et al.'s (1999) work with team teaching, we decided that it would be best if we combined some whole-class mini-lessons with the small group instruction that would form the main portion of our teaching.

Our second focus was on determining what would be taught in the small group lessons in order for us to reinforce common concepts for the students. We both felt that our struggling students needed as much guided practice in reading as we could provide, but we wanted to make sure the strategies they were introduced to were consistent across settings to avoid confusion. This required discussion of the strategies that students were beginning to use, such as cross-checking or phonetic analysis using “chunks” or small parts of words. We needed to decide which strategies were most helpful for each student or group of students and reinforce them using similar language.

Forming this collaborative relationship required, in addition to common goals, plans for what to accomplish in team planning time (Schnorr & Davern, 2005; Tatum, 2004). As Jean noted in our post-interview, “It is so much easier to go it alone. What’s good for the kids is that meeting... it is a chance to talk about what you notice happening and how to support it” (interview, February 27, 2007). Having a guideline for planning time allowed us both to feel that the team planning time was well-spent, even if finding time to meet was often difficult.

Later on in the teaming approach, Jean and I considered what agenda we might use during our meetings to discuss the students’ needs in our classroom. We looked at student processes and products (running records, Clay’s (2002) Observation Survey from fall and winter, and classroom writing). We agreed that our discussions would take the following general format, which is very similar to that used by Picard (2005).

1. Talk about the strategies the student used during reading and writing.
2. Talk about the strategies the student needed and which ones the teacher most needed to coach.

3. Talk about whether the student was ready for the challenge of the next text level based on running records and observations.
4. Talk about how the student skill and strategy level fit in with others in the class (to choose the most appropriate reading group).

Working as a collaborative team requires clear goals for what the team members wish to accomplish in their teaching and regular meetings in which they discuss progress toward those goals (Picard, 2005). Adopting an agenda to use in collaborative meetings helps to make sure that each member of the team feels that the time is well-spent and helps to keep all members of the team working towards the common goals (Morrow & Casey, 2004; Picard; Tatum, 2004).

Professional reading. Tatum (2004) described what he called an “anatomically correct” model of professional development. This included starting with a firm base in theory to give teachers groundwork for classroom change. Bussell (2003) also found that successful professional development involves providing continued research support for the changes advocated in the professional development.

Studying research, such as that done by Kinnucan-Welsch, et al. (1999) concerning the need for clear roles in a team teaching environment, allowed the first grade team to articulate goals in the team process and plan the roles of each teacher. In addition, Jean and I found it useful to return to articles again and again as our classroom instruction evolved.

One area in which that Jean and I frequently used professional literature to help our understanding of teaching practices was during the writing component of the guided reading lesson. As Jean watched me teach the writing component of the lesson to her

students, she noted that I spent a great deal of time teaching students to use assistance for spelling words in their stories, such as “sound boxes” (Clay, 2006b). When using sound boxes, students must articulate a word slowly as the teacher draws the number of boxes for each sound. With supportive scaffolding from the teacher, the student then uses these boxes as a framework to help sequence and spell the desired word.

Jean noted that on the first day I took the time to teach the whole group explicitly how to use sound boxes before we began to write and that I reviewed the steps the next day. She noted that while she had used sound boxes in the past, she had never seen them introduced and taught in this fashion. As a follow-up to our discussion, we looked at the work of Marie Clay (2006b) to see the teaching steps, as well as the reason for teaching this task so explicitly. Both my demonstration and the support of the literature gave Jean more information to understand not only the how of what I was doing, but also the why.

It is often not enough to just show a new strategy to a teacher, or to explain it. Consulting professional literature can help teachers to develop a deeper understanding of the reason for using a strategy (Mehigan, 2005; Tatum, 2004).

Roles of the team members. Many programs that facilitate change in a school are begun by bringing in someone from outside of the existing team to initiate the change (Bussell, 2003; Le Fevre & Richardson, 2006; Tatum, 2004). This person is sometime employed by the school or district, but the focus of his or her duties is to implement the changes planned or needed based on an already articulated program.

The presence of a leader or facilitator is a key factor in the success of any change (Bussell, 2003; Le Fevre, & Richardson, 2006; Tatum, 2004). The simple statement of need and the attempt to improve what teachers are already doing may not be enough to

improve student performance (Tatum). Rather, for real curricular change to occur for the benefit of the students, teachers need continued support from administration or reading specialists that aims to make them “think differently about their work and work differently because of what they think” (Tatum, p. 32).

In the case of my team teaching with Jean, this was an internally initiated change, implemented with no additional facilitators or outside forces. This context presented opportunities and challenges for the team teaching experience.

Change in the classroom does not come easily for many teachers. Even with professional development opportunities, teachers may not make changes in instruction (Morrow & Casey, 2004; Tatum, 2004). Current research links this lack of change to an often unmet need to sustain support of the changes proposed by professional development (Morrow & Casey; Picard, 2005; Tatum). Once the initial phase of professional development is completed, often there is little opportunity for teachers to continue to explore and evaluate changes to curriculum or new ideas (Mehigan, 2005; Picard).

Starting the changes from within the team meant that the change could be designed to extend over a longer period of time. The leader of the professional development (in this case, me) was not going to leave after presenting a few sessions about literacy. Jean and I knew that we could count on being able to review and extend our ideas and knowledge over time.

As an example, Jean commented that watching me teach guided reading groups helped her to see how some things that I did, for example book introductions, differed from her own practices. As she looked at the differences between our approaches and she crafted her book introductions with some of my models in mind, she could return to me

and we could discuss how and why I did certain things. According to Jean, this led to a deeper understanding of the structure of text in emergent literacy books. It also gave me a chance to clarify my process for creating a book introduction. This shared processing, like the shared discussions about professional reading, allowed both of us to grow as teachers.

At the same time, being a member of the current teaching staff and taking on the role of facilitator raised issues for me. In most cases, the facilitator of the staff development is focused on that task (Bussell, 2003; Le Fevre & Richardson, 2006; Tatum, 2004). This allows the facilitator to spend time reflecting on and planning the next steps without other responsibilities. However, as I was also committed to a full-time teaching position in our school, I found that arranging time to take these steps was difficult.

Le Fevre and Richardson (2002) found that facilitators in a variety of programs believed that the facilitator's ability to focus on the program was one of the main factors in creating success. One teacher in the study stated that she did not see how their program could be implemented without a full-time person as the facilitator. While the team teaching effort at my school was perhaps not as involved as this person's program (a school-wide effort), I found that not having time scheduled into my day to focus on the development and continuation of our efforts made sustaining some parts of the team teaching effort difficult. This was especially true in my work with the other members of the first grade team, for I had difficulty finding much time to facilitate their professional development and team-teaching efforts.

I addressed this issue partially by altering my daily schedule to accommodate a common planning time with the whole first grade team, but this required a negotiation of my other duties (Reading Recovery and second grade groups). I had to work constantly to balance where to focus my attention with what amounted to an extra responsibility.

Sustained support of professional development initiatives is important to help facilitate real change in the classroom (Morrow & Casey, 2004; Tatum, 2004; Picard, 2005). Beginning the professional development process as a member of the team, rather than as a temporary support, gave me the chance to be that sustaining support. However, taking on this additional role required negotiation of my other duties to give the time needed to plan and implement the professional development adequately.

Reflection. In order for teachers to develop the reflective stance needed to implement real change, it is important for those leading the change to be reflective about what methods are used to create change (Tatum, 2004). Tatum found that he, as the reading specialist, needed to constantly think about his role in the process of teaching and develop goals to clearly communicate the need for change to teachers. Constant reflection helped to sustain momentum for change in the school.

I found that I needed to take a reflective stance to my work with teachers, just as I do with teaching my students. I needed to constantly reflect on the goals of the team, the needs of all the students, and the roles of each teacher involved in the team teaching effort. I also needed to reflect on my role as both facilitator and teacher and my relationship to the teachers. As Bussell (2003) noted, the facilitator of change must balance carefully the needs of the program being implemented and the needs of those adopting the program.

Reflection made me slow down at times in the process of planning team teaching. During the planning stage, my notes about the discussions as a grade level team led me to realize that the idea of team teaching needed more structure than our discussions had lent it. I noted in my journal that at first the teachers seemed confused about our focus as team partners and that we needed to clarify the roles of each teacher in the classroom. This, in turn, led me to reopen the discussion of teaming, after providing professional reading about team teaching, such as the work by Kinucan-Welsch, et al. (1999), to give us a place to start in providing structure for the team process.

Comments from team members during group discussions helped me to gauge when we were moving too quickly and overloading everyone, as well as when we needed to address an issue right away. For example, I found that my discussions with Jean, which happened more frequently than whole-team discussions, were particularly valuable in identifying topics for which classroom teachers needed more information (e.g., book introductions and sound boxes).

Reflection on my part as the facilitator of the team teaching effort helped me to identify places in which we were struggling and ways to guide us back. It also helped me to plan the next step in my plans for our work.

The Future

Discussions with Jean and my reflections have lent themselves to some plans for how to use team teaching in future years. We plan to make a few changes in order to craft this team approach into a more self-sustaining effort.

While it might not be possible for us to continue team teaching in the classroom every year, Jean and I think that beginning the year with the Title 1 teacher as a partner in

the classroom will be very beneficial. Jean said during one interview that she saw the presence of both teachers in the room making it clear to the students how important it is to learn to read. “The fact is, so much depends on reading that, especially in first grade, they need to have it blossom” (interview, February 27, 2007). We both feel that supporting the collaboration early in the year and establishing my role in the classroom as another reading teacher for all the students is important to reading success.

Jean and I agree that the continuation of professional literature sharing is an important part of our effort. She also suggested returning to the study group model at the beginning of the school year. In order to broaden our scope and give more ownership to each teacher, we may ask each teacher to find one or two articles throughout the course of the year to share with others. This would lighten the responsibilities for me, as everyone would share the responsibility for finding resources to share. I think this would give more ownership of the discussions to the group members, rather than to me as an individual.

We also think that continuing to craft our plans for team teaching meetings to streamline the process and make the most of the time we can work together is essential to forming a cohesive reading program within our first-grade team. This year’s efforts have given us some valuable lessons that will help in the future.

Conclusions

This team teaching effort was my first experience in taking on a more formal leadership role in my school. It involved my reflection about how to structure not only classroom instruction, but also the professional activities that lead to quality classroom instruction.

My role as both the facilitator of change and as a full-time teacher in the school sometimes caused conflict for me, as I found that my time was stretched to the limit. In order to guide the change I needed to have time to choose quality professional literature to support the development of quality literacy instruction, collaborate with Jean and with the other teachers as much as I could, and reflect on our direction to see where we needed to focus next.

Even with the difficulties that I faced negotiating my duties and finding time to reflect on our work and plan for the next steps, the team teaching effort had a positive impact on our team. Jean shared her view of this effort by stating in our exit interview, “We’re all a little more connected now... we have something to build on for next year too” (interview, February 27, 2007). We were able to begin some powerful and effective practices that we can continue next year as a team.

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Figure 1.

Initial Survey

Please answer the following questions by circling the number that best fits your current practice using the following scale:

Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
1	2	3	4

Classroom assessment	
How often do you do conduct running records of your students' reading behaviors?	1 2 3 4
How often do you analyze your running records of students' reading? Please describe what method you use for analysis: _____	1 2 3 4

Please list any other forms of literacy assessment that you currently use in classroom instruction:

Answer the following questions using the following scale:

Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Very
1	2	3	4

Emergent Readers	
How well do you think you understand emergent reading development?	1 2 3 4

How confident do you feel about teaching emergent readers?	1	2	3	4
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Please list the methods you use to teach and support emergent readers in your classroom:

Please share what you hope to learn from this study group.

Please answer yes, no, or maybe to the following questions:

I would feel comfortable teaching a demonstration lesson for colleagues.

Yes No Maybe

I would like to observe another teacher teaching. Yes No Maybe