



Oak Park Elementary School District 97

260 W. Madison Street ▪ Oak Park ▪ Illinois ▪ 60302 ▪ ph: 708.524.3000 ▪ fax: 708-524-3014

Date: March 12, 2019

To: Board of Education
Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent

From: Eboney Lofton
Senior Director of Special Education

Re: Co-Teaching Update

The IDEA requires that “to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in the regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.” 20 U.S.C. '1412(a)(5)(A). Currently, students with disabilities may experience learning along a continuum that may or may not include access to co-taught learning environments. To that end, the district has supported the expansion of co-teaching classrooms in an effort to broaden implementation of inclusive practices that support meaningful access to general education learning environments, curricula and experiences for students with disabilities.

Our district defines co-teaching as the partnering of a general education teacher and a special education teacher or another specialist for the purpose of jointly delivering instruction to a diverse group of students, including those with disabilities or other special needs, in a setting that flexibly and deliberately meets their learning needs. The intent of co-teaching is to make it possible for students with disabilities to not only access the general curriculum, but also benefit from specialized instructional strategies necessary to nurture their learning. In order to support the expansion of co-teaching, the special education department has:

- provided professional learning sessions for general education teachers and special education teachers,
- opened a blended early childhood section,
- implemented the use of a co-teaching fidelity tool to determine the need for additional supports and resources,
- monitored the percentage of students that are provided with special education services in a separate setting for more than 60 percent of the school day and
- leveraged teacher and student focus groups to provide the department with qualitative data to inform the supports necessary for continued expansion.

The Co-Teaching Fidelity Tool is in active use. The tool is meant to measure the ways in which teacher teams collaborate and plan for impactful instruction (planning); the delivery of universally designed instruction with a focus on teaming and creating pathways for students to understand and engage with academic content (instruction); and the ways in which teams collaboratively assess both student growth and their own practices (assessment). The tool has been shared with the district's administrative leadership team as well as all special education and general education teachers touched by co-teaching. Data is collected for elementary teams (pilot expansion schools) monthly. The intent is to address programmatic change in order to inform the provision of supports and resources. The progression toward implementation of the fidelity tool is outlined below:



The table below represents the scores (with 100% being optimal) for all classrooms on the tool. There has been marked improvement in performance on the indicators over time. The department would like to thank all of our wonderful teacher teams for their patience with this new process and for their work on behalf of all students.

Month	Total Co-Teaching Fidelity Tool Score (Planning/Instruction/Assessment)
September/ October	84.4%
November/ December	89.3%
January	88.2%
February	92.2%

The department also closely monitors the percentage of students who receive special education services in a separate setting for more than 60 percent of their day. This year, our department's goal is for said percentage not to exceed 10 percent of all students with disabilities. The chart below features the data that has been collected on a monthly basis.

Month	Percentage of students who receive special education services in a separate setting for less than 60% of the school day
September/October	11.4%
November	11.1%
December	9.9%
January	9.8%
February	10.6%
March	10.0%

In addition, teacher focus groups comprised of both general education teachers and special education teachers were conducted. Several themes emerged around co-teaching implementation. The feedback presented as largely positive with teachers relating that with thoughtful planning and support, almost all students (both students with disabilities as well as their general education peers) benefit from co-taught classrooms. They related that alongside the academic growth that is evident in their classrooms, there is also evidence of increased social connections between students. It was noted that the students would not have had an opportunity to form relationships if not for the implementation of the co-teaching models. In providing feedback around continuous improvement, the teachers related that there should be an increased focus on student transition from year to year and that there is a continued need for increased collaboration amongst all stakeholders to ensure student success. This spring the department will conduct the yearly student lunch and learn sessions to explore how all students experience co-teaching and to garner their feedback around the impact of the model.

As the department looks forward to continuing to the co-teaching expansion, there are several factors to consider. These include:

- continued professional learning for teachers with avenues for job-embedded supports alongside ways to leverage existing teacher expertise in future training models
- expansion of co-teaching to the remaining buildings that currently house instructional programs
- continued collection of teacher, student and community feedback to inform program refinements
- supporting professional learning aligned to Universal Design for Learning principles
- continued qualitative and quantitative monitoring to inform the provision of resources and support