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S4 E12: Co-Teaching during COVID19

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Transcript

Lisa Dieker

Welcome to Practical Access. I'm Lisa Dieker.

Rebecca Hines

And I'm Rebecca Hines. And Lisa we've been working this season off of inquiries from teachers, so I understand you have something new for us today.

Lisa Dieker

Yeah, so this one came through an e-mail so we can't play their voice, but it's a really great question and I'll read it to you. It says, "Dear Practical Access, we are curious what we should be doing with this constant shift in co-teaching, not the shift in co-teaching as I read it, this constant shift in co-teaching from moving from being in an online brick and mortar hybrid and now all the kids are coming back. All day, every day. How do we schedule the co-teacher in these changing models to be effective and we don't all lose our minds. Thank you for your advice."

So, there you go, I'll throw it to you--first losing their minds, that sounds very pandemic worthy in my opinion.

Rebecca Hines

It does sound familiar. So Lisa, you and I talked about this a lot, and we presented on it a lot, and we've written about it, I always have to go to my two fall backs, which is to think differently about what co-teaching looks like planning-wise. And instead of thinking about planning around class periods, et cetera, I think we have to go back to planning around tasks and time. I'll give you one example now and I know you have lots of ideas on this. So, if I know that you and I are collaborating for language arts, in the absence of knowing exactly what time or where language arts takes place right now, we could plan around a specific language arts task. I could say Lisa, I have a great reading comprehension strategy that I can do a mini lesson for 15 minutes. So where does that fit in your day, so that you know I'm coming with those 15 minutes of strong instruction as your co-teacher and we can plan around that one chunk now. If we have a class period together, I'm still planning around specific tasks during that time, so I'll do 15 minutes of a mini lesson, I can do 15 minutes of data collection so we can talk about who we want me to observe, gen ed, special ed, academic behavior, and then 15 minutes of coaching with kids, so I can meet with them either in a breakout room if we're online or I can meet with them in a section of our face-to-face room if we're face to face. But if we can start thinking about how we plan our time in chunks and specific tasks, I think that's workable across delivery models.

Lisa Dieker

Yeah, and I love what you just said is, you know I can come in and watch across special ed and gen ed. You know, I'm surprised the myth is still out there. You know it changed; I believe it was in 97. That said, special ed teachers can really work with anybody. However, their primary job has to be kids with disabilities, so I think when we start taking the labels off the kids and the labels off the teachers, it does give us a little bit more freedom that yeah, my first and foremost is in your room if you're the general ed

teacher as the special ed person and I'm supposed to deliver to those IEPs. That doesn't mean you can't deliver. You deliver to kids IEP's all day when I'm not there. So, what's magical when I show up? I think that's it's a mind shift too. But I think this is going from you know we've had friends that have been like we were brick and mortar, the pandemic hit, they went online, then the kids came back and then they came back in the morning and then like in the afternoon. And then they're here Monday, Tuesday, but not on Wednesdays. So, I think you and I both agree that whatever it looked like wherever it was before chaos happened, try to keep it consistent for kids' sakes.

I think that's the other thing, is like, if all of a sudden, I come in your room 5 days a week and you only have 30 minutes with me twice a week before. It's like, whoa, wait, what happened, and I think the biggest thing for teams to think about is they start to reschedule is if you were offline in the afternoons or you were off brick and mortar, or you were more online learning on Wednesdays, try to make that a part of your classroom just because you came back to face to face and I like to say now when you're online, think of yourself like a PE teacher and be coaching kids. So, I see you know Zach over there on the computer and he's missed the last six questions on some, like Zach back here with me dude, let's have a mini lesson instead of just letting you continue because that's hard when they're in their home, but now they're back in the classroom. You could be monitoring computer screens and saying, yeah, you 3 come over here from a mini-intervention, and I think sometimes we think things have to be so planned but I know you and I both believe great co-teaching is improv. And right now, boy, there's been some improvisation happening and so that's one thing I have a couple of other ideas, but I wanted to hear what you thought about like kind of that flexibility, but consistency in what we're doing.

Rebecca Hines

Well, I think that's my motto in general. So that fits along the lines of what I always try to encourage teachers to do and what I try to practice myself when I'm collaborating with other people, and collaboration has to be the heart of our co-teach partnership. So, I would really encourage everyone to think about this as an opportunity to sit down and think about what, what does collaborate collaboration mean for us? Does it mean we're supposed to be doing the same thing, or does it mean we sit down and say, ok, we've all gone through this experience, now let's look at what the most valuable things that I brought during this time were. Like what was the biggest value add for me, whether I'm the gen ed teacher or the special ed teacher, because even that coaching piece that you're mentioning and this idea of conferencing that we have an opportunity to do now in in different environments. We keep thinking that it has to be the gen ed teacher who's doing one of these things and the special ed teacher doing the other. But to your point about special ed teachers are allowed to work with kids in of all abilities in the classroom, and in principle, if I'm the special ed teacher and I'm leading a mini lesson that's whole group for the whole class and you're the gen ed teacher and you're conferencing with individual kids, that is giving kids with disabilities access to content specialists, so it does fit within the intent of co-teaching in the first place. So, as you said, getting rid of this idea of roles and thinking about real collaboration, dissecting what we already do well. I wish all of us had a chance to just sit down and say no, here's what I'm really good at, Lisa, so let me bring this to our partnership now.

Lisa Dieker

Yeah, I love that your phrase is, "What's your A game? What are you doing as well?" I think that's a great place to start. Well, I'm going to go a little more Type A. I know that shocks you into maybe something a little more structured too to think about, but I'm really big on, just imagine in front of you

right now are 4 buckets and placing your kids in those buckets, do they need resource? Do they need self-contained? You know why are we doing self-contained? Why would we? I know one place to talk about doing self-contained within the room. I'm like, why would you do that? Why wouldn't you do as you said, mini lessons for anybody based on needs and as a parent of a kid with a disability. I don't like the thought of my kid as an IEP would get pulled with Becky, my kid doesn't have an IEP, so you get pulled with Lisa. I mean, that's not what we're looking for. But think about these four buckets, one's self-contained ones, one's resource, one's co-taught, and ones really novel bucket kid doesn't need anything. I just want to keep reminding our colleagues that just because a kid has an IEP doesn't mean they need a para for our parents. Right? Sometimes less is more. I know it's really hard when your kid struggles, you're like oh, but if I give them, you know more medication, more oxygen, you know at some point it doesn't help because they become so dependent upon those things instead of being able to do it myself. And so, I'm really big on that bucket being one that we try to fill up as much as we can, no support. And if you think about your students in those four buckets. Then you start to say, "Well, am I co-teaching because it has academic need or behavior needs?" Those are very different approaches if there's behavior needs you need me for a totally different reason. If it's really strategic academics, but once we have that bucket of co-teaching what I find most people forget to do is to say well, can that bucket serve more than one room at the same time? So, if two third grade teachers both have kids in that bucket, yeah, right now with social distancing, we can't move kids over but, novel concept, I could be on Zoom and one third grade group could also join me with the third-grade group sitting in front of me. We have the technology and I think as we move back and forth into environments, whatever we were doing before. So, if I was meeting with this third-grade group for 30 minutes and this third-grade group for 30 minutes, now can I meet with one group for 60 minutes but invite the others to join me for 60 minutes? And I think it's that kind of thinking, but I think until we think better about where we best serve kids with the least amount of support, I don't think we're going to move forward as fast as if we keep layering more and more support on students because co-teaching is not even the model some kids need, they need less. So those are my thoughts.

Rebecca Hines

Yeah, I agree, and again, if we could get away from thinking of it as co-teaching as a specific thing versus just sheer collaboration and rethinking all of our partnerships. I'll give you my closing thoughts for a specific example now and the type of direction I'd be thinking in specifically. Because it can be done either remotely or face to face. Teachers at all levels, who have the luxury of a collaborating partner, you know whether it's a formal co-teacher or in some states where it's support, facilitation, or some type of other support, if you plan around time, if I know Lisa, that you teach reading from 9 to 10, if you're in elementary, then we can plan for reading stations. I can run a reading station, you can run a reading station, and we can have an independent reading station. And so, I can plan for my own reading station if I know what standard we're looking for. We can group kids in whichever way works best for us, but kids can rotate through these reading stations with us. It doesn't call for you, and I'd have to sit down together and plan everything out together. I'm a certified teacher, I can plan a station, but it gives kids that chance to hear from each of us and for us to isolate and plan for really really strong chunks of content and to make sure that all kids are getting it because we have that lower student teacher ratio when we work in stations.

And even though I just gave that elementary example, I wish that my secondary colleagues would make sure they understand the potential of station teaching where you can really have more rich discussions

and more in-depth opportunities you know to work with kids. So, three stations, each of us running one station and an independent station, if your class is the type that can handle independent work for 15 minutes. And if they're if they're not, then it's just two stations, but it still gives us each an opportunity to plan for and craft a really strong lesson, and to keep an eye on individual kids who need support in a way that we can weave it into our instruction by reducing the student teacher ratio.

Lisa Dieker

Yeah, and I'll end with my last statement of less is more, and reminding again to my parents, that I'm not saying I don't want your kids to get their services, but I don't know why we do 4x90, 5x90. You know to me we should be putting on the IEP the minimum that a kid needs, and we can always over deliver, but I think sometimes we over commit and then we make it so that we're really not helping that kid. We're really making that kid dependent and so I do think you know I often say to teams look generally teacher assume that their special teacher will never be with you on Wednesday because they're going to be up for testing, especially at the elementary level where all second and third graders magically need to be tested all of a sudden. And so, if you just assume I'm coming in Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, you have a different mindset about my approach then what you're doing on Wednesday, because you know, it's unlikely if I come in, it's like, hey, I can always do improv and do something, but I do think it's that less is more is mentality because again I think we should always commit to over deliver instead of committing to more than we really can deliver. And I think that's my last statement. Go ahead.

Rebecca Hines

While you were saying that it did remind me that probably during this pandemic, the thing that that I saw personally because I had some undergraduates doing this, we did almost, what I would say is a help desk in a classroom because my students couldn't go out into classrooms. This is a good model for collaborating with teachers as well. So literally, we made sure there was somebody logged in, and teachers could send their students, because they were teaching face to face and online, they could send their online or their face-to-face students back to the computer to our little help desk, and I had a student on there the student and needed a test read out loud, that teacher said, just go back to the UCF help desk. What we called it was the learning lab, go back to the learning lab. It was literally just one of my students via Zoom, whatever the student showed up and needed, that's what that's what we attempted to give them. So, if it was, oh, you need help with that assignment, that teacher's already trying to run two different classrooms. She can't always customize and individualize, so there's unlimited opportunities to think of how we offer support now that we have technology in place that has shown us it can be done. So I encourage everybody to be creative. You know, even in how we think about support it doesn't have to be just for kids with IEPs, we can support all kids in new ways.

Lisa Dieker

I love it so creative and less is more is kind of a story from this session. So again, if you have questions, please send them to @AccessPractical or feel free to leave us a voicemail at (407) 900-9305, thanks.