

ADAPTING LEARNING AND TEACHING MATERIALS

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Annotation: *This article focuses on information about educational materials, helping students to learn educational materials, and teaching them the necessary information for independent use of educational materials.*

Key words: *adapting, learning teaching, education, educational materials, reading, special, Support, structure, classroom*

Introduction.

Adaptations that demand the most time and resources may be those requiring direct interaction of the student with another person. From the perspective of teachers, parents, and students, one-to-one assistance in learning from instructional materials with a trained professional is ideal for students with extraordinary educational needs. Direct assistance in learning from instructional materials can take many forms:

Reading printed materials aloud to the student.

Providing guided instruction before, during, and after reading printed materials.

Adjusting the pace of instruction.

Teaching prerequisite information so that students can use materials independently.

Monitoring student understanding and mastery of the materials.

Reteaching if necessary.

However, providing such assistance is not an economic reality in most general education settings or, increasingly, in special education settings where the student caseload is unusually high. How else can teachers ensure that students have the intensity of instruction and support they need to be successful with the curricular materials? Teachers who are the most successful in providing direct assistance are those who collaborate constructively with other professionals, enlist and empower other adults, and promote positive peer instruction among students.

Main Part

Suggested adaptations for providing direct assistance include the following:

1. ESP-Plus: Toward Constructive Collaboration in Making Curricular Adaptations

One way to increase the amount of direct assistance available to elementary school students is through coteaching. Due to the inclusion movement and the reduction of Title I pullout programs, more and more classrooms have two or more

professional teachers for all or part of the school day. While coteaching holds the promise of more and better adaptations for students with special needs, many general and special education teachers have neither the professional training nor the experience to work in such partnerships. Careful planning of roles and responsibilities is imperative. This includes considering what adaptations need to be made and who will prepare for and actually make those adaptations.¹

Result and discussion

ESP-Plus is a series of recommendations for establishing successful coteaching partnerships. Successful coteaching partnerships enable both professionals to maximize their potential as educators and to provide all students with the direct assistance they need. The recommendations are derived from a variety of data sources (i.e., individual interviews, focus-group interviews, and open-ended survey items) included in a statewide pilot program focusing on general-special education partnerships. Overall, teachers reported positive perceptions of coteaching – not only in terms of personal job satisfaction, but also in terms of the impact on general education and special education students. However, teachers did offer recommendations for improving the coteaching experience. Their comments have been organized around the abbreviation ESP.

E = Engagement, Expectations, Elasticity

Engagement – Both teachers need to be actively engaged in teaching using a variety of grouping patterns and techniques for monitoring student understanding.

Expectations – General and special educators may have very different expectations of their students. Issues related to expectations – especially as they pertain to grading and pacing of instruction – need to be discussed and negotiated.²

Elasticity – Working collaboratively necessitates flexibility. It is a primary ingredient for coteaching success.

S = Skills, Support, Structure

Skills – Recognizing the skills of each professional and developing mutual skills (particularly communication and interpersonal skills) can enhance the working relationship.

Support – Administrative support is especially important for the coteaching partnership to succeed.

Structure – Classroom management issues can be more troublesome than philosophical issues related to curriculum. Constant communication about management issues needs to occur.

¹ Achebe .c. (1975) .Morning yet in creation day.New York: Doubleday.

² Arnett ,J.J. (2002) .The psychology of globalization.American Psychologist ,57 (10), 774- 783.

P = Planning, Preparation, Parity

Planning – Collaborative planning time is a must. Without time to make short- and long-range plans, the coteaching partnership cannot exist.

Preparation – Ongoing professional development is needed as teachers continue to prepare for new teaching situations.

Parity – If coteaching is to succeed, it must be founded on the premise that there are two professionals in the classroom.³

2. Enlisting and Empowering Other Adults: The Miami Reads Tutorial Project
Classroom teachers – particularly at the elementary-school level – state that their knowledge, skills, and confidence in making adaptations for students with special learning needs are moderate to high. The greater problems for teachers are how and when to find the time in the busy school day – in sometimes overcrowded classes – to make those adaptations.

Conclusion

Increasingly, teachers are being encouraged to engage other adults in supportive teaching roles in the classroom. The other adults might be parents, community volunteers, service learning students from high schools and universities, paid tutors, or other paraprofessionals. Adults who are empowered with adequate training, who are monitored and supported in their work, and who have well-defined instructional roles and responsibilities can provide students with direct assistance.

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