Co-Teaching as a Response to Mainstreaming of Special Needs Students: The Perspectives of Teachers at a Magnet Middle School

Charkie Quarcoo ‘06
Ed400 Senior Research
Definitions

• Mainstreaming is the combining of special needs students and non-special needs students in a classroom setting

• Co-teaching is a method of teaching that involves at least two teachers: one special education teacher, one normal (non-special education) teacher
Research Question

• How has co-teaching become a solution to mainstreaming at a magnet middle school and has it been an effective one?
• What are the teachers’ hopes for the future of the special education program?
• How did the unique environment of a magnet school facilitate the perceived effective mainstreaming and co-teaching?
Significance

• Possible solution to mainstreaming for other public schools
  – Effective strategy for teachers
• Suggest changes in education training in graduate programs
• Ease parents worries about quality of teaching
Magnet School Environment

- School has been mainstreamed for 3 years
- Controlled by outside program (CREC)
- Class sizes are limited to about 20 students
- Beautiful and clean facilities with students work posted along all hallways
- Dress code
Methods

• Observations at magnet middle school in Hartford (Curtis-Bey Magnet Middle School)
  – 8th grade Math and English classes (primarily)
  – 6th grade Math and English classes

• Interviews with special education and non-special education teachers, principal, and secretary
Thesis

• Mainstreaming can be effective given the appropriate training of teachers and effective methods of teaching, such as co-teaching

• Different types of co-teaching provides teachers with opportunity to teaching method that best fits classroom setting

• CMMS provides a unique environment
  – Commitment to on-going training
  – Additional resources
Computerized Math Class

- Eighth grade math class (20 students total, 6 special needs students)
- Mr. Reed & Mrs. Smith (special education teacher)
- Vignette:
  - Mr. Reed is boosting with energy at the front of the classroom explaining addition and subtraction of integers. The students are all look at him as though he is crazed due to his excitement. “If I’m playing football and I gained 5 yards, but then on the next play I lost 12 yards, how many yards would I have gained or lost? Write it down in your notebooks.” As Mrs. Smith is walking around the room checking everyone’s work, she says in a playful voice, “We’re always using football as an example. Girls, let’s prove to Mr. Reed that we understand it too.”
Key to a Successful Co-Teaching Environment

• Flexibility
  – Different types of co-teaching methods for different lessons

• Support

• Sense of humor/energy

• Continuous Planning

• Teaching to strengths
Analysis of Co-Teaching

- Teacher/teacher relationships
- Teacher/students interactions
- Inclusiveness of environment
- Training sessions
- Teachers perceptions
Magnet School vs. City Public School

- Math and English classes are co-taught for the whole period
  - no floating special education teacher
- Class size
- Additional professional development training and workshops in addition to monthly training available to teachers
Conclusion

• Future training for co-teaching
• Co-teaching in every classroom
• Mainstreamed society equates to mainstreamed classroom
  – Benefits of mainstreaming for special education students
• Exceptions to mainstreaming
• Application to other public schools