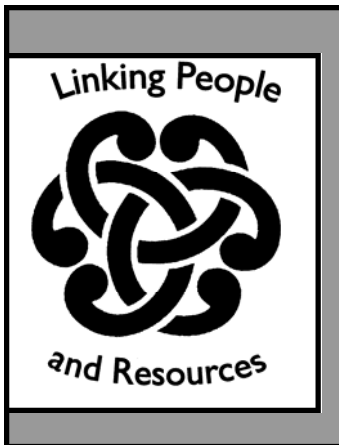


Realizing the Full Potential of Station Teaching

Pano Kallis, M.Ed., Coordinator

VDOE Region 5 T/TAC @ JMU



Most educators who are familiar with inclusive practices are aware that in order for students with special needs to be engaged and fully benefit from the learning process, they will require a setting of instruction that meets their individual needs. For this reason, many co-teachers focus not only on the instructional content but also on finding ways to maximize the use of their shared resources in an attempt to accommodate every student in their classroom. For teachers who are new to inclusive practices, this can seem like a daunting task especially in this age of assessment and accountability. However, NCLB has made it clear that we must ensure students with special needs have greater access to the general education curriculum as a way to help level the academic playing field.

To put this into perspective, students in their pre-teen years have a five to ten minute attention span, while teenagers to adults average ten to twenty minutes (Sousa, 2001). In fact, David Sousa, a leading brain researcher, found that twenty minutes is the ideal time frame for a learning segment. He also goes on to say that these shorter learning segments should be followed by two to five minutes of movement in order to increase respiration and help deliver more oxygen to the brain. In effect, this instructional transition time becomes a crucial part of the learning process that will aid students' attention and performance during subsequent learning segments.

With many schools feeling the effects of population growth, it's becoming more challenging to provide student-centered instruction even in co-taught classrooms. While some co-teaching approaches, such as parallel and alternative teaching, offer teachers the opportunity to work with fewer students, children with attentional deficits may still be left to cope with an inability to focus on lengthy lessons and activities that usually take up the whole class period.

For this reason, it is essentially *station teaching* that addresses the issue of larger class size and student engagement based on the principles of brain-based learning. With this approach, co-teachers divide instructional content and are responsible for working with different groups of students as they transition or rotate through each station at designated time intervals. Traditional station teaching is implemented with three stations (see figure 1). Students are divided into groups and assigned to a particular station from where they will begin the rotation process. Each of the first two stations is directly managed by the general and special education teachers while the third station can run independently without direct teacher involvement.

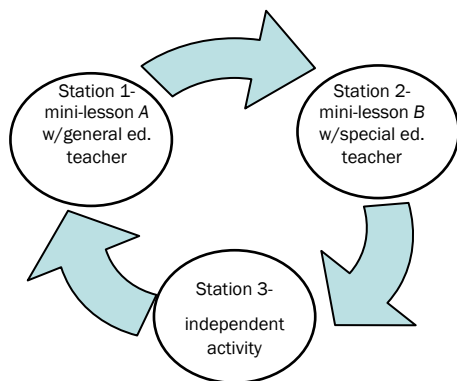
In his book, *A Celebration of Neurons*, Robert Sylwester argues that the brain is not designed to focus for long periods of time on a single task. Most people who have caught themselves daydreaming during a long presentation or lost focus while reading a lengthy book can certainly attest to this fact. Furthermore, a young person's attention span is often calculated based on chronological age in minutes, plus or minus two.

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These independent stations usually consist of activities that require students to practice previously taught skills that will enhance their learning. Such activities could be set up as part of thematic or curriculum-based centers throughout the room. Another consideration is to set up a computer station in the classroom that uses instructional software or internet-based activities to reinforce content being taught. As a result of working with smaller groups that rotate through short station activities, teachers are able to offer students more personalized attention while still covering essential content in an engaging and effective manner (Burello, Burello, & Friend, 2005).

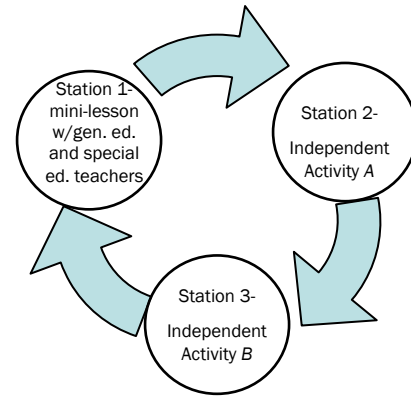
Figure 1: Traditional Station Teaching



Another inherent benefit of this approach that is often overlooked is that other highly utilized styles of co-teaching can easily co-exist within the station teaching structure. This can be accomplished through some creative planning and advanced preparation. When students' mastery of concepts or skills varies tremendously, they may be grouped homogeneously to facilitate differentiation at each station. Students may even be re-grouped when necessary to manage behavior, especially during cooperative learning activities. This type of student grouping during station teaching allows opportunities for the strategic use of other concurrent approaches such as parallel teaching, alternative teaching, or even team teaching.

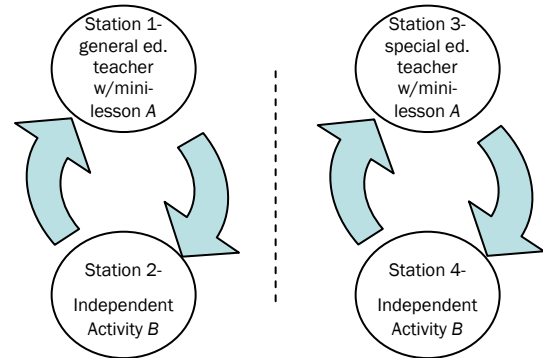
Similar to traditional team teaching, in team-station teaching both teachers deliver the same instruction at the same time (see figure 2). However, instead of presenting a large complex lesson to the whole class all at once, co-teachers divide the class into three separate stations and provide small-group mini-lessons at one designated station together. In addition to the teacher-led station, the remaining two stations offer students two different independent activities that relate to previously taught content or skills. In order for students to have the opportunity to work through all three stations, all groups rotate at the end of each scheduled time interval.

Figure 2: Team-Station Teaching



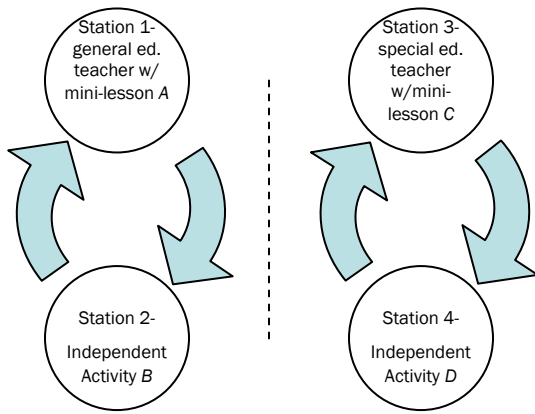
To effectively implement parallel-station teaching, four stations are necessary (see figure 3). The general and special education teachers each manage a separate station that provides instruction on the same content. The remaining two stations offer students the same independent activity. The four groups are then divided into two rotating sections as seen in the following diagram. Unlike traditional station teaching that requires students to move through three rotating stations, parallel-station teaching only requires students to visit two stations. In order for students to have the opportunity to work in both the teacher-led and independent activity stations, all groups switch places at the end of each scheduled time interval.

Figure 3: Parallel-Station Teaching



In similar fashion, alternative-station teaching is comprised of four stations that are also divided into two rotating sections (see figure 4). In this approach, the general and special education teachers each manage separate stations and provide instruction at different levels or for different purposes. Students are grouped and sectioned according to their level of mastery on a concept or skill being covered. The general education teacher may be in charge of the two groups which have a high level of mastery whereas the special education teacher is responsible for teaching the two groups with a low level of mastery. The remaining two stations could offer independent activities that are either similar in content and difficulty for all groups or based on separate group needs.

Figure 4: Alternative-Station Teaching



The number of stations implemented can depend on a variety of factors such as physical classroom size, number of students, instructional objectives, and designated co-teaching roles. Length of class periods can also affect how the stations will operate. For example, a class with a 90-minute block will have the opportunity to go through three or four 20-minute stations with little difficulty. However, for a 50-minute class, teachers may want to consider spreading the instructional routine over a two-day period. On the first day of the rotation sequence, a class with three stations can start out with 20 minutes of whole-group instruction which is then followed by having students transition to a designated center for the next twenty minutes. The remaining time can be devoted to a short whole-group lesson review that might provide students the opportunity to self-reflect. On the second day, students can continue the rotation sequence from where they left off in order to rotate through the remaining two stations.

As with any co-teaching approach, there are some potential issues to consider when implementing station teaching (Burello et al., 2005). First, it is important that both co-teachers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities within their set time frames. This is especially true when using a parallel-station teaching style. Otherwise, instructional content and station pacing will not be consistent which can cause confusion for all students. Another problem that could arise is the noise level which may be more noticeable during station transitions due to student movement. This distraction can be alleviated by having students practice the rotation process early on in the year before station teaching becomes implemented. A significant amount of noise can also be reduced by asking students to monitor the volume of their voices which the teacher should be modeling regularly as well. However, excess noise can also come from students working at the independent activity station since they may not be closely supervised. To help them focus more, activities could be arranged so that students work in pairs rather than independently.

Another suggestion is to use any available aides or parent volunteers to help monitor behavior. On the other hand, if more intrusive behavior intervention is required at the independent activity station, teachers should realize that students in this area are not required to be in close proximity to each other as they would in teacher-led stations. Therefore, they can be spread out in the classroom and assigned to clearly visible seating locations from where they can be easily supervised. Lastly, it is important to note that station teaching is only as effective as the amount of collaborative planning and preparation that is put into it. Once classroom structure and routine have been established from the beginning, quality instruction can then easily take place.

Regardless of the station teaching approach you prefer to use, one thing is certain. Its inherent versatility makes station teaching a viable solution to managing a large class and facilitating structured engagement. By implementing its use, you'll quickly discover how it can help make every lesson a more enjoyable and interactive experience so that there are greater opportunities to meet every student's needs, including your own.

References and Resources:

- Burello, L.C. (Executive Producer), Burello, J.M. (Producer), & Friend, M. (Producer). (2005). *The power of 2* [DVD]. Indiana University: Forum on Education.
- Cook, L., & Friend, M. (2004). *Co-teaching: Principles, practices, and pragmatics*. Albuquerque, NM: New Mexico Public Education Department, Quarterly Special Education Meeting.
- Sousa, D. A. (2001). *How the brain learns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Sylwester, R. (1995). *A celebration of neurons: An educator's guide to the human brain*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Curriculum & Development.
- Villa, R.A., Thousand, J.S., Nevin, A.I. (2004). *A guide to co-teaching: Practical tips for facilitating student learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Talking Together:

A Community-Building Program

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VDOE Region 5 T/TAC @ JMU

“Stop hogging it all!” “Give it to me!” “You’re not on our team!” These words certainly do not signal the best start to a teacher’s day. Words, if left alone, can lead to disharmony in the classroom and can lead to students being left out (distanced from the class community).

Dufour and Eaker (1998) describe a learning community as “... an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as (people) work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone”(p. 10). D. Sue Vernon, Donald D. Deshler, and Jean B. Schumaker have designed a program, *Talking Together*, to introduce the concept of learning community to students. The program teaches students how to successfully communicate and respectfully participate in class discussions. Through *Talking Together* instruction, demonstrations, and practice, students learn basic concepts associated with, and strategies for, controlling their own behavior during discussions. They learn how to take turns with classmates, how to give someone else a chance to speak and be heard, and how to express respect and kindness toward others.

Research shows that students who participated in *Talking Together* instruction participated more frequently and engaged in fewer behaviors that would disrupt discussion. Participating teachers comment, “My students are kinder and more polite. The children feel safe and help each other. I like how it builds structure in my classroom. I like the idea of everyone working together and feeling confident” (Deshler, Schumaker, & Vernon, 2000, p. 3).

Talking Together consists of six lessons. The lessons introduce students to the concepts of participating, working with partners, diversity, respect, tolerance, and learning community. During the lessons, students learn and practice three confidence and competence-building skills and some basic rules for participating in discussions. To facilitate teaching, lessons are presented “At-A-Glance,” which outlines the major instructional procedures in a brief, one-page lesson guide, and “Play-by-Play,” which provides a more in-depth description of the instructional procedures. The “At-A-Glance” may be copied and used as a general outline for teaching; “Play-by-Play” gives a more in-depth description of procedures.

Sample: At-a-Glance

Lesson 1: Participation and the Discussion Skill

Give an advance organizer: 1. State the purpose of today’s lesson. 2. State your expectations.

Introduce and describe: 1. Introduce the concept of “learning community.” 2. Discuss feeling safe and comfortable. 3. Introduce whole-group participation. 4. Demonstrate whole-class nonverbal participation. 5. Demonstrate whole-class verbal participation. 6. Introduce the Discussion Skill. 7. Discuss the steps. 8. Discuss what “Look and listen” means. 9. Discuss what “Hands up, hands down” means. 10. Discuss what “Stay on topic, keep it short” means. 11. Discuss the option to “pass.” 12. Demonstrate how to “pass.” 13. Discuss the rules. 14. Discuss when and where to use the Discussion Skill? 15. Conduct verbal practice. 16. Have students make folders.

Give a post-organizer: 1. Review the lesson. 2. Preview the next lesson.

Take it a step further.

References:

- Deshler, D., Schumaker, J., & Vernon, D. (2000). *Community building series: Talking together*. Lawrence, KS: Edge Enterprises.
- Dufour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

To Order Resources:

Community Building Series: Talking Together

Edge Enterprises, Inc.

P.O. Box 1304

798 W. 9th Street, Suite 107

Lawrence, KS 66044

Toll free: 877.749.0207

Goodbye Judy, Hello Loretta

T/TAC recently bid farewell to secretary and library manager, Judy Hensley, who moved to another position at JMU in the Financial Aid office. Often your first contact with the Region 5 office was with Judy when you borrowed library items, registered for a workshop, or called the toll-free phone number. Judy was with the T/TAC for seven and one-half years, our “growing” years, during which she learned and enhanced her skills right along with all the coordinators. We wish Judy well in her new endeavors!

Newly hired in the secretary/library manager position is Loretta Ennis. Loretta comes to the T/TAC with a wealth of office experience and previous work employment at JMU, most recently in the HR Training and Development office, and Bridgewater College. Loretta has also been a substitute teacher in local school divisions. Loretta will now be the friendly voice on the phone when you call the office central number. Loretta’s phone number is 540.568.6746 (888.205.4824 long distance) and her e-mail is <ennislg@jmu.edu>. Welcome Loretta!



Congratulations

**To Region 5 T/TAC
Coordinator
Sally Chappel**

Sally was honored at the Virginia Transition Forum conference held in Norfolk in March with the Division for Career Development and Transition “Transition Leader of the Year” award. The award is presented to an “outstanding member of the profession whose work exemplifies the best in transition practices.” Sally was recognized for “...commitment, leadership, and dedication for students with exceptionalities.”



Sally is in her 10th year as a coordinator at the Region 5 T/TAC with primary responsibilities in the areas of secondary transition and autism. She is also an adjunct instructor in the exceptional education department at JMU. Prior to working at T/TAC, Sally was a public school special education teacher. During her years teaching, Sally incorporated overall training and instruction in independent living skills along with work experience programs to ensure that students would be prepared for adult life after graduation. Sally has served on the Transition Forum planning committee in many capacities for at least 10 years. Until recently, she had also been the driving force behind the Annual DCDT Summer Institute, an annual summer conference for transition practitioners. As VA DCDT President, Sally proposed to the National Board of DCDT that Virginia host the 2003 International DCDT Conference. As a result of her efforts and with VA DCDT Board approval, that conference was held in Roanoke in October 2003. It was the most successful conference to date for National DCDT with over 900 people attending!

From all of us at T/TAC...Congratulations Sally!

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Movin' On Up

June 22, 2007

James Madison University

This event is designed for rising 8th and 9th graders (2007-08 school year) with disAbilities who have an interest in attending a four year college or university program. The students will spend the day at James Madison University learning about college life from successful college students with disAbilities. Students will learn what self-advocacy skills are necessary to be successful in high school and college, participate in disAbility awareness activities, attend a typical college class, explore a typical college campus, eat in the dining hall, and have the opportunity to ask questions to a panel of successful high school and college students with disAbilities. Adults are welcome to return for the high school and college panel from 2:00 – 3:00.

Pre-registration is required. For more information, contact John McNaught at 540.568.2641 or mчнаught@jmu.edu or Sally Chappel at 540.568.8095 or chappesl@jmu.edu.

Literacy Assessment and Instruction for
Students with Autism Spectrum

Presented by Susan H. Norwell

July 24, 2007

Stonewall Jackson Hotel, Staunton, Virginia

For more information contact:

Sally Chappel at chappesl@jmu.edu or 540.568.8095

Inclusive Practices for All Students and Educators

Dr. Marilyn Friend

October 11, 2007

JMU, Festival Conference & Student Center

Sponsored by T/TAC @ JMU

Detailed information will be available in
August/September 2007.



Early Childhood Educators...do you have questions about the use of assistive technology and young children? Visit the Web site for the Family Center on Technology and Disability to read the *News and Notes* newsletter (www.fctd.info). The title of the March 2007 version is “Early Childhood Education & AT: A Tool, Not a Crutch” and includes resources and a listing of affiliated organizations.

Please return all library materials by Friday, June 1, so that we may do inventory. Items will be available for loan later in the month, following completion of the inventory.

Thank you!



Stakeholders Needed!

If you are interested in serving on the T/TAC Stakeholders' group for the 2007-08 school year, please contact Cheryl (hendercl@jmu.edu) or Melinda (brightmb@jmu.edu) for further information. The group meets once or twice a year and has representatives from early childhood, elementary, middle, high school teachers; administrators; state operated and early intervention programs; and parent resource centers.