

Intentional Co-Teaching for Multilingual Learners

*An Equitable Approach
to Integrating Content
and Language*

Holly J. Porter

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An Equitable Approach to Integrating Content and Language

by

Holly J. Porter, Ed.D.
Independent Consultant
Aurora, Colorado

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About the Online Companion Materials

Purchasers of this book may view the videos and may download, print, and/or photocopy the worksheets, forms, and Rubric for Analyzing Co-Teaching Practices for professional and/or educational use.

To access the materials that come with this book:

1. Go to the Brookes Download Hub: <http://downloads.brookespublishing.com>
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About the Author

Holly J. Porter, Ed.D., Independent Consultant, Aurora, Colorado; Director of Language Supports and Services, Cherry Creek School District, Greenwood Village, Colorado

Dr. Holly Porter is an independent consultant and the director of the Language Supports and Services Department in the Cherry Creek School District, located in Greenwood Village, Colorado. She has more than 27 years of specialized experience in the field of education and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish: Bilingual/Bicultural Elementary Education, a Master of Arts degree in Special Education: Moderate Needs with an endorsement in Deaf Education, an Educational Specialist degree in Educational Leadership, and a Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership—all from the University of Northern Colorado.

Dr. Porter has served in several Colorado school districts as well as at the Colorado Department of Education. She has been an adjunct professor for Regis University, the University of Colorado, the University of Northern Colorado, and Adams State University. Dr. Porter received recognition as the Language, Culture, and Equity Director of the Year for the State of Colorado in 2014, and the department she supervises received an annual Excellence Award from the state for high growth and achievement of the students in their program during the years it was awarded to districts (from 2014 to 2017). She was also the 2015 Spring graduate commencement speaker for the University of Northern Colorado.

Dr. Porter is a fifth-generation Coloradan and was born and raised in Aurora, Colorado. In her free time, she loves to enjoy the Colorado outdoors through snowboarding, hiking, and Jeeping, with her husband and son. She also enjoys scrapbooking, cooking, gardening, and helping her husband coach their son's baseball team.

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge those who have supported me through the process of bringing this book to fruition.

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who blessed me with the capacity and ability to develop this work.

All my thanks and love to Bryan and Cristian, for your time, encouragement, and love. Thank you for giving up countless hours away from home or holed up in the basement to give me time to write in a quiet space. Thank you for the encouragement to keep going even when it seemed like it would never happen. Without you, this book never would have been finished!

Thanks to my loving parents who raised me to be a faithful steward of my God-given gifts and to use those gifts in a way that shares God's love. I am grateful that they have encouraged me to continue to pursue my gift of writing to share this programming model that will have an impact on thousands of students who may have otherwise been marginalized or held back from reaching their full potential. "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen." — 1 Peter 4:10–11 (NIV)

While my family supported me and told me to keep going, my colleagues in the Cherry Creek School District are the inspiration and backbone of this work. I want to personally recognize my department leadership team who worked alongside me as we moved our programming into a new and uncharted space. Thank you to Lori M., Lori S., Kellie, La Toyua, Julie, Lisa, Meg, Tricia, Jess, and Carissa for all of your hard work, great thinking, research, development, and dedication as we moved into uncharted waters with our programming shift. Thank you also to those of you who are still in the department and continue to move the work forward.

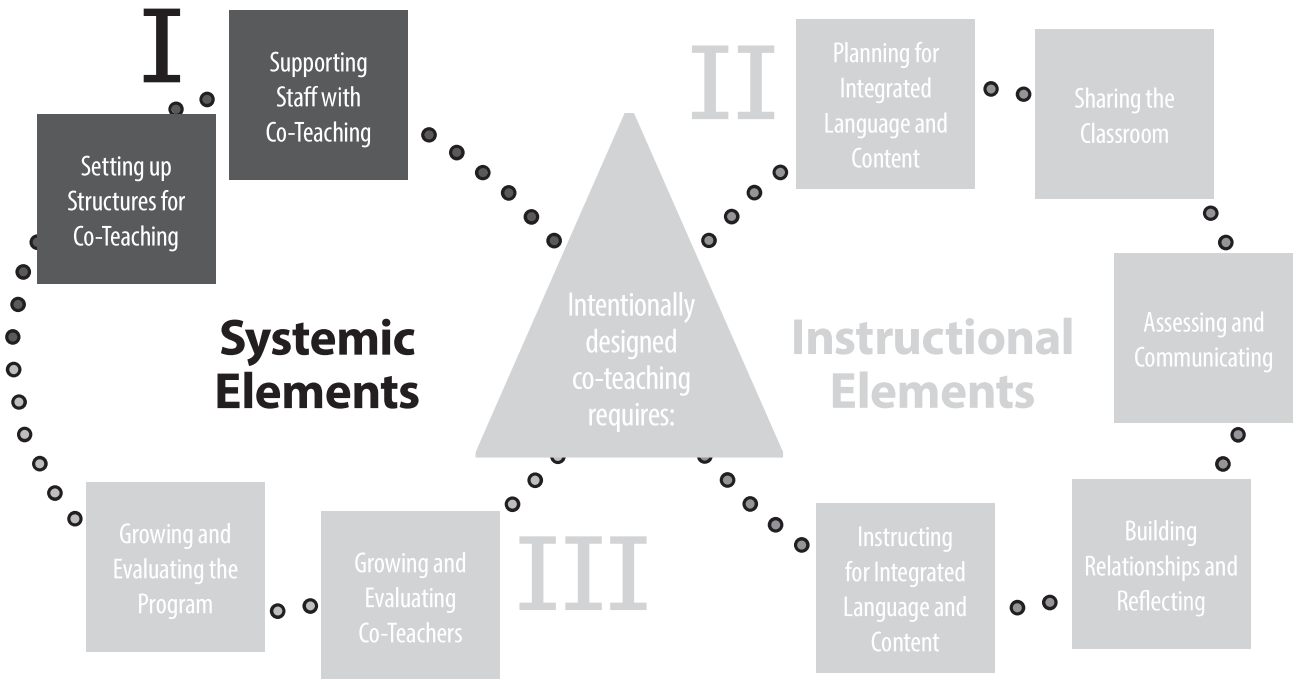
My deepest gratitude goes to all of the current and former English Language Support Specialists in the Cherry Creek School District whose tireless work every day through co-planning, co-teaching, and consultation ensures that multilingual learners are given equitable access to cohesive learning opportunities that accelerate their social and academic English, provides meaningful access to grade-level content, and increases their overall achievement. Without your commitment, none of this would be possible!

Thanks also goes to all of my current and previous supervisors, district leaders, and school principals who supported me and the department team in the development of this new approach to programming and who continue to support the implementation and innovation of the work. Without your leadership and "having my back," the co-teaching program may never have been what it is today. Special thanks to the late John Buckner, who supported me in branching out into the first stages of co-teaching, and to Dr. Tony Poole, for his flexibility and encouragement as I neared the end of this writing project.

Finally, I want to thank all of the hundreds of students and parents who have come into my life in my nearly 30 years in the field of education. Your trust in me, passion for your own education or the education of your children, and desire to ensure that multilingual learners have rigorous and meaningful educational opportunities drives my ongoing passion for this work.

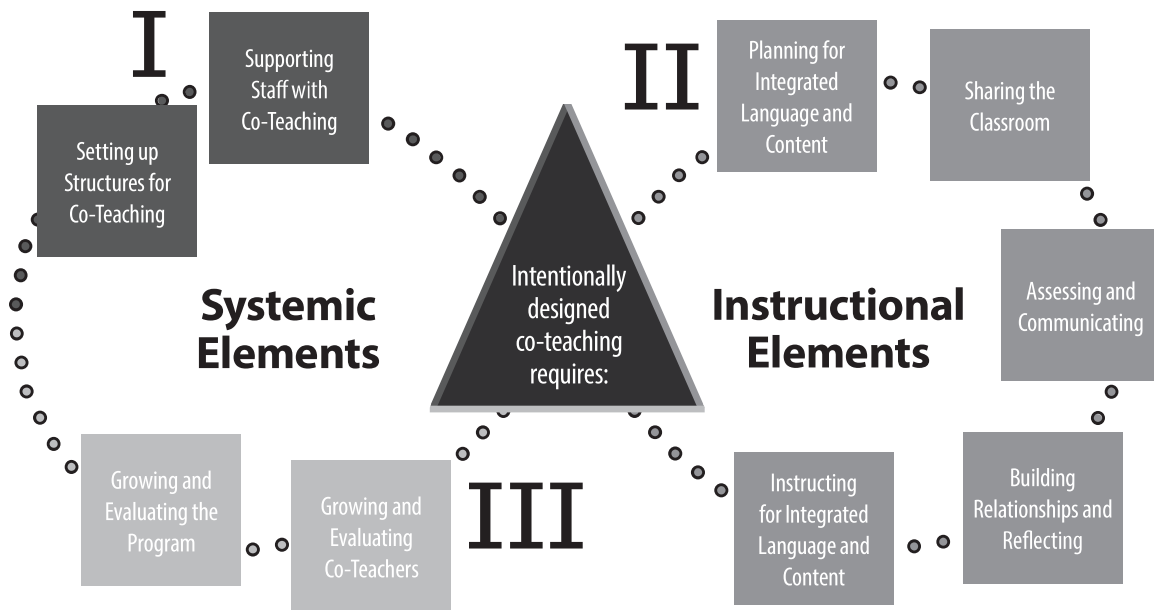
Systemic Elements

Structures and Supports



Intentional Co-Teaching for Multilingual Learners

1



Co-teaching provides multilingual learners with equitable access to cohesive learning opportunities that accelerate their social and academic English through meaningful opportunities to participate in grade-level content, resulting in overall increases in achievement (see co-teaching rubric in the appendix, indicator 4).

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is intentional co-teaching for multilingual learners?
- What are the three primary goals of co-teaching for multilingual learners?
- What does an intentionally designed co-teaching framework for multilingual learners look like?
- Using the co-teaching program rubric (found in the appendix) as a guide, do you believe that an intentionally designed co-teaching program is possible in your district? What systemic and individual resources and strengths can you identify to build upon?

This book illustrates how school districts can develop, implement, monitor, evaluate, and strengthen co-teaching for their multilingual learners. The majority of public school districts in the United States today are very diverse—linguistically, culturally, racially, and socioeconomically. Some districts may have large numbers of Spanish-speakers, others may have substantial numbers of students who speak

other languages such as Arabic, Cantonese, Karen, Somali, Urdu, and many more. According to civil rights legislation passed in the 1960s, districts have been required to provide equal educational opportunities to students officially designated as multilingual learners, then labeled limited English proficient, or LEP. Today, over 60 years later, we know much more about effective policies, programs, and practices for students who are learning content through English as they acquire English for academic purposes. However, it is unfortunately also the case that many of these students do not achieve at the same levels as their monolingual English-speaking peers, as assessed by standardized tests in English. This fact runs contrary to the goals of the civil rights legislation.

This book uses the story of the Cherry Creek School District in Colorado as a framing device to show readers how a school or district might move from an ineffective, piecemeal approach to educating multilingual learners, through the challenges of restructuring school or district policies, programs, and practices to strive for equity, to create an effective school or district-wide approach to co-teaching involving general education teachers and multilingual learner (ML) specialists. A small group of English Language Acquisition (ELA) teachers started this journey 16 years ago in 2007, when Cherry Creek students who were in the process of learning English tended to be marginalized from the academic mainstream in pull-out or stand-alone ELA classes. Now we refer to these students as multilingual learners, which makes visible and values the language resources they bring with them to school. English language acquisition was the term used to describe the program in order to purposefully highlight that students were acquiring English and not “learning” a second language, which was the common term at the time. Acquiring a language is a different process than learning, and students may have been acquiring English as a second, third, or even fourth language. We did not want to limit students by providing information that made it seem as though their language acquisition was something learned in the same way as academic content.

Early on, we became aware of the power of co-teaching for multilingual learners and for their content teachers and language specialists. We intentionally designed our systemwide co-teaching approach based on what we learned from research and practice, and we took care to align our work with federal, state, and district policy as well as civil rights legislation. We also conducted internal research on our practice as the program moved from ineffective to effective. This book is grounded in the Cherry Creek School District transformation, and it provides a co-teaching framework and rubric to guide others as they consider co-teaching in their contexts.

WHAT IS INTENTIONAL CO-TEACHING FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS?

The idea of co-teaching is not a new construct in the field of education. Encouragement for collaboratively supporting students through team or co-teaching is referenced as far back as the 1960s (Bair & Woodward, 1964; Shaplin, 1964). However, most of the information and research on co-teaching comes from the field of special education. When we began this journey, we found little research on co-teaching with multilingual learners, and we never found explicit guidance relative to our three primary goals for the co-teaching model we began to imagine 1) meaningful access to grade-level content, 2) acquiring English proficiency through content instruction, and 3) job-embedded co-teaching professional learning opportunities to build the capacity of content teachers and ML specialists.

There are many definitions of co-teaching that have been used or assumed in the field of education. We use the term “*co-teaching*” in this book to refer to *two teachers—a content professional and a multilingual learner professional—sharing planning, instruction, and evaluation in order to meet the needs of multilingual learners*. We advocate that both of these professionals be certified teachers, one an expert in content and one an expert in language instruction and supports for multilingual learners. These co-teaching teams jointly provide instruction to a heterogeneous group of students that include students who are acquiring English as an additional language (multilingual learners) as well as students for whom English is their first language or who are proficient in English and another language or languages. Co-teachers share instructional responsibility and accountability for a single group of students for whom they both have ownership. Co-teaching teams also intentionally choose and plan to implement a variety of co-teaching approaches according to lesson objectives and student needs. Finally, co-teaching teams design instruction to meet the needs of multilingual learners by addressing

language demands through content instruction while building the capacity of both teachers to provide access to grade-level content and opportunities for explicit English language instruction within and beyond the co-teaching time.

We have learned that in order for a co-teaching program to be successful, it must go beyond just the broad idea of co-teaching as an approach that simply brings two teachers together in the same classroom. Our experiences in Cherry Creek, as well as in other districts in the United States, have shown that schools are clamoring for detailed information about how to effectively implement a co-teaching approach for the instruction of multilingual learners in their district that is explicit, integrated, and sustainable within their daily work. This book responds to this demand and shows educators how to intentionally design equitable co-teaching programs and practices to support multilingual learners.

Our experience and success with the model have shown that co-teaching programming must be intentionally designed around three goals.

1. Multilingual learners will experience meaningful access to grade-level content.
2. Multilingual learners will acquire English language proficiency through content learning.
3. Content teachers and ML specialists will experience job-embedded professional learning to build their capacity as co-teachers.

Getting to the heart of how to use these three goals to intentionally design an effective co-teaching program for the success of multilingual learners is the purpose of this book.

CO-TEACHING AT THE CHERRY CREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Cherry Creek journey to co-teaching began during the 2007–2008 school year. It was my second year in the role as one of two district-level program coordinators. I had most recently been the principal consultant for English Language Learners with Exceptional Needs at the Colorado Department of Education in the Exceptional Student Services Unit (Special Education). That experience helped me to see that among the districts in the state, there was a wide variety of ways in which the needs of multilingual learners were being addressed. As my role was also to monitor compliance of state and federal laws in the Office of Special Education, I saw the ways in which the needs of students with individualized education programs (IEPs) were receiving services. Before my time at the Department of Education, I was a teacher, bilingual diagnostician and coordinator for the Special Education/English Language Acquisition assessment team, and an ELA teacher in the Cherry Creek School District, so I was familiar with the programming and goals of the district.

Note that the term ELA was previously used to refer to services for multilingual learners throughout Colorado and in the Cherry Creek School District. This term will be utilized when describing the historical programming in the district as it describes more accurately the programming shift that took place in the district. However, because many other districts use the terms English language development (ELD), English as a second language (ESL), or English as a new language (ENL), and these districts also use ELA to refer to English language arts, we know that the terminology seen in this book may differ from what is used in other districts and states. Going forward, we will use the term multilingual learner supports (MLS) in this book to refer to supports for multilingual learners as they acquire English. This is a more encompassing term that includes not only explicit English language instruction, but also appropriate scaffolds and strategies to make content comprehensible, knowledge of languages and cultures and their impact on instruction, the language demands of content expectations, how language is developed within content, and so much more.

Impetus for Change

At the time of my transition back to Cherry Creek Schools, there were just over 3000 students identified as multilingual learners in a district of approximately 40,000 students, and these represented over 140 languages, with about 3-4 students maximum that shared the same home language in any one class. At the time, the district was not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)—the measure by which schools,

districts, and states were held accountable for student performance under Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)—for multilingual learners at any level. AYP required that districts and schools demonstrate growth in the percentage of students by particular subgroups scoring at the proficient or above level in English language arts (reading and writing) and mathematics on statewide tests. Over 60% of the Cherry Creek schools did not meet the growth requirements for the ML subgroup. Because of that, our district ELA leadership team, comprised of two ELA program coordinators and three ELA coaches, was struggling to determine what our next steps would be for programming, given that the current model did not seem to be working.

The model the district was using at the time was a pull-out program at the elementary level in which students received 40 minutes of separate, direct ELA instruction from a teacher specifically hired to teach English to multilingual learners; therefore, their title was “ELA teacher.” At that time, not all teachers providing this service had the Colorado state endorsement to teach multilingual learners on their license. At the middle- and high-school levels, students received separate leveled ELA classes: beginning, intermediate, and advanced, depending upon the English proficiency levels of the students. In most cases, these classes replaced language arts or social studies core classes for multilingual learners.

Another struggle the Cherry Creek School District was facing was a lack of funding for additional teachers. At the time, all ELA programs were traditionally staffed at a 35:1 student-to-teacher ratio. This was not sustainable in the long term because in some cases, there were up to 10 ELA teachers in one elementary school due to the sheer numbers of multilingual learners in the school. When it came time for staffing conversations, our team was asked by the district executive directors of elementary schools and the assistant superintendent to consider how we might save the district some funding by revisiting how ELA staffing was allocated to schools.

Piloting Something Different

The Cherry Creek School District included one fairly large elementary school with a population of multilingual learners that exceeded 50% in many of the primary-level classrooms. One of the ELA teachers there was frustrated that she was taking at least half of a second-grade class out of the classroom, down the hallway, and into a mobile classroom outside of the school in order to provide separate pull-out ELA instruction. She felt that much of the students’ time was wasted in transition between the classroom and the outside mobile and that students were being disconnected from their classroom community. The ELA teacher asked permission to pilot something new and go into the classroom of the second-grade teacher and work with the multilingual learners in the classroom rather than take the students outside to the mobile for their separate English language acquisition instruction. It wasn’t completely clear how this pilot would work and if it would even meet the standard of instruction that our district ELA leadership team believed was required. (At that time, it was assumed that ELA teachers were required to provide 45 minutes of instruction outside of the classroom to all multilingual learners because that was what had historically been done and was written down in a district program guidebook.) However, the team gave permission to the ELA teacher to pilot this new way of instruction. The team required that she work closely with one of the elementary district ELA coaches to ensure that data was collected on the multilingual learners that would demonstrate progress as well as indicate performance at or above the other classrooms of second-grade multilingual learners at the school who were still being pulled out of the classroom for their separate ELA instruction.

The district coach who worked with the two teachers had recently come from a neighboring district in which they had all classroom teachers trained in sheltered instruction and utilized a part-time teacher leader/coach in each building who worked with the classroom teachers to enhance their instruction for multilingual learners. In short, the goals of sheltered instruction are for multilingual learners to gain access to comprehensible content-area instruction all day, every day; acquire English for academic purposes; and integrate into the mainstream classroom and school communities (Echevarria et al., 2004). This coach’s experience as a building leader/coach in that district was invaluable in helping the ELA teacher see how instruction might be done jointly with the classroom teacher rather than in a separate room or even as a separate group at the back of the classroom. The district

coach supported the teachers in taking the first steps toward a co-teaching relationship. While it was not the co-teaching model we have since developed and refined, it was an exciting departure from the pull-out instruction of the past.

After almost a full year of eliminating pull-out instruction in this second-grade classroom, the ELA teacher brought forth the students' reading data to the district ELA leadership team. The second-grade students were given the Developmental Reading Assessment 2nd edition (DRA2), which is a reading assessment that allows primary teachers to systematically observe, record, and evaluate changes in student reading performance. The assessment provides teachers with information that helps them determine each student's independent reading level and identify what the student needs to learn next (Beaver, 2006).

The multilingual learners in the classroom in which the ELA teacher had stopped all pull out for ELA instruction had outperformed the multilingual learners in an adjacent classroom in which they were still pulled out for ELA instruction by almost two full grade levels of reading achievement. In addition, the students who were not multilingual learners also outperformed those in the other classroom. Needless to say, it was eye opening to everyone. The disparity was large enough that it was evident to the leadership team that our district needed to continue down the path of looking into some type of collaborative model for ELA instruction to replace the ineffective pull-out model.

Research and Requirements

During this pilot year, the ELA leadership team started to research what a different program model might be and to see if anyone had tried a more collaborative approach, particularly at the elementary level. At the same time, the team was also working with a Title I school that was in the process of moving from a targeted assistance model to a schoolwide model of support. Up until this point, all Title I supports in the district were done through a targeted assistance model which required that instruction and services be provided separate from the classroom. The school wanted to move their program to a schoolwide model, which would allow for more flexibility in their instruction. This came from the results of an internal study conducted by the school that showed many of their students who received multiple supports—such as ELA, Title I reading, Special Education, Gifted and Talented, and other interventions—were being pulled out of their classrooms at various times throughout the day, thus creating a revolving door in each of the classrooms. One classroom was observed to have had only one 15-minute window throughout the day in which every student in the class was present in the classroom at the same time. One of the proposals they made in moving to a schoolwide model was to push the services into the classrooms rather than pulling the students out throughout the day. This sparked more interest in co-teaching for multilingual learners as the school, alongside the district ELA team, began researching ways to support students in the classroom.

Through that research phase, the team discovered that Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS), located in Minnesota, had been experiencing success with multilingual learners for the four years preceding the Cherry Creek School District's consideration of co-teaching and its potential for future programming. "In the Council of the Great City Schools Beating the Odds VI report (2006), SPPS [stood] out as having made the most progress of any large school district in the U.S. in closing the achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL students" (Pardini, 2006, p. 22). Their approach was described as

[A]bandoning traditional pull-out programs in which non-English speaking students are removed from their classrooms several times a week to work in small groups with specially trained ELL teachers. Instead, ELL services are delivered through a collaborative model in which ELL and mainstream teachers team teach. The goal: to teach language through—not prior to—content. (Pardini, 2006, p. 21)

Multilingual learners (referred to as English language learners in the data sets) outperformed their peers at the state level on English proficiency assessments for five consecutive years and were closing the performance gap among non-English language learners in both reading and math. [Figures 1.1](#) and [1.2](#) present the results of the Test of Emerging Academic English (TEAE), which is Minnesota's exam to measure the ability of children in grades 3–12 to read and write in English. These raw scores estimate the amount of English a student has learned. SPPS ELLs in every grade level outperformed the rest of the state's ELLs for five consecutive years.

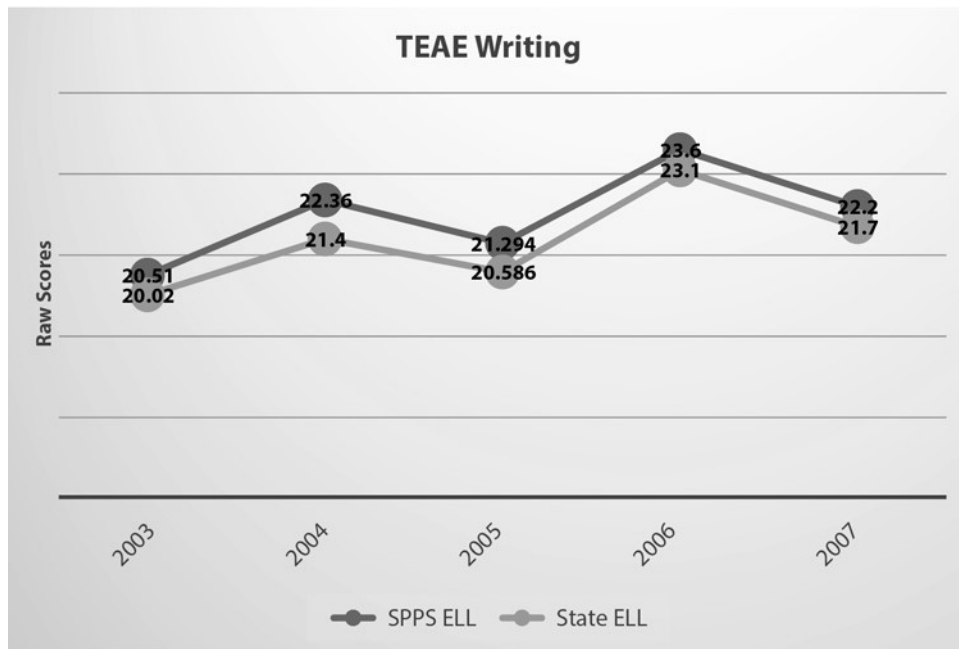


Figure 1.1. TEAE (Test of Emerging Academic English) Proficiency—Writing, Saint Paul Public Schools. (Pardini, P. [2006]. In one voice: Mainstream and ELL teachers work side-by-side in the classroom, teaching language through content. *Journal of Staff Development*, 27[4], 20–25. Used with permission of Learning Forward, www.learningforward.org. All rights reserved.)

Figures 1.3 and 1.4 illustrate the narrowing of the performance gap between ELL and non-ELL students in SPPS in the reading and math data between 2003 and 2005.

In addition to looking at data on effective co-teaching for multilingual learners in SPPS, the Cherry Creek ELA leadership team also wondered about the expectations related to federal and state laws, as well as what was recommended from the Office for Civil Rights (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Multilingual learners are a heterogeneous group of linguistically and culturally diverse students who, by

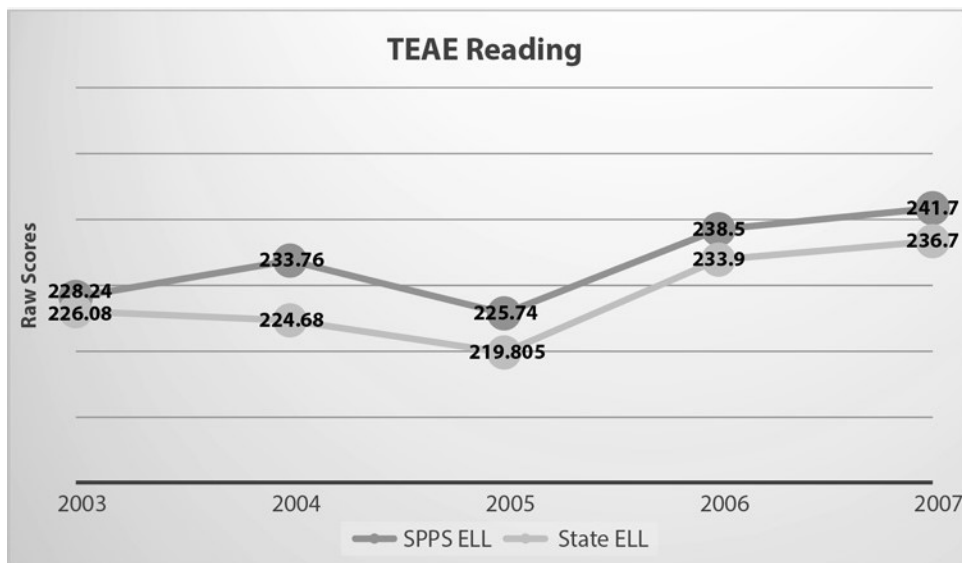


Figure 1.2. TEAE (Test of Emerging Academic English) Proficiency—Reading: Saint Paul Public Schools. (Pardini, P. [2006]. In one voice: Mainstream and ELL teachers work side-by-side in the classroom, teaching language through content. *Journal of Staff Development*, 27[4], 20–25. Used with permission of Learning Forward, www.learningforward.org. All rights reserved.)

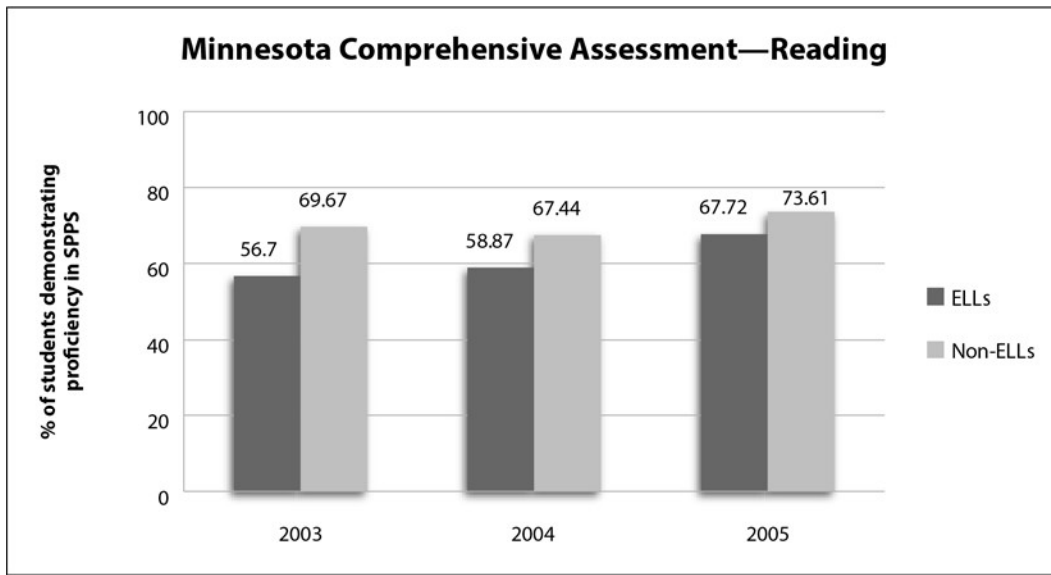


Figure 1.3. ELL Performance Gap Data—Basic Standards Test (Reading), Saint Paul Public Schools. (Pardini, P. [2006]. In one voice: Mainstream and ELL teachers work side-by-side in the classroom, teaching language through content. *Journal of Staff Development*, 27[4], 20–25. Used with permission of Learning Forward, www.learningforward.org. All rights reserved.)

definition, have a primary or home language other than English and require specific support to achieve academic proficiency in English. In addition, the job of teaching multilingual learners was historically solely placed into the hands of ELA teachers, with classroom teachers being given unspoken permission to “opt out” of the responsibility to meet their needs. In the Cherry Creek School District, ELA represented a “place” where multilingual learners went (usually a small room down the hall) to receive instruction

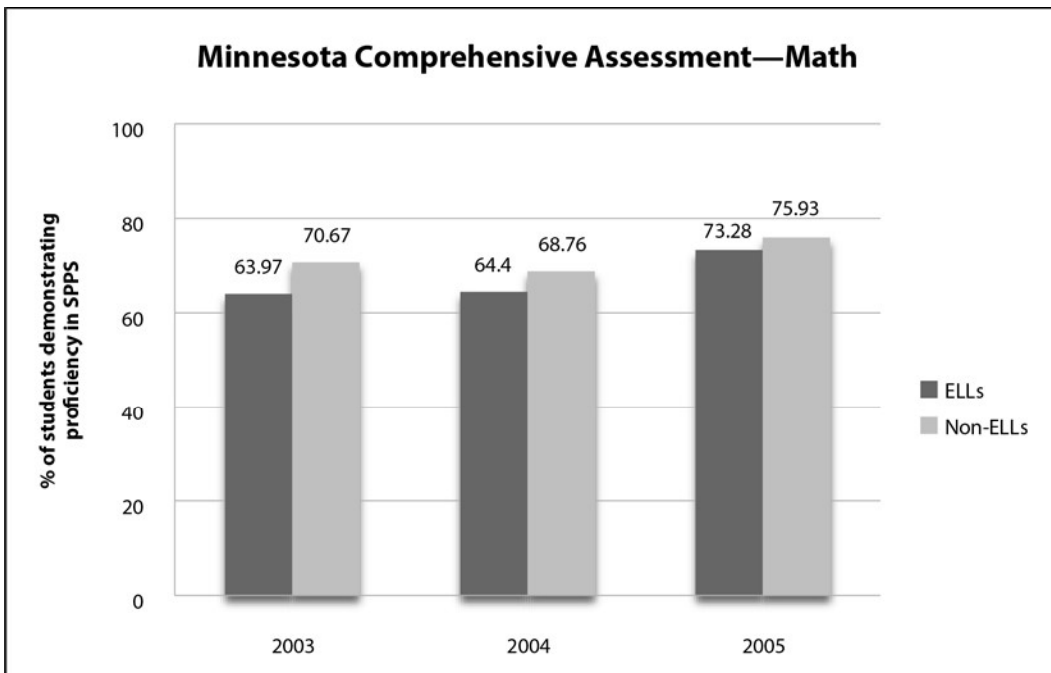


Figure 1.4. ELL Performance Gap Data—Basic Standards Test (Math), Saint Paul Public Schools. (Pardini, P. [2006]. In one voice: Mainstream and ELL teachers work side-by-side in the classroom, teaching language through content. *Journal of Staff Development*, 27[4], 20–25. Used with permission of Learning Forward, www.learningforward.org. All rights reserved.)

that would hopefully address their language needs. It was assumed that, by law, multilingual learners were required to have a specific amount of time outside of the general education classroom devoted to teaching English separate from content. This traditional notion of separate spaces and required time of instruction differed in scope and intent from the concept of access to grade-level content and explicit English language instruction that the team subsequently found in both federal and state laws.

Federal law at the time, as part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, stated that local education agencies, more commonly referred to as school districts, must “provide high-quality language instruction programs that are based on scientifically based research, and that have demonstrated that they are effective in increasing English proficiency and student achievement” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Current law, as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) states that school districts must develop programs that “increase the English proficiency of multilingual learners by providing effective language instruction educational programs that meet the needs of multilingual learners and demonstrate success in increasing (A) English language proficiency; and (B) student academic achievement” (ESSA Section 3115(c)(1)).

The Colorado English Language Proficiency Act required (in 2007) that districts “administer and provide programs for students whose dominant language is not English” (Senate Bill 462-1981; Article 24 of Title 22, Colorado Revised Statutes as amended). On May 21, 2014, Colorado’s Governor signed HB14-1298 that repealed and re-enacted with amendments to the English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA). The re-enacted ELPA provides funding for Colorado districts with eligible multilingual learners. The current version of this statute mirrors more closely the federal law and states that districts must “administer and provide evidence-based English language development programs for identified multilingual learner students while also providing access to grade-level content.”

The Office for Civil Rights Policy Regarding the Treatment of National Origin Minority Students Who Are Limited English Proficient states that, “school districts may use any method or program that has proven successful, or may implement any sound educational program that promises to be successful. Districts are expected to carry out their programs, evaluate the results to make sure the programs are working as anticipated, and modify programs that do not meet these expectations” (Smith, 1990, sec. 2, para. 10).

All of these requirements confirmed the initial thinking that it was important to somehow integrate language and content and that the district needed to try something different. The evidence from Saint Paul Public Schools provided an intriguing case about the “promise” of co-teaching being a successful way to ensure that the requirements were met while allowing for a different approach to instruction. In addition, the Cherry Creek team believed that a collaborative approach would also address the three prongs of the *Castañeda v. Pickard* Supreme Court case (1981) which requires that districts consider whether (Williams, 1991):

1. The educational theory underlying the language assistance program is recognized as sound by some experts in the field or is considered a legitimate experimental strategy
2. The program and practices used by the school system are reasonably calculated to implement effectively the educational theory adopted by the school; and
3. The program succeeds, after a legitimate trial, in producing results indicating that students’ language barriers are actually being overcome within a reasonable period of time.

The newfound “permission” to try something different and knowledge that co-teaching had already been determined to be a strategy that was successful in another district gave the Cherry Creek team a focused energy toward the potential of embarking upon a co-teaching program model. The team knew that they would need to monitor the program and evaluate its effectiveness and were excited to see what positive impact it may have on the growth and performance of multilingual learners.

Beliefs About Multilingual Learners

Creating coherent beliefs about multilingual learners is integral to the success of a co-teaching program. Simply asking teachers to do something different without addressing the underlying belief structures that come with the new paradigm is a setup for disaster. In Cherry Creek, we quickly realized that

we needed to outline our beliefs and how they influenced our move toward co-teaching. As a result, the ELA leadership team determined the following as core values:

- We believe that multilingual learners should learn alongside their peers in grade-level content, learning the same things in the same setting.
- We believe that language and content cannot be separated and that language cannot be taught in isolation of grade-level content.
- We believe that content teachers are the most qualified to teach content and that language specialists are the most qualified to support the language of content.
- We believe that the integration of content and language must happen in a grade-level setting to ensure that the level of rigor remains high and that multilingual learners have experiences in content alongside a heterogeneous mix of their non-multilingual learner peers.

Beliefs matter and it becomes most obvious that they matter when an individual's beliefs are *not* in alignment with the underlying assumptions of the program. Traditional views of multilingual learners and ML programs can quickly erode the very foundation upon which the program is built and eventually cause the program to dissolve if the view is not addressed or clarified.

Our continual focus on highlighting our core beliefs and their alignment to co-teaching programming encouraged some of our staff who previously worked in our program as pull-out teachers to look for other areas in which to use their expertise. Many found positions as intervention teachers and some returned to the general education classroom. This type of movement was encouraged, as we wanted to be sure that we had a core group of teachers who believed in the tenets of the programming and would maintain our focus on inclusive practices for multilingual learners.

Hiring practices also changed as a result of our move to co-teaching. The district ELA leadership team included job postings and interview questions that highlighted our beliefs and ultimately enticed those teachers who share a similar belief system to apply for positions within our program. The team also changed the title of the teachers in the program from ELA teachers to ELA specialists to highlight the expertise of teachers in that role and required all of those who would be hired into or transition to the role of ELA specialists to hold the state Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) endorsement on their license, which signifies that they have successfully completed a university program and passed the state assessment to be certified in working with multilingual learners.

The Start of Something New

As you consider how you can use the foundations provided in this book for your own school or district, it is important to remember first and foremost that the Cherry Creek program was not successful overnight! It was a process filled with missteps, new learnings, adjustments, and changes of direction. The initial move toward co-teaching was simply to try something different because what we were doing was not working.

Because there was limited research or data to refer to when we began co-teaching for multilingual learners in 2007, we drew on the work of experts in the field of co-teaching in special education to try and make sense of co-teaching with multilingual learners. Available research in 2007 indicated that the rationale for co-teaching in special education is to provide an inclusive way to deliver services to students with disabilities while increasing understanding and respect for students with disabilities on the part of other students. The main goal for co-taught special education classrooms is for all students to receive enhanced instruction. It also eliminates the fragmentation that often occurs in other service delivery models such as pull-out and self-contained classrooms because students benefit by not having to leave the classroom to receive services. Teachers also benefit in that the special education co-teacher has a better understanding of the content of the general education classroom and the academic expectations (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989; Friend & Cook, 2004; Friend & Bursuck, 2006; Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Scruggs et al., 2007; Villa et al., 2004; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003).

The rationale and understanding of the benefits of co-teaching in special education have only been strengthened since the team's initial research phase that was conducted in 2007. Authors and

researchers have since added additional information about the benefits of co-teaching for multilingual learners (Barger-Anderson et al., 2013; Beninghof, 2012; Villa, Thousand & Nevin, 2013)

Simultaneously meeting the academic and English language needs of our growing number of multilingual learners is not an easy task, but it is our charge. Educators cannot pick and choose whether students will first learn content or English—it must always be both. There are not “special standards for special students.” The standards are the standards, and it is the responsibility of schools to create inclusive learning environments that promote academic and language learning simultaneously. From our perspective, in order to effectively meet the needs of all students, there is no other option than teachers working collaboratively.

AN INTENTIONAL DESIGN

At first, the Cherry Creek School District’s move toward co-teaching was more of a grass-roots effort. Motivated by the success experienced by the multilingual learners and their co-teachers in the informal second-grade co-teaching pilot, other content teachers and ELA specialists expressed their interest in co-teaching. This interest resulted in a few co-taught classes here and there in different classrooms and school, and the enthusiasm for the loosely defined co-teaching approach began to grow. In 2009, the Cherry Creek School District introduced a new way of meeting the needs of multilingual learners: All multilingual learners districtwide would receive support by two co-teachers at some time during their school day, one certified in their content area and one endorsed by the state in culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) education and whose role was that of an ELA specialist in the district. We also refined our understanding of the three goals we mentioned at the beginning of the chapter: 1) multilingual learners will experience meaningful access to grade-level content, 2) they will acquire English through content learning; and 3) content teachers and ELA specialists will build their capacity through co-teaching. To institutionalize the co-teaching program in the district, we created a co-teaching rubric that includes indicators to guide a school’s implementation on the administrative and instructional levels, which we use to monitor the implementation of the co-teaching model. Initially the rubric was discussed in twice-per-year meetings that included the director of the ELA program, the principal of the school, the district ML program lead assigned to the school, other relevant administrators, coaches, or staff invited by the principal, and the ELA specialists in the school. Those meetings have since been scaled back to once per year now that the program is well established in the district. During these rubric meetings, the indicators are used to create school goals that are then acted upon by the ML program lead, in collaboration with the school personnel to provide resources, individual supports, professional learning, coaching, and other specific actions that will address each goal. Individual teachers, co-teachers, and administrators may also use particular indicators as a focus of their own personal professional learning.

Students Will Experience Meaningful Access to Grade-Level Content

One of the most eye-opening learnings we had while starting our co-teaching journey was that elementary students whose parents had refused ELA support in order to stay at their home school in lieu of being bussed to a center-based ELA program were outperforming the students who were being bussed to the center-based program. *Why was this?* The students were from the same neighborhood and socioeconomic status. Many of them were from the same language background and immigrant experience. The only real difference we came up with was a lack of consistent access to grade-level content in the center-based ELA programs. The programs were set up to have between 45 and 120 minutes of pull-out English instruction for each student—mostly in groups of 5–10 students—based on their level of English proficiency, with students at the beginning levels of English language acquisition spending more time out of the grade-level classroom. In these pull-out settings, games were often used to encourage students to practice English. Instruction was typically based in themes and some schools purchased specific language instruction programs that were designed to increase students’ proficiency in English. Once the students returned to their grade-level classroom, they were given alternate assignments, mostly packets, of work to be done in lieu of the work that the other students in the classroom were completing.

The multilingual learners were typically pulled from instruction during either the language arts block or during the most hands-on time of the day: science and social studies. Most classroom teachers had no experience with multilingual learners and did not know what the students should be doing upon their return to the classroom, so they were given time on the computer to play language games or more time with worksheet packets that were intended to give students practice with the English language. These packets were not grade-level materials, and the computer programs were typically only based in learning isolated new vocabulary, so the students were rarely given any meaningful access to grade-level content.

In the schools in which the parents had refused support through the center-based program, no one came and pulled the students from class to “teach them English.” The teachers were solely responsible for ensuring that the students learned the content and were not familiar with many of the alternate packets of assignments or computer games being provided or encouraged by the ELA teachers in the center-based schools. The students experienced access to grade-level content all day every day. While not always as meaningful as it could be because the teachers had not yet learned how to be adept at scaffolding or teaching language through content, the students in these settings still outperformed the students in the pull-out setting.

This discovery led us to dig deeper into what it means to provide instruction in the English language. We began questioning whether it had to be done in a separate setting. This was happening at the same time as the previously mentioned pull-out ELA teacher suggested that maybe she could go into the classroom instead of pulling students outside to avoid losing instruction time in the transition; even though instruction time was a primary concern, the students being pulled out were also missing what was happening back in their classroom.

We learned through the informal phase of our pilot that multilingual learners who remained in the content-based classroom with one content teacher and one ELA teacher far exceeded the growth and performance of other students who were still being pulled out. We were also beginning to see positive gains and results from the school that moved to schoolwide Title I and was doing what they called “pushing in” the services they used to provide outside of the classroom. These students were meeting their AYP requirements for the multilingual learner subgroup and for other subgroups for the first time. These results were so similar to those of the students who stayed in their local school rather than attend the center-based program. Based on this, we knew we needed to continue looking into the idea of integrated instruction.

Since we began co-teaching with an intentional emphasis on ensuring that students have not only access, but *meaningful* access to grade-level content, multilingual learners are far surpassing the performance of the students who experienced instruction in *any* of the above settings. Meaningful is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It requires intentionality in the ways that co-teachers analyze data, plan for specific scaffolds and strategies that will meet students where they are and move them forward, and continually monitor the progress of students so that they are always challenged at an appropriate level, while also maintaining the expectation of attaining grade-level standards. All of these considerations will be discussed throughout this book.

Multilingual Learners Will Acquire English Through Content Learning

Not only did we discover that students needed meaningful access to grade-level content, we also discovered that teaching English in isolation was problematic. At the time we started looking into co-teaching (or at least the end of pullout), our state standards for multilingual learners were not what they are today; Colorado has since adopted the WIDA Consortium standards. The standards at the time we started our program were heavily based in English language arts and mostly included reading and writing standards that mirrored, and many times directly copied, the English language arts standards for the state. While we knew that students needed to be able to read and write, such standards were not truly based in language. We were discovering that because language was embedded in all content areas, our students were thriving as they learned the content and the language simultaneously. Our ELA specialists, who had formerly been pull-out teachers and were now in the classrooms alongside their content teachers, quickly realized how much language was required to be proficient in a content area. They

also learned that language goes well beyond just vocabulary and picture support, and that you could not possibly teach all of the language necessary to be proficient in all content areas in a short pull-out block or separate class. These specialists then became some of the biggest advocates for the integration of content and language instruction rather than separate objectives, instruction, and expectations. In the spirit of using language that mirrors beliefs, it is essential to note that as the program has grown and our understanding of the role of the specialist has become focused, it is important to now move beyond the terminology of simply ELA specialists. By instead using the terminology of ML specialist, they can be more accurately described as being experts in the educational needs of multilingual learners, which includes, but is not limited to, language acquisition.

Teachers Will Build Their Capacity Through Co-Teaching

Realizing the huge undertaking it would be to attempt to teach the language of all content areas, our ML specialists began to advocate for professional learning for their co-teaching colleagues. They also began to provide helpful supports and explicit language instructional models to their co-teachers so that they were able to continue providing integrated language and content instruction beyond the co-teaching time, essentially building content-area teachers' capacity to instruct multilingual learners. The classroom co-teachers also realized that the ML specialists were not as highly trained or skilled in the knowledge and expectations of the content areas. These content teachers worked to ensure that the specialists understood grade-level content and expectations, essentially building the ML specialists' capacity in grade-level content. This reciprocal relationship ensures that students learn both language and content simultaneously, with each being an area of expertise for one of the co-teachers, but also each specialist learning methods and content taught by their colleague.

Diane Staehr Fenner (2013) discusses this need for collaborative planning with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) if multilingual learners are to be successful in school:

When schools draw on ESL teachers' training and expertise as advocates, all teachers may rise to share the responsibility for teaching ELs. Content-area teachers may feel overwhelmed with teaching ELs within the CCSS framework and may see ELs as students who slow down the rest of the class. As a result, some content teachers may feel that EL students are the ESL teachers' sole responsibility instead of forging a joint effort with ESL teachers to integrate the students with the rest of the class. In such cases, if school administrators send a message that ESL teachers have much expertise to leverage and that ELs are "everybody's kids," CCSS planning and implementation can become more collaborative, creating a school culture in which the entire staff shares responsibility for ELs' success. (p. 8)

Our three goals—multilingual learners experiencing meaningful access to grade-level content and acquiring English language proficiency through content learning, as well as content teachers and ML specialists building their capacity as co-teachers—have become integral themes in the Cherry Creek School District. These goals have helped co-teachers develop a clear description and definition of co-teaching for multilingual learners as well as create a co-teaching framework that integrates and develops the goals as areas of focus throughout the programming cycle. These three goals are present throughout the programming in the Cherry Creek School District and will therefore be present throughout the chapters of this book.

CO-TEACHING PROGRAMMING FRAMEWORK

At the beginning of our co-teaching inquiry, we assumed that most, if not all, of the work for co-teaching was going to take place in the classrooms. However, we learned—through trial and error—that administrative support was also essential and the two must cooperate in a symbiotic way. Co-teachers can only move a program so far without having systemic support and structures to fortify their work.

In order to design a sustainable co-teaching program that integrates content and language, we clearly articulated two sets of interrelated responsibilities, one systemic and one instructional. Administrators are primarily responsible for the systemic responsibilities and teachers are primarily responsible for the instructional responsibilities. The roles of these administrators and teachers—as they design, implement, monitor, evaluate, and strengthen their programs—must complement each other

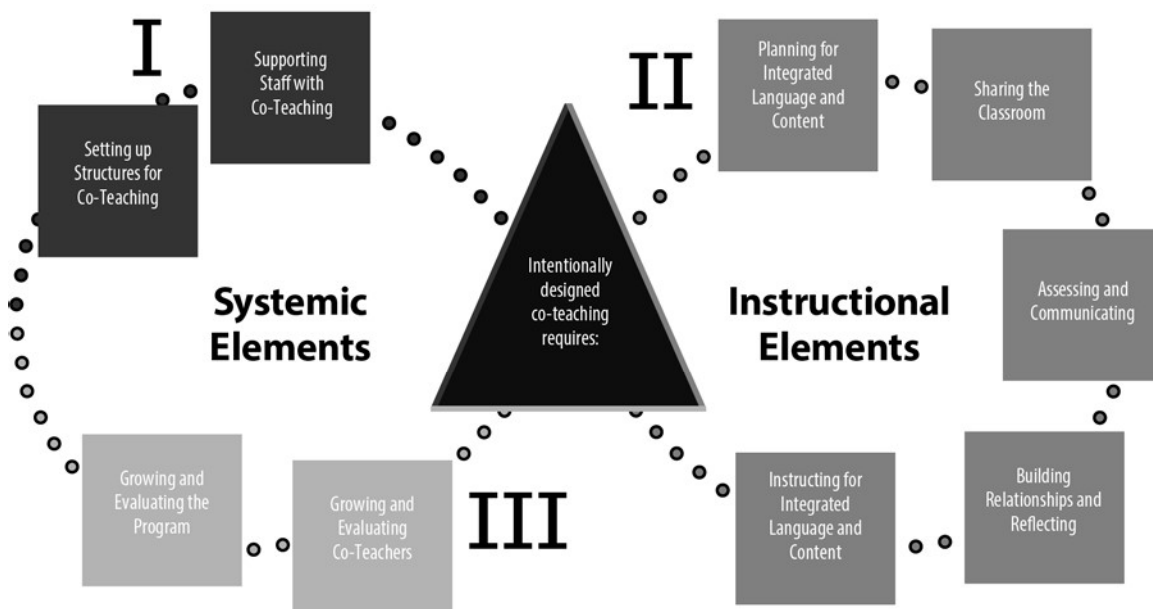


Figure 1.5. Co-Teaching Programming Framework.

and work toward the same goals. These roles can be thought of as part of a larger ongoing set of practices that are continually revisited and refined: there is no end. We use the infinity symbol to represent the co-teaching framework because it encapsulates the ongoing nature of this balance of roles. One cannot have systems without instruction that puts those systems to work, just as one cannot have instruction without the systems that support it. Both of them work together for continuous growth, innovation, and forward thinking.

Figure 1.5 provides a visual representation of the systemic and instructional elements that are required for successful co-teaching, from our experience. This book is organized around the framework, starting with I) the systemic elements of *setting up structures for co-teaching* and *supporting staff with co-teaching*, followed by II) all five instructional elements, and then ending with III) the two systemic elements related to growth and evaluation of both the co-teachers and the program.

As previously mentioned, we also developed a co-teaching rubric that is aligned with the co-teaching framework, which you can find in its entirety in the appendix. The co-teaching rubric is made up of indicators for each component of the framework to help co-teachers develop, implement, monitor, evaluate, and strengthen the work; it is also recommended that district leaders revisit this rubric with teachers and schools at least once annually. The rubric provides an anchor for observations of the key elements of effective co-teaching systemwide, and an evidence-based means to improve practice. Individual co-teaching teams can use the rubric to monitor and strengthen particular aspects of their practice, and schools can use the results of the rubric for all of the teachers to identify evidenced-based goals for the co-teaching program.

CONCLUSION

When thinking about co-teaching for multilingual learners, there are many ideas about what it might look like. Some might imagine two teachers in a room, equally sharing the content instruction of a lesson. Others might envision a content teacher leading a lesson and another English language support teacher walking around and helping individual students. Still others might perceive it as a classroom teacher leading a lesson and an ML specialist pulling aside a small group of multilingual learners to pre-teach vocabulary or lead a lesson on oral language. Although it may be surprising, the type of

effective co-teaching for multilingual learners that we have developed doesn't look like any of the above examples.

While there are many articles, books and other resources available that provide support with the logistical aspects of co-teaching, including co-planning strategies, co-teaching approaches, and co-instructional strategies, what is typically lacking in such resources is the ways in which co-teaching adds value to not only the instruction for multilingual learners, but the classroom, the teachers, the school, and the district. Co-teaching for multilingual learners is transformational when all aspects are done with purpose and focus.

“If you are just starting or want to enhance your collaborative practices for multilingual learners, study the Cherry Creek co-teaching initiative. It is an outstanding success story that deserve everyone’s attention!”

—Andrea Honigsfeld, Ed.D., TESOL professor, Molloy University

How can K–12 educators use co-teaching to strengthen success for the growing number of multilingual learners in schools? Practical answers are in this book, your guide to intentionally designing and implementing a high-quality co-teaching framework in a school or across an entire district.

Developed and tested by the author in a diverse Colorado school district, this proven co-teaching model will help educators and multilingual learner specialists work collaboratively to support multilingual learners and **promote their academic achievement and English language proficiency at the same time**. You’ll get immediately useful guidance focused on these key goals: **meaningful access** to grade-level content for multilingual learners, **English proficiency** through content instruction, and job-embedded co-teaching **professional learning** opportunities.

Readers will:

- **Master 4 systemic components of the framework:** setting up structures for co-teaching, supporting staff with co-teaching, growing and evaluating co-teachers, and growing and evaluating the program
- **Implement 5 instructional components:** planning for integrated language and content, sharing the classroom, assessing and communicating, building relationships and reflecting, and instructing for integrated language and content
- **Use an expertly organized rubric** to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate the quality of co-teaching in schools and across districts
- **Get the tools needed for success**, including engaging online videos demonstrating key co-teaching interactions and reproducible forms and templates

A timely and innovative guide for co-teachers, coaches, teacher leaders, and school and district administrators, this book helps co-teachers develop strong partnerships and unlock equitable, inclusive learning opportunities for multilingual learners.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **Holly J. Porter, Ed.D.**, is an independent consultant and the director of the Language Supports and Services department in the Cherry Creek School District, located in Greenwood Village, Colorado. She has more than 27 years of specialized experience in the field of education and recently received recognition as the Language, Culture, and Equity Director of the Year for the State of Colorado.