# Co-Teaching in Language Arts: Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities

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In this case study, I have examined teachers' use of co-teaching models to support students with learning disabilities in an inclusive elementary classroom. Co-teachers progressed from the developmental stage of collegial growth to the compromising stage (Gately & Gately, 2001), but struggled to achieve the third stage of collaboration. Teachers used several methods to support students' literacy: explicit prompt sheets, scaffolded mini-lessons, and interactional inclusion. Classroom structures and helping routines played key roles in maintaining teachers' availability to exceptional learners. The students with learning disabilities protected their social status in the classroom, a key factor in their decision to accept teachers' help.

Key words: collaborative practices, literacy learning, interactional inclusion, struggling learners.

Dans cette étude de cas, l'auteure examine les modèles de coenseignement utilisés en vue de venir en aide à des élèves du primaire ayant des difficultés d'apprentissage dans une classe inclusive. Les coenseignants ont progressé du stade initial de la collégialité au stade des compromis (Gately et Gately, 2001), mais ont eu de la difficulté à atteindre le troisième stade, celui de la collaboration. Les enseignants ont employé plusieurs méthodes pour soutenir les élèves dans leur apprentissage de la littératie : feuilles de messages-guides explicites, mini-leçons avec soutien à l'apprentissage et inclusion faisant appel à des interactions. C'est principalement grâce aux structures des classes et aux méthodes de soutien mises en place que les enseignants ont pu demeurer disponibles pour les élèves en difficulté. Ces élèves ont protégé leur statut social en classe, ce qui a joué pour beaucoup dans leur décision d'accepter l'aide des enseignants.

Mots clés : méthodes de collaboration, apprentissage de la littératie, inclusion par l'interaction, apprenants en difficulté.

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In a recent overview of the research on teaching students with learning disabilities (LD), McLeskey, Hoppey, Williamson, and Rentz (2004) concluded that most students should spend much of the school day in regular classrooms. As a result of this policy of inclusion of students with diverse learning needs, classroom teachers have adopted inclusive models of instruction that emphasize collaborative structures such as co-teaching. Bauwens and Hourcade (1995) described a co-teaching approach as a "restructuring of teaching procedures in which two or more educators possessing distinct sets of skills work in a co-active and coordinated fashion to jointly teach academically and behaviourally heterogeneous groups of students in integrated educational settings" (p. 46). For example, both a classroom teacher and a special education teacher would provide all students with instruction, discipline, and support. This collaborative approach helps co-teachers avoid unintentionally stigmatizing students with identified needs by meeting the needs of all students in a regular classroom.

To find out more about co-teaching in an inclusive language arts class, I considered how two teachers, the classroom teacher and me, where I played dual roles as resource teacher and researcher, incorporated students with special needs. The following questions framed the research: In what ways did we, as co-teachers, support students with learning disabilities in an inclusive grade-6 language arts classroom? How did three students identified with LD access help in an inclusive setting?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*Models of Co-teaching*

Vaughn, Schumm, and Arguelles (1997) describe five basic models of co-teaching. The first, "one teach-one assist," requires both teachers to be present with one teacher taking the lead in delivering instruction; the other teacher monitors or assists students individually. In the second model, "station teaching," each teacher takes responsibility for teaching part of the content to small groups of students who move among stations. Teachers divide students into three groups, two working with teachers and one group working independently. Students rotate among the three stations over a pre-determined block of time. With the third

model, "parallel teaching," teachers plan instruction together but split the class and deliver the same instruction to smaller groups within the same classroom. With the fourth model, "alternative teaching," one teacher works with a smaller group of students to reteach, preteach, or supplement the instruction received by the larger group.  Finally, in "team teaching," the fifth model, both teachers share the instruction of all students at the same time

Sands, Kozleski, and French (2000) describe the same models but break co-teaching into four types:  tag team (one teaches a part of the lesson and the other follows), speak and add (one teaches, one adds information), speak and chart (one teaches, one records on overhead, easel, etc.), and duet (teachers work in unison, finishing each other's sentences and ideas). Although the impact of co-teaching on student outcomes is still unclear (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Weiss, 2004), proponents argue that co-teaching effectively utilizes the specific and unique skills of each professional (Jitendra, Edwards, Choutka & Treadway, 2002).

*Supporting students with LD in the Language Arts Classroom*

One area in which teachers are most likely to co-teach is language arts because most students with LD (90%) have significant difficulties with reading and writing (Vaughn, Linan-Thompson & Hickman, 2003). Although learning strategies as they play out in the classroom context are complex and dynamic, researchers are increasingly aware how both the scaffolded activities and student-teacher discourse play key roles in helping students with LD emulate the performance of expert learners (Baker, Gersten, & Scanlon, 2002; Butler & Cartier, 2005).  At the same time, cognitive strategies help students develop awareness of their relevant background knowledge, enhancing their ability to monitor their learning as they complete instructional tasks and solve problems (Tierney & Readence, 2000). The most recent research on self-regulated learning indicates that the learning process is highly modifiable and shaped by individual student characteristics in interaction with context (Butler & Cartier, 2005).

To bridge the gap between oral and written language and to develop relationships between them, teachers also use elaborated dialogues and

think alouds (Abadiano & Turner, 2004; Angelis, 2003), building on students' current levels of understanding, and their ability to articulate their ideas. The key concept in teaching students with LD is to immerse them in an environment, rich in discussions that are explicit, clear, and full of relevant examples so that students can increasingly make connections on their own (Swanson, 2000). At the same time, students with LD need support to become self-regulated learners; that is, they need to be engaged in a recursive cycle of cognitive activities as they work through a given task (Butler, 2002).

For this study, I investigated co-teaching in a grade-six classroom. My intent was to explore what happens when two teachers share teaching duties. I specifically chose a language arts classroom because many students with learning disabilities have problems with reading and writing.

METHOD

For this case study, I used qualitative research techniques, appropriate for exploring and interpreting educational phenomena in a real-life setting in which "how" and "why" questions were the focus of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). I collected data from multiple sources: tape-recordings of participant observations (40 hours); field notes on planning meetings (8 hours); taped semi-structured individual interviews with students (3 hours); interviews with the classroom teacher (2 hours); and interviews with the teacher assistant (2 hours). [1]

As a researcher, I served as a full participant observer (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002), co-teaching with the classroom teacher three times per week during 50-minute blocks (2.5 hours per week for 16 weeks). To record the interactions, I wore a micro-cassette recorder with a tie clip. Full participant observation pre-empted my taking notes of non-verbal behaviour and contextual information. For this reason, after each participant observation/co-teaching block, I made a taped record of participants' attendance, seating arrangements, and field notes. With the whole class, I introduced co-teaching models consistent with those recommended in the literature commencing with a structured model (one teach-one assist). Within the co-teaching framework I collected

fieldnotes and tape recorded interactions with the three students with learning disabilities.

*Research Site*

In response to the increased diversity of class composition and my commitment to inclusive practices, I elected (in consultation with school administrators and school staff) to use a co-teaching model to support students with learning disabilities who were enrolled in a grade-six classroom. This initiative was part of a larger school district movement toward more inclusive practices for students with exceptionalities. Aberdeen Middle School (pseudonym) is a large, mostly middle-class school (grades 6 to 8) located in a small city in British Columbia. The school enrolled 850 students in three distinct programs: English program, French immersion program, and First nations program. Of the twenty-nine students enrolled in the grade-6 class, five students had individual educational plans: three with learning disabilities, one student with a hearing impairment, and one gifted student. Among the remaining students, five were reluctant readers and writers.

*Researcher Context*

Sandelowski (1999) highlights the importance and complexity of researcher identity in contexts where the researcher is a full participant and a researcher; hence I provide my background as researcher. Prior to the study I had taught students with learning disabilities for ten years in both pull-out and in-class models of support and had also worked for eight years as a regular classroom teacher. I relied on in-depth exposure to the site, data from multiple sources, and member checking with the teacher to offer a balanced perspective. Nonetheless what is offered is an insider's understanding of the scene – what Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis (1997) describe as a methodology of portraiture.

*Participants*

The grade-6 teacher, Tina, volunteered to try co-teaching as an alternative to the traditional pull-out support model. She was introduced to the co-teaching model based on Friend and Cook's principles (2000) through a school district workshop. Tina had eight years experience teaching grade 6.

The focus of my study was both the inclusive grade-6 classroom and the three students with learning disabilities in this context. I chose the three student participants using two criteria: designation under the British Columbia Ministry of Education guidelines as students with severe LD,[2] and impending transition to middle school. All ten students who were classified as LD and who were entering grade 6 had an opportunity to participate in the study. Six opted to do so. The six students were assigned in clusters of three to two grade-6 classrooms, one of which was Tina's classroom. Tina was selected because she was particularly motivated to be involved in the study and because of her interest in both co-teaching and in professional development related to exceptional students.

I gathered information on the three student participants, Noah, Katelyn, and Sam[3] from their school records, conducted two interviews with each student during visits to their elementary schools, and interviewed their grade-5 teachers and the students' parents. I obtained informed consent from the parents and assent from the three students.

Noah had well-developed oral skills and a sense of humour that teachers and students affectionately described as "warped." He presented as introverted, with a passion for comic-books and computer games, and difficulty making friends. His academic records placed him approximately three years below his peers in reading and three and half years in writing. Noah entered grade 6 with a history of extreme apathy towards reading and writing. Our main emphasis, to engage him so that he would respond during language arts lessons, involved getting him to read materials in addition to comic books, to respond to texts presented in class, and to write short passages of two to three paragraphs.

Extroverted, Katelyn loved to work in groups, and was often the first to raise her hand in class. Her academic records placed her approximately 18 months below her peers in reading and one year below in writing. She liked to write stories and her grade-5 portfolio contained two cohesive narratives a page and a half to two pages in length. Our goal was to have Katelyn challenge herself with advanced reading materials that were more appropriate to her reading ability.

Sam, a confident, imaginative individual with exceptionally strong verbal skills, had a strong sense of humour. His reading and writing

assessment placed him two years behind his peers. Although he was a reluctant writer with a pen, he was motivated using a keyboard. Our goal for Sam was to have him write longer first drafts by Christmas and to encourage him to use his laptop.

*Data Analysis*

To determine preliminary themes, I entered into the QSR NUDIST system transcribed recordings, field notes, and researcher memos generated throughout the research period. I then coded and compared these data. When conflicting data emerged, I used them to refine existing themes or create new ones. Once I drew preliminary conclusions, I began member checks with the classroom teacher and the teacher assistant to verify and extend my understanding. The classroom teacher read the full transcript of her interview and commented on the transcriptions of the classroom observations. I also conducted semi-structured, individual interviews with the three students selected for in-depth study.  I asked them to bring artefacts such as their language arts notebooks and sample projects to the interview to elaborate their answers.

FINDINGS

*Ways of Supporting Students with LD in a Grade-6 Classroom*

In response to the first research question concerning the ways in which students were supported in the classroom, three themes emerged: learning support within the co-teaching structures, explicit teacher-instigated literacy support, and interactional inclusion. In the following section, I expand on these three themes.

*Reflections on Co-teaching*

During the four-month semester when I conducted the co-teaching project, the co-teaching models that we carried out reflected the extant literature in two ways: first, we initially supported students with the most familiar and more traditional format of "one teach-one assist" (Vaughn et al., 1997). As trust and willingness to compromise grew, we used more interactive models, stopping short of using fully cohesive models such as duet teaching (Sands et al., 2000). Secondly, we went through predictable stages of collegial growth from the developmental

stage to the compromising stage (Gately & Gately, 2001), but struggled to achieve the third stage of collaboration due to some parity issues, insufficient planning time, and the brevity of the project. I also identified numerous teacher-instigated ways of supporting learners with LD in their literacy learning, including explicit instruction, an emphasis on creative representations of literacy as a bridge to writing, interactional inclusion, and engaging students in prompting dialogues during mini-lessons.

*Taking the Lead.* In our initial planning session, I had a discussion with Tina on several co-teaching models that might structure our roles, and Tina chose two models that had components with which she was already familiar: one teach-one assist (Vaughn et al., 1997) wherein I would do the lead teaching the first week and she would assist and conduct mini-lessons among students requiring individual attention. We alternated the lead role from week to week. She also chose cooperative teaching whereby students worked in structured accountable groups of four to six while we circulated among them. Students requiring support would sometimes be grouped together and at other times were grouped heterogeneously according to the language arts task. However, I did not introduce cooperative teaching until two months into the project.

Although Tina had initially elected to try the most structured of the co-teaching models (one teach-one assist), within three weeks our teaching evolved from one teach-one assist to tag teaching and one-speak-one chart (Sands et al., 2000). She felt most comfortable making this shift after having me take the initial lead which provided her with a safe zone from which to observe my calibrating the language arts instruction. This approach was critical to establishing an authentic and credible relationship with Tina. Both of us displayed some uncertainty and awkwardness in the early weeks as we tried on new roles and made sense of how best to structure literacy support.

Gately and Gately (2001) describe this beginning stage as developmental in which communication is often guarded and classroom teachers tread more slowly to determine role expectations. One way that I sought to team build and move past the awkwardness of the early days was for both of us to share incidental anecdotes about our out-of-school

interests with our students. At first, Tina was reluctant to share brief stories from her life (for example, her experiences in overcoming obstacles to make the national Masters Swim Team) but as she saw the interest and feedback from the students she became more relaxed and looked for natural transitions to carry on our conversation.  This began a verbal rally between us which seemed to bring the sixth graders closer to us and reminded them that that their teachers encountered challenges not entirely unlike their own.  It also contributed to the development of a congenial professional relationship of mutual respect and openness, allowing for acknowledgement of inevitable slip-ups and subsequent collaborative problem solving.

*Compromising stage*. One issue on which we disagreed involved some of the classroom rules about how students could access help during seatwork. I liked to be proactive and communicate availability before students needed it and to stay within earshot, without hovering. In a debriefing with Tina, she expressed concerns that the students with LD needed to get help in a way that would still make them functional when support staff were not in the classroom, to learn to use the structures set up for all learners. We worked out a compromise whereby Tina acknowledged the merit in anticipating challenges with the work and the instructions and then moving in, so time was not wasted. I acknowledged that delaying intervention until students had time to think through what was being asked of them in the assigned work was equally important. Interventions that were either too early or too late were both problematic and spoke to the degree of discernment required in the teaching role. This compromising stage (Gately & Gately, 2001), wherein we both began to see the benefits of one another's perspective on classroom structure and classroom management, represented a new level of comfort for both of us.

*Classroom Structures and Traffic Patterns*. The learning support was also facilitated by classroom structures for accessing help through the use of the Help Board, a corner of the chalkboard that Tina had divided into two columns. When students were participating in writing workshop activities, they could sign up for help under the column we had labelled "Help with ideas and instructions" or the column "Help with editing." At other times, Tina labelled the two columns with each of

our names, recognizing that some students were more comfortable asking a particular person for help. Interestingly, most of the regular students in the class used this structure, but of the three students with learning disabilities, only Katelyn signed up, and then only irregularly. Tina also told students to "Ask three before me" which encouraged them to check with their neighbouring peers before using the Help Board. We also established a regular traffic pattern, an approach for helping, in which Tina took responsibility to engage reluctant writers in mini-lessons and I first engaged students with LD. This simple traffic pattern, in which we prioritized and assumed responsibility for particular students, reduced the amount of time that they were idle, increasing the amount of individual instruction during each instructional block while still allowing enough time for students to analyze the assigned work. Such explicitness in facilitating strategic help-seeking encouraged self-regulated learning. Butler and Cartier (2005) highlight the importance of establishing models of self-regulated learning that capture both the characteristics of the learner and the features of the context including the support structures, the expectations, and task demands.

As the relationships between the teachers and between the teachers and students matured, we used a wider variety of co-teaching structures, such as one speak-one chart and co-operative learning. However, the seamless level of duet teaching (Sands et. al, 2000) whereby more spontaneous instruction might occur and teachers function as a seamless unit never occurred. The literature suggests that such team work requires a longer partnership than one semester so that mutual trust can develop over time. This collaborative stage of co-teaching (Gately & Gately, 2001) involves a high degree of comfort wherein fluid movement becomes unplanned and natural.  To reach this level, both of us felt that the co-teaching initiative required more communication to make joint curricular decisions and time by increasing the number of co-teaching blocks from three times weekly to five .

*Teacher-Instigated Ways of Supporting Students' Literacy*

*Explicit Instruction.* When I started to co-teach the language arts, I strove to fit in with Tina's language arts curriculum, which was focused on a novel study of *Me and the Terrible Two* (Conford, 1974). She

frequently integrated arts with language arts and often chose to have students anticipate, interact, or respond to the elements of a novel by, for example, constructing a paper model of the novel's neighborhood, filming a news report of events in the school, or writing letters and reports about characters and events in the story. Tina largely determined the content of the curriculum; I focused on differentiating the work for Katelyn, Sam, and Noah and a few of the other students. The integrated focus of the curriculum appeared to motivate the students with LD, but they struggled in particular with open-ended tasks and the written component of the unit. I routinely prepared prompt sheets for both of us to use in the mini-lesson with the students with LD and with a few of their struggling peers. The prompt sheet was then used to scaffold instruction and as a guide for the dialogues during mini-lessons. It tackled the complexity of the literacy task, usually, by providing more structure, making the task more concrete, adding more steps or fewer steps, increasing the number of known elements, or bringing the task closer to the text.  The key goal was clarity and explicitness and at other times the prompt sheet simply served to get the students to elaborate on their ideas about their writing.

Striking a balance between traditional literacies so that Katelyn, Noah, and Sam would be engaged in meaningful reading and writing practices and also have opportunities to participate in the creative literacies was a source of tension and discussion between Tina and me, as this in-class exchange illustrates:

Tina: Did you remind him [Noah] that he does have to actually write a story to go with his picture?
Me: I haven't, but I will once he gets some of his ideas down.
Tina: Good, because I don't have enough in his writing portfolio to write a report on him.  (classroom teacher and researcher)

We eventually agreed that although we needed to attend carefully to their voiced ideas and aesthetic responses to the text, we ultimately had to use their creative works as bridges to writing because without this insistence and support, Noah and Sam, in particular, would almost always opt for a creative response and not persevere with their writing. We didn't always agree on the timing of when Noah was ready to write, Tina leaning toward spending less time on his creative work. My

experience with Noah led me to argue for more time because he often had richer ideas for his initial drafts when he had been allowed to follow through on his creative projects.  On the other hand, who knows a student better: A teacher who spends three hours per week in the classroom or a teacher who spends three hours per day? (Tina taught art two hours per day in other grade 6 classrooms). Also, although I was providing input into the three students' grades from the classes we co-taught, Tina had the responsibility of providing the final mark.

*Prompting Dialogues and Interactional Inclusion.* One key advantage of having two professionals in the classroom was the opportunity to engage the students with LD in individual dialogues and to prompt them in their writing using a few simple techniques as they talked about their ideas such as scribing or generating a graphic organizer.  For example, in one class in which we were working on developing descriptive writing, Tina gave the following directions to the students:

You are going to choose either an amusing, exciting, or frightening experience that you've had, but you're going to exaggerate… why I said choose something that happened to you is because you can remember it well and you can brainstorm lots of ideas.  (teacher Tina)

In  this lesson, the differentiated support for the students with learning disabilities involved two stages: an opportunity to first brainstorm individually with me as support teacher (whereby I would scribe some key phrases about a student's experiences and dialogue with the student to elaborate on the key ideas); and the provision of a written example of an exaggerated story.

In addition to prompting students, I also used specific discourse practices in my interactions with the whole class to both validate learners and to position them and their at-risk peers as knowing classmates (Fairclough, 1995).  For example in taking up questions, if I did not understand what one of the students said the first time, I would repeat part of the statement, allowing the student to reformulate his or her thoughts, giving second opportunities to articulate meanings.  Rex (2000), who describes this process as interactional inclusion, argues that such effective discourse moves by the teacher can position vulnerable students for academic success.

*Students' Criteria for Accessing Help*

Although the second research question on how students accessed help is partly answered in the first part of this paper, it has been largely written from the perspective of the teachers' practices and initiatives. Yet while we were providing explicit instruction and prompting dialogues, encouraging multiple ways of responding to texts, and structuring help routines, the three students with LD were gauging when it was worthwhile, appropriate, and in their best social interest to ask for help.

During the interviews, students' initial answers about getting help were almost dismissive, as indicated in the examples below:

Me: When you need help, do you find it difficult or easy to ask for help?
Sam: There's nothing really that I need help with in lots of situations. I got all the help I need and that's it.
Noah: Yeah, everyone helps me. It's no big deal.
Katelyn: If I really need help, yeah. (interview with Sam, Noah, and Katelyn)

As my questions became more specific, concerning when and under what circumstances they requested assistance, the answers revealed considerable reflection about when, in their view, it was most acceptable to ask for help. The students performed a type of risk assessment that was driven by four considerations.

Foremost, they considered the level of difficulty of the work for the regular students. For example, when Noah was asked if he found it hard or easy to ask for help, he said:

It's depending on my surroundings, actually. If the work is hard enough for the rest of the class, then I'm okay to put up my hand, but if the work is quite easy and I feel I'm getting a little stuck, it's sort of embarrassing. (Interview, Noah)

Noah's response spoke to the importance of ensuring that the curriculum presented was sufficiently robust.

A second consideration related to an awareness of who was using the Helping Board or getting help most frequently. Here is how Sam responded to the query about whether asking for help is hard or easy: "Easy. I probably ask a neighbour for help first if no one else is asking, if he wasn't busy, or I would just skip until some other person

asked…*someone who's not asking all the time*" (emphasis added). Sam had attached a stigma to asking for help from his teachers and did not want to be among those asking all the time.

A third consideration, common to all three students, was the availability of an equally confused classmate as an asking partner. For example, in response to whether asking for help was easy or hard, Katelyn replied, "Easy. I ask my friend and if my friend doesn't know then *we both ask at the same time*." (emphasis added)

As it became evident to us that Katelyn and several of the other students liked to get help in pairs, we sanctioned this practice by telling them that they could sign up on the Help Board in pairs and formulate questions together prior to meeting with one of us.

The final consideration in asking for help was the physical proximity of the helping staff. In response to the question, "How do you get the help you need?" Noah responded:

If you want, you can put your name up on the board under HELP Mrs. T [Support Teacher] or HELP Ms. Tate [Classroom Teacher] and then you wait for them to come. But usually, I don't get stuck, and if I do they just come around anyway after about five minutes and then you don't have to ask or put your name on the board. It's better that way anyway. (interview, Noah)

Multiple approaches to accessing help were important to the students. Whereas Katelyn found that going to the Help Board with a friend and logging her request worked, Noah depended on the staff's traffic patterns and accepted help when staff "just happened to be nearby." Sam preferred to wait until another student would ask first. All three students appeared cognizant of their borderline status in the classroom and sought ways to maintain their dignity by carefully choosing if, when, how, and to whom they would communicate their need for help.

CONCLUSION

We supported the students with learning disabilities by assuming specific co-teaching roles and responsibilities and structuring specific helping routines. We used mini-lessons to engage these students in prompting dialogues, provided them with explicit instruction, and

encouraged creative responses to text as a bridge to writing. Despite these teacher-initiated efforts, the students with LD sometimes went without help if they perceived that it was not in their best social interest to ask for it. We concluded that to proceed with future co-teaching initiatives, we would need more planning time, and additional administrative support. In addition, we concluded that adapting the classroom curriculum as we did in this case study may not have been the most beneficial way to proceed. Our approach contributed to parity issues because most of the curricular decision making was the classroom teacher's responsibility. We may also have contributed to the three students' sensitivity about soliciting help because we mainly adapted instruction and work products for them and for two to four other students in the class. An alternative would have been to adopt a differentiated approach to language arts instruction for the whole class (Tobin, 2005; Tomlinson, 1999). Under such a model all students' needs, interests, and profiles become the key components in planning a range of learning activities for all students, not just those with individual educational plans.

Because this was an exploratory case study over a short period of time, more investigation with more co-teachers over a longer duration is required to further understand how co-teaching may support the needs of students with learning disabilities in language arts. First, scholars in this area frequently recommend that teachers engage students in interactive scaffolding dialogues. Such support often requires differentiated materials, processes, and content as well as individual student attention, strategies that are more likely to occur with two professionals in a classroom who can engage students in meaningful dialogue thus scaffolding the task at hand. In the early weeks of the study, we, as co-teachers, did not achieve this end because of our misconceptions about what it meant to co-teach. In the absence of sufficient professional preparation of the co-teachers, we found that time and resources were under utilized. However, as the co-teaching roles and responsibilities became more delineated and as a result of the helping routines, such as the Help Board and co-teaching traffic patterns, we could free time and attention for the students with LD. Foundational to effective inclusion for students with LD are teachers' skills in

classroom engagement, or what some prefer to think of as skills in student engagement (Weiner, 2003). In our case, the classroom routines and structures, which the classroom teacher established very early in the semester, contributed to our ability to teach the range of students enrolled in this class.

The students with LD expressed concerns about how they were perceived by their peers and tended not to use the more overt helping structures as much as their classmates did. Instead, they developed creative ways to ask for help. They accepted assistance primarily when the teachers came to them, and secondarily through other students. Ultimately, the critical judgments made by teachers in helping learners with LD -- when to speak, what to say, and when to turn a blind eye -- are borne from subtle understandings of the complexities and nuances of teaching and learning. Such judgments can only be developed through extensive professional development and experience in co-teaching, as reflective practitioners develop commitment to, and responsibility for, inclusive practices that support students' literacy learning.

NOTES

[1]Ethics clearance was received from both the University and the School District to conduct the interviews and the recorded participant observations

[2]To receive this designation, students were of average to above average intelligence and scored at two standard deviations below the mean on academic tests in reading and writing.

[3]I have used pseudonyms for names of the teacher, students, and school.

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