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The following items will be discussed at a virtual meeting of the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports to be held on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. in Room 410 in the Durkin Administration Building:

(Consider gb #9-288, gb #9-416 and gb #0-31 together.)

gb #9-288 - Mr. Comparetto/Mr. Foley/Miss McCullough/Mr. Monfredo (August 28, 2019)

Request the establishment of an inclusive and transparent process for selecting and implementing a comprehensive Sex Education Curriculum that is age-appropriate, evidence-based, medically-accurate and LGBTQ inclusive in the Worcester Public Schools.

gb #9-416 - Miss McCullough/Mr. Foley/Mr. Monfredo (December 4, 2019)

Request that the Administration consider incorporating the campaign entitled "RESPECTfully" when the Sex Ed Curriculum is established.

gb #0-31 - Mayor Petty/Mrs. Clancey/Mr. Foley/Ms. McCullough/Ms. Novick (January 8, 2020)

Request that the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports recommend a comprehensive, inclusive, evidenced-based sexual and health curriculum and an appropriate level of increased classroom time for health education to the school committee for the FY21 budget.

gb #9-313 - Mr. Monfredo/Miss Biancheria /Mr. Foley/Mr. O'Connell (September 17, 2019)

Request that the Administration establish a committee by November to include early learning teachers to review the two year kindergarten 1 program for students who are four years old and lack the necessary readiness skills for school success.

gb #0-363.1 - Administration/Ms. McCullough/Miss Biancheria/Mrs. Clancey (November 24, 2020)

Response of the Administration to the request to provide an update on Special Education testing to include the types that are taking place, the timeline updates and any other pertinent information.

gb #1-53 - Mr. Monfredo/Miss Biancheria/Mrs. Clancey/Ms. McCullough/Ms. Novick (February 12, 2021)

Request that the Administration collaborate with community agencies, retired teachers and other groups, to study the feasibility of establishing a summer learning program to assist K-8 students.

gb #1-86 - Administration (March 9, 2021)

To consider approval of the following courses:

US History Survey
Foundations of Modern Biotechnology
Applications of Modern Biotechnology

Committee Members

Molly O. McCullough, Chairman
John F. Monfredo, Vice-Chairman
John L. Foley

Administrative
Representative
Susan O'Neil, Ph.D.

OFFICE OF THE
CLERK OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
20 IRVING STREET
WORCESTER, MA 01609

AGENDA #1

The Standing Committee on TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS
will hold a meeting:

on: Tuesday, March 30, 2021
at: 5:30 p.m.
virtually in: Room 410, Durkin Administration Building

ORDER OF BUSINESS

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. ROLL CALL
- III. GENERAL BUSINESS

gb #9-288 - Mr. Comparetto/Mr. Foley/Miss McCullough/Mr. Monfredo (August 28, 2019)

Request the establishment of an inclusive and transparent process for selecting and implementing a comprehensive Sex Education Curriculum that is age-appropriate, evidence-based, medically-accurate and LGBTQ inclusive in the Worcester Public Schools.

gb #9-313 -Mr. Monfredo/Miss Biancheria /Mr. Foley/Mr. O'Connell (September 17, 2019)

Request that the Administration establish a committee by November to include early learning teachers to review the two year kindergarten 1 program for students who are four years old and lack the necessary readiness skills for school success.

gb #9-327 -Administration (October 7, 2019)

To consider answers to the fourteen Action Steps made by Mayor Petty and approved by the School Committee:

1. School Department to create clear and transparent process to provide the necessary, student-sensitive data needed to do a thorough review of the suspension rates in our Worcester Public Schools. This should include the last 7 years of data.
2. Worcester State University to re-engage with our school department regarding the 2014 report, "Suspension in Worcester: A Continuing Conversation.
3. Incorporate comprehensive training practices focused on understanding cultural differences, unconscious bias, understanding racial disparities, and trauma informed care for all staff. Included in this training is MGL c222. For all staff including School Committee.
4. Review of the state's school discipline statute, MGL c222, to ensure the city is in complete compliance with the law and make any necessary changes to our policies and procedures.
5. Continue to maintain an English Language Learner Parent Advisory Council that includes Community Based Organizations and Community Partners in compliance with law, which will work with both the Director of English Language Learners and the Chief Diversify Officer.
6. Review the practice of out of school suspension for students in K-2 grade and work with community partners and internal staff to create an in-school program to provide counselling and assessment services for these students, contingent on proper funding and in-kind services.
7. Create an Affirmative Action Advisory Committee that would work with the Human Resource Department and the Chief Diversity Officer. Provide a semiannual report to the School Committee, with the Human Resources Department and the Chief Diversity Officer, as to progress.
8. Create a Superintendents Latino Advisory Committee
9. Quarterly/biannual reports on the progress of the Strategic Plan
10. Review and maintain the existing suspension hearing and appeal practices so that the same WPS person is not allowed to do both hearings and appeals.
11. Hiring a Chief Diversity Officer who shall report to the Superintendent and who shall work collaboratively with the Department of Human Resources of the Worcester Public Schools.
12. Review and assist a comprehensive plan with college presidents to do focused recruitment and retention plans to hire diverse teachers and support staff.
13. Provide a semi-annual report on the work of the English Language Learner Department and programs to the School Committee on compliance with best practices and Federal DOE guidelines.
14. Work with the School Committee to consider and implement recommendations of the Mayors Commission where appropriate. Work with the Commission to benchmark projects.

gb #9-349 - Miss McCullough/Mr. Foley/Mr. Monfredo (October 14, 2019)

Request that the Administration invite educators who currently teach or train NoticeAbility Curriculum and consider implementing it for students with dyslexia.

gb #9-384 - Mr. Comparetto/Mr. Foley (November 13, 2019)

Request that the Superintendent present an annual report on the status of education for Latino students.

gb #9-386 - Mr. Comparetto/Mr. Foley (November 13, 2019)

Request that the Administration provide an update on current restorative justice practices.

gb #9-388 - Mr. Comparetto (November 13, 2019)

Request an "equity audit" of the Worcester Public Schools in accordance to best practices.

gb #9-416 - Miss McCullough/Mr. Foley/Mr. Monfredo (December 4, 2019)

Request that the Administration consider incorporating the campaign entitled "RESPECTfully" when the Sex Ed Curriculum is established.

c&p #0-2 -Clerk (January 2, 2020)

To consider a communication from Gordon T. Davis, Chair of the Education Committee, Worcester Branch NAACP, relative to a uniform districtwide policy on age appropriate touching.

c&p #0-13 -Clerk (August 19, 2020)

To consider a communication from the Racism Free Worcester Public School Group regarding nine areas of concerns.

gb #0-31 - Mayor Petty/Mrs. Clancey/Mr. Foley/Ms. McCullough/Ms. Novick (January 8, 2020)

Request that the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports recommend a comprehensive, inclusive, evidenced-based sexual and health curriculum and an appropriate level of increased classroom time for health education to the school committee for the FY21 budget.

gb #0-101 - Mr. Monfredo (March 5, 2020)

Request that the Administration work with the City Administration to see if there is a building available for the expansion of a full-day pre-school program.

gb #0-125.1 - Administration/Mr. Foley (April 8, 2020)

Response of the Administration to the request to present comprehensive data showing the test scores for all student subgroups since these initiatives started. This data should show changes over the years, with a particular emphasis upon the WPS student subgroups targeted through SOA funding (Hispanic students, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities).

gb #0-313 - Ms. McCullough/Mrs. Clancey/Mr. Monfredo/Ms. Novick (September 23, 2020)

To consider the items filed by the City Council and request WPS consider Councilor Sean Rose's order to offer civil service exam study groups and to research a mechanism for students to acquire school credit for participation in these cohorts.

gb #0-362.1 - Administration/Ms. McCullough/Miss Biancheria/Mrs. Clancey (November 24, 2020)

Response of the Administration to the request to provide a report on the tracking of Special Education services that are currently being provided remotely to students.

gb #0-363.1 - Administration/Ms. McCullough/Miss Biancheria/Mrs. Clancey (November 24, 2020)

Response of the Administration to the request to provide an update on Special Education testing to include the types that are taking place, the timeline updates and any other pertinent information.

gb #0-382 - Ms. Novick/Ms. McCullough (December 17, 2020)

Request administration report on updates to the Worcester Technical High School admission process, its results, and its interaction with state attention and possible revision to admission requirements.

gb #1-42 - Ms. Novick/Mrs. Clancey/Mr. Foley/Ms. McCullough/Mr. Monfredo (January 25, 2021)

Request administration propose for Committee deliberation shifts in practice, curriculum, process, and culture that have taken place during remote learning for possible retention for in-person learning.

gb #1-53 - Mr. Monfredo/Miss Biancheria/Mrs. Clancey/Ms. McCullough/Ms. Novick (February 12, 2021)

Request that the Administration collaborate with community agencies, retired teachers and other groups, to study the feasibility of establishing a summer learning program to assist K-8 students.

gb #1-86 - Administration (March 9, 2021)

To consider approval of the following courses:

- US History Survey
- Foundations of Modern Biotechnology
- Applications of Modern Biotechnology

motion (gb #9-195.2) Mr. O'Connell (June 20, 2019)

Request that the Administration provide a report on the funding that the Worcester Public Schools receives through Education Access Channel 11 revenues, and provide information on the four positions and refer the report to the Standing Committee on Teaching Learning and Student Supports for discussion with gb #9-207.

motion (gb #9-195.2) Mr. O'Connell (June 20, 2019)

Request that the Various Grant Program section of the Budget be referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Helen A. Friel, Ed.D.
Clerk of the School Committee

STANDING COMMITTEE: **TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS**

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, March 30, 2021

ITEM: Mr. Comparetto/Mr. Foley/Miss McCullough/Mr. Monfredo
(August 28, 2019)

ITEM:

Request the establishment of an inclusive and transparent process for selecting and implementing a comprehensive Sex Education Curriculum that is age-appropriate, evidence-based, medically-accurate and LGBTQ inclusive in the Worcester Public Schools.

PRIOR ACTION:

9-5-19 - Held for the meeting on September 19, 2019.

9-19-19 - Referred to the Administration for a report in November 2019.

12-19-19 - It was moved and voice voted to refer the item to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports to be considered with gb #9-416. (See gb #9-418.)

9-15-20 STANDING COMMITTEE ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS

(Considered with gb #9-416 and gb #0-31.)

Chairman McCullough stated that the purpose of this meeting was to provide a stepping off point to move forward in selecting a curriculum. She informed the public that there would be opportunities for parents, students and community members to be a part of the process at a future meeting when evaluating the sex ed curriculum.

(Continued on page 2.)

BACKUP: (Consider with gb #9-416 and gb #0-31.)

A PowerPoint will be presented at the meeting.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

9-15-20 (continued) Dr. Matilde Castiel, Worcester Commissioner of Health and Human Services, presented an updated version of the Case for a Comprehensive Sexual Education Curriculum in Worcester. She cited statistics and provided recommendations for the adoption of an age-appropriate, evidence-based, medically accurate and LGBTQ inclusive sexual and health curriculum.

Dr. Laurie Ross, member of the Worcester Impact on Sexual Health Task Force (WISH), presented the work that was previously done several years ago when the task force evaluated several different curricular options and was never given the opportunity to present those findings. She stated that the hope of the task force is to have a community dialogue with students and parents, budgetary discussions, training for staff and implementation by the Spring of 2021.

Chairman McCullough spoke to the need for sexual literacy with a focus on sex trafficking. She would like the committee to work with the Department of Health and Human Services in conjunction with the Administration to come up with a curriculum.

Mr. Monfredo stated that instead of waiting for the Senate Bill to be passed, the committee should move ahead with a plan.

Mr. Foley stated that the district should adopt a plan quickly with information that is age appropriate and will remain with the students for the rest of their lives.

Superintendent Binienda stated that the Administration has reached out to other districts and found that they don't necessarily use one book, but rather take parts of one curriculum and another to incorporate into their own. She acknowledged that more needs to be done, but also wants to make sure that it is age appropriate for the students and one that is approved by the State.

Mr. Monfredo made the following motion:

Request that the Administration establish a committee consisting of community members, health experts, Health Educators and the CPPAC and report the findings back in January 2021.

On a roll call of 1-2 (yea Mr. Monfredo), the motion was defeated.

Mr. Monfredo made the following motion:

Request that the Administration mandate a 10 week health program for 9th grade students in the 2021-22 school year.

On a roll call of 3-0, the motion was approved.

Mr. Monfredo made the following motion:

Request that the Administration investigate how other communities are handling their health curriculum.

On a roll call of 2-1 (nay Mr. Foley) the motion was approved.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

- 9-15-20 - Chairman McCullough made the following motion:
(continued) Request that Dr. Castiel provide a short list of potential curricula for the committee to explore that would meet the needs of a comprehensive sex ed plan for the WPS.
On a roll call of 3-0, the motion was approved.
Chairman McCullough made the following motion:
Request that the Administration provide an update from the State regarding its timeline of providing regulations for comprehensive sexual education curricula.
On a roll call of 3-0, the motion was approved.
Chairman McCullough made the following motion:
Request that the members of the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports and the Administration develop a timeline by mid-October for the process of selecting a new curriculum and work together with all stakeholders for public input sessions and discussion and consider the timeline that was presented at this meeting.
On a roll call of 3-0, the motion was approved.
Chairman McCullough made the following motion:
Request that the above mentioned items be held in the Standing Committee and be taken up at a meeting in October.
On a roll call of 3-0, the motion was approved.
HELD
- 10-1-20 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as stated.

STANDING COMMITTEE: **TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS**

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, March 30, 2021

ITEM: Mr. Monfredo/Miss Biancheria/Mr. Foley/Mr. O'Connell
(September 17, 2019)

Request that the Administration establish a committee by November to include early learning teachers to review the two year kindergarten 1 program for students who are four years old and lack the necessary readiness skills for school success.

PRIOR ACTION:

- 10-3-19 - Mr. Monfredo made the following motions:
Request that the Administration form a committee by November to study the feasibility of establishing a two year kindergarten 1 program.
Request that the Administration consider revising the date of eligibility to start kindergarten.
On a voice vote, the motions were approved.
Referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.
- 1-29-20 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS
Mr. Monfredo stated that the Worcester Public Schools is the only system in the state that has the entrance date of December 31st.

BACKUP: The committee met five times over four months (e.g., October 29, 2020, November 5, 2020, December 17, 2020, January 14, 2021 and January 28, 2021) to research and discuss the development of a two year kindergarten program. Representatives were from elementary, special education and the English learner departments. The administration recommends piloting two models and evaluating them over three years: Preschool Reggio Inspired Classrooms and Kindergarten Co-Teaching for Developmentally Appropriate and SEL Responsive Acceleration. A description of the proposed pilots is attached. Information from the committee meetings is also attached.

As we look to the new school year and students potential needs, the district is also examining the need for a flex classroom between kindergarten and first grade.

Annex A (6 pages) contains a copy of the K1/K2 Proposal.

Annex B (10 pages) contains a copy of an article entitled Partnerships in Full-Day Kindergarten Classrooms: Early Childhood Educators and Kindergarten Teachers Working Together.

Annex C (15 pages) contains a copy of an article entitled Partner Teaching: A Promising Model.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

- 1-29-20 - Mr. Monfredo made the following motions:
(continued) Request that the Administration establish a committee comprised of early learning teachers and administrators and report back to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports in May 2020 to consider the following:
- establishment of a two year kindergarten 1 program for four year old students
 - involvement of parent groups in meaningful workshops
 - change the entry date for kindergarten from December 31 to November 1 and at a later date from November 1 to September 1
 - provision of a report to the full School Committee in May 2020
- Request that the Administration forward a letter to the Local Delegation requesting additional funding for full day preschool programs.
On a roll call of 3-0, the motions were approved.
Mr. Foley suggested adding more teachers in the K-1 Program to address class size and the Superintendent stated that space limits the possibility to implement that suggestion.
A question was posed relative to a possible correlation between early date of birth and disciplinary issues. The Superintendent indicated that there is no correlation between the two.
- 2-6-20 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as stated.
- 6-9-20 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS
Mr. Monfredo stated that Worcester is the only school district with the late start date of December 31.
Dr. O'Neil stated that the Administration will look at research done on the subject and will send an email by Friday to solicit committee members.
Mr. Monfredo made the following motions:
Request that the Administration work with the city administration and check on various schools to see if it is possible to secure space for additional pre-school or K1 programs.
Request that the Administration move the start date from December 31 to November 1 and then to September 1 by the 2021-22 school year.
Request that the Administration consider implementing a pilot program for kindergarten and Grade 1.
On a voice vote, the motions were approved.
On a roll call of 3-0, the item was held for a report in October.
- 6-18-20 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as stated.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

10-22-20 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS

Dr. O'Neil stated that the committee that was established will begin meeting next week in order to have a proposal for the budget.

Laurie Kuczka, Director of Head Start and Early Childhood Education, provided an update regarding low enrollment figures as a result of the shutdown. She stated that in March, 1,281 students in pre-school and Head Start and over 2,000 kindergarten students left the face to face model and went remote. She and Mr. Allen discussed ways in which to ensure that those children get the social, emotional and academic support to be prepared for first grade without being face to face. They also talked about the creation of a transitional kindergarten, a 2 year program for students who are not ready to move into grade 1. The program would be two-fold, not only would it help support social and emotional learning gaps, but also help move the cutoff date to September 1st. She stated that they looked at possibly moving the start date to November 1st one year, October 1st the next year and finally in year three to September 1st in order to not interfere with funding.

Vice-Chairman Monfredo made the following motions:

Request that the Administration consider establishing a 2 year kindergarten program for those students who are in need of service.

Request that the Administration consider moving the start date from December 31 to November 1 and then to September 1 by the 2022 school year.

Request that the Administration consider expanding the pre-school program to full day starting with two in each quadrant.

Request that the Administration provide a report on this item in late January.

On a roll call of 3-0, the motions were approved.

Mr. Foley made the following motion:

Request that the Administration study the feasibility of involving community partnerships to work with neighborhood schools and families to build parent skills and family capacity and to prepare their children for successful entrance into kindergarten.

On a roll call of 3-0, the motion was approved.

On a roll call of 3-0 the item was held.

11-5-20 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING – The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as stated.

K1/K2 Proposal

Preschool 3 Year Pilot Proposal: Reggio Emilia Inspired Preschool

2 full day, integrated preschools (typically developing and students with identified special needs)

1 infant classroom, 1 toddler classroom

All classrooms housed at South High School within the Chapter 74 model

Student Age Range:

Ages birth through 5

15 Preschool students maximum per integrated classroom (8 Typically/ 7 students on IEP)

6 infants, 9 toddlers

Student Selection Process:

Use the existing lottery process for integrated preschool

Placement for infant and toddler classrooms will be through South High's Parent Teen program

Staffing Structure:

Existing structure of 1 teacher and 1 instructional assistant for preschools

3 adults for the infant classroom, 3 adults for toddler classroom

Curriculum Overview :

- There is no "Reggio Emilia curriculum" to follow! The curriculum is responsive to students. For curriculum development, teachers begin by identifying an overarching topic for children to explore. This topic is one that should be meaningful to children and relevant to their lives. They brainstorm provocations that will allow children to have time and experience with the topic they are covering. The provocations are open-ended activities that are set up with intentionality and attention to detail. They are aesthetically pleasing and inviting to children. Teachers keep in mind learning objectives that have been set by the district (MA Pre-K Standards in math, science, and ELA or any other requirements from the district supported curriculum) and weave those objectives into the provocations they develop. Teachers then become researchers, looking at how the children are exploring the topic and identifying what their interests within the topics may be. They see who the "experts" are in this topic area. These experts can be children, family members, school staff and/or members of the community, all willing to give new insight on the topic they are studying. Together with the children, teachers co-construct learning which is to say they discover and build new ideas alongside the children. Children who care about and are invested in what they are learning see the value in discovering new ways of thinking.

A critical piece of curriculum development is sharing the artifacts, or the evidence of learning (documentation), with peers to discuss what has been observed and how to scaffold learning for the children. Curriculum development cannot be done in isolation. Teaching teams should work together to discuss what children are understanding and where they may need support in learning. These meetings can be mediated by a curriculum liaison or pedagogista. That liaison can also follow-up with teams to ensure smooth and appropriate implementation of curriculum. For more information see: <https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/reggio-emilia-approach/>; <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2015/emergent-curriculum>.

Assessment of Progress:

- Assessment for the Reggio Emilia approach relies heavily on teacher’s observation, documentation, and reflection on student learning. The focus is on opportunities to support children in demonstrating their knowledge and development in authentic ways. Standards would be reviewed and assessed through observations. The Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) Observation/Assessment Tool is in place and familiar to teachers. The TSG provides a comprehensive set of academic and developmental objectives for the age ranges included in this proposal.

Classroom Composite:

| Pros | Cons |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A philosophy of teaching that focuses on child, family and community strengths and needs, not age or abilities of child. • Research based best practices in early childhood development. • Strong focus on meaningful, reciprocal relationships and shared documentation that describes the process of learning through child/teacher/parent conversations/observations. • Meaningful learning opportunities for all students, including at risk students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in staff training/ongoing coaching support cost for each classroom • Infant and toddler staff hires • Classroom materials if needed |
| Points to Finalize | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would it be possible for teachers to apply after an introduction/explanation of the Reggio Emilia Inspired Approach? • Development of program vision, mission, structure for distribution • Metrics and data points for determining progress and success | |

Budget Impact:

- 2 Preschool classrooms with IAs converted -no impact
- 3 Infant and 3 Toddler staff to be hired
- Staff stipends for related training after hours and summers
- Consultant cost for training and ongoing coaching
- Classroom materials

K1/K2 Proposal

Kindergarten 3 Year Pilot Proposal: Co-Teaching Model for Developmentally Appropriate, SEL Responsive Accelerated Growth

2 Kindergarten classrooms

Students Age Range: 4-5 year old kindergarten students

Student selection process:

- Preschool teacher recommendations
- Parent/guardian interest
- Spring screening/observations, if possible

Staffing Structure:

- 2 Early Childhood Teachers per classroom
 - Academic Lead
 - Social Emotional Lead
- 2 Instructional Assistants per classroom

Curriculum Overview:

- Grade level state standards through a progression responsive to student's strength and needs to master and exceed grade level skills and content knowledge using a developmentally appropriate lens. See: <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/dap-kindergartners> and <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/mar2018/promoting-social-and-emotional-health>
- Teachers plan collaboratively to establish classroom routines and expectations that support both academic and social emotional growth and development.
- Academic Lead plans majority of academic instruction, with SEL input from the Social Emotional Lead.
- Social Emotional Lead develops, embeds and monitors student social, emotional, and behavioral skills, establishing structures, teaching necessary skills and planning interventions and activities as needed.

Assessment of Progress:

- District assessments
- Formative assessments
- SEL data analysis quarterly

Classroom Composite:

- 25 students in total per classroom made up of:
 - 15 typically developing kindergarteners
 - 10 at-risk kindergarteners

| Pros | Cons |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All students have access to grade-level academic content on a consistent basis. ● At-risk students have peer models ● Staffing allows for targeted interventions in both academic and SEL areas. ● Does not require additional classroom space. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase in staffing cost for each classroom |
| Points to Finalize | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student selection process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Preschool teacher recommendations? ○ Spring in-person screening and observations ? ● Development of program vision, mission, structure for distribution ● Metrics and data points for determining progress and success ● Credentials for co-teaching team | |

Budget Impact:

- 2 classrooms converted - no impact
- 1 Instructional Assistant per classroom = 2 if not allocated
- 2 additional teachers
- Staff stipends for related PD/ training
- Consultant cost for ongoing training and coaching
- Classroom materials

Committee Meeting Notes

The October session began with the following focus for discussion:

- Question of linking the K1/K2 proposal to roll back of entrance age.
- Pros and cons of linking the program proposal to chronological age.
- Question of financial impact. Clarify with WPS Finance and DESE.
- Question of access and equity for students in poverty. Clarify options and eligibility.

The November 5 Session Response to Action Steps:

- WPS Finance: What does DESE allow for the creation of this model so the students can be counted in the foundation model for funding? Funding for prek is only half day regardless of how long the day is. Cited past full day prek only partially reimbursed. Also, consider transportation costs. 4 million projected revenue loss if move entrance date fully 50 teachers lost across grades

- Poll of elementary principals:
Historically how many students recommended to repeat K?
27/33 responses
63% One to five
5% More than 10
Reason? Multiple reasons including academic, attendance, ...
- 5 years of K retention data: 68-71% of students had birth dates before September 1.
Similar data spread for subgroup of English Learners
Students with Identified Special Needs slightly higher percentage of birth dates prior to September 1.
- Two articles discussed on co-teaching are attached.
- **Article: English language learners and kindergarten entry age: Achievement and social-emotional effects**
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OjfMd3bGx6vC5yM5opxb5DAAK0bL6-2m/view?usp=sharing>

The December 17 meeting focused on the review of possible formats:

Include in work identification of needs:

- Work on creating communication/referral process from community based prek. Need guardian permission for release
- Follow up on Arenas where students are not found eligible for special education services)
- Can screening be done at centers prior to entering?

Universal PRK Full day

Pro: Meets needs of families and children, gives our children with SPED issues; more service time per day/per week/per year, allows teachers to spend more time serving our most at risk children

Con: Only half day reimbursed, if we make any of our current half day classrooms into full day, we take 7 SPED slots away from the district, there is no space to open additional classrooms

K1 for 4 year olds entering K

Pro: Gives those children identified as not ready for kindergarten an additional year, in a full day environment, focusing on specific social emotional needs

Con: No space to open additional classrooms, no peer models

K1 for kindergarten Students need more time before Grade 1

Pro: Gives those children identified as not ready for grade 1 an additional year, Gives those children identified as not ready for first grade an additional year, in a full day environment, focusing on specific social emotional needs.

Con: No space to open additional classrooms, no peer models

Co-Teaching K Model

Pro: All students have access to grade-level academic content on a consistent basis; At-risk students have peer models; Staffing allows for targeted interventions in both academic and SEL areas; Does not require additional classroom space.

Con: Increase in staffing cost for each classroom

Changing the Cut-off date

Pro: students enter K at an older age

Con: The idea that “more school is better than no school” so leaving the cut off allow more students to begin school, age doesn’t always equal readiness; Budget impact for reimbursement; Possible staff lay-off with reduced # of students; Els disadvantaged (See article)

Explanation of WPS Reggio Inspired Head Start Program

Article on Changing K Entry Age:

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED595496.pdf>

<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/redshirting-kindergarten/>

Co-Teaching Article

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yItyDljQPokKgvweNd_sVIbJQ85_vbnTSdfljgBT98k/edit

Agreement to go forward with a prek Reggio Inspired pilot and a K Co-Teach Pilot.

The January 14 meeting was a discussion on how to structure the pilots for evaluation of effectiveness facilitated by the Office of School and Student Performance. Documents are being finalized that describe the logic models and evaluation designs for both the Reggio Emilia pilot and the Co-Teaching model.

January 28th the committee reviewed the proposals to submit in response to the school committee item.

Partnerships in Full-Day Kindergarten Classrooms: Early Childhood Educators and Kindergarten Teachers Working Together

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This study examines the relationship between teachers and early childhood educators in full-day kindergarten classrooms in one school board in Ontario. The study uses the theoretical framework of co-teaching models developed in special education to analyze the range of approaches used by the educator teams. Findings indicate that the teams primarily engage in a one teach/one assist approach, but they also describe some examples of other co-teaching approaches that are possible in these classrooms. The study concludes that support for the expansion of the co-teaching repertoire could provide a mechanism for integrating the expertise of both educators in full-day kindergarten classes and maximizing the efficacy of this social policy direction. Implications for educators and administrators are addressed.

Full-day early learning programs, where children attend kindergarten every day for a full day, have been gaining support in recent years in Canada (e.g., British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador) and around the world (e.g., New Zealand, Australia; Early Childhood Learning Agency, 2009; Flanagan, 2011; Ryan & Date, 2014; Warburton, Warburton, & Hertzman, 2012). Current literature suggests that children could benefit from an integrated system of early childhood education and care programs that acknowledges the learning and care needs of young children (Corter, Janmohamed, & Pelletier, 2012; Pascal, 2009).

In 2010, the province of Ontario began implementation of the Full-Day Early Learning – Kindergarten Program (FDK), a two-year kindergarten program for all 4- and 5-year-olds in Ontario (Pascal, 2009). A critical component of this program is the co-teaching

structure, with one Ontario-certified teacher and one registered early childhood educator (ECE) who share responsibility for each kindergarten classroom. This blended staffing model was articulated as the preferred model to “add to the strengths of the professional preparation and skill sets of both teachers and ECEs” (Pascal, 2009, p. 33). This model followed investigations that indicated that “children benefit and staff satisfaction is enhanced” in full-day programs (Pascal, 2009, p. 33).

Full-day kindergarten programs can benefit children with respect to their holistic development, transition to the primary grades, and academic development (Early Childhood Learning Division, 2011; Pascal, 2009; Ryan & Date, 2014). In addition, these programs provide universal opportunities for children and families to access quality early learning environments (Early Childhood Learning Division, 2011; Pascal, 2009; Ryan & Date, 2014). However, early analysis of outcomes from Ontario's full-day kindergarten program indicate greater effects for students from low-income families but fewer benefits for children identified as having special needs (Janus, Duku, & Schell, 2012; Vanderlee, Youmans, Peters, & Easterbrook, 2012). These differential outcomes may be related to the way in which the program is delivered. One of the strategies to ensure high-quality programs for all children in the province was to implement a team teaching model with one teacher who is registered with the Ontario College of Teachers and one ECE who is registered with the Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators.

This model is key to the program design and is intended to address the structural issue of adult-to-child ratios and to improve the educational process (Kluczniok & Roßbach, 2014). However, the model has an inherent power imbalance in the educator partnership. One factor in this imbalance is the difference between a teacher's and an ECE's qualifications. Kindergarten teachers are required to have an undergraduate degree and a minimum of one year of teacher education, and teachers have had a professional college since 1997 (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014). ECEs have either a two-year diploma or a four-year degree in early childhood education, and have a long history of working to identify themselves as a professional group. It was not until 2008 that the College of Early Childhood

Educators was established in Ontario (Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators, 2014). In addition to qualification differences, teachers have historically worked independently in classrooms, whereas ECEs have often worked in collaboration with other ECEs in childcare settings.

The roles of the two types of professionals in the FDK teaching teams were intentional and are complementary. Teachers “have knowledge of the broader elementary curriculum, assessment, evaluation and reporting, and child development” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a, para. 1). They evaluate children’s developmental progress within the context of the program and provide progress reports to parents (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a), and they prepare children for the transition to grade 1 (Pascal, 2009). ECEs “have knowledge of early childhood development, observation and assessment. They bring a focus on age-appropriate program planning that promotes each child’s physical, cognitive, language, emotional, social and creative development and well-being” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010b, para. 2). In addition to the ECE role the Ministry outlines, Pascal (2009) describes responsibility for implementing extended day activities and summer programming, as well as liaising with community partners. Although the roles and responsibilities of both professionals were outlined in the planning, in reality, the province did not implement many of the responsibilities of the ECEs. The extended childcare components are separate from the kindergarten program, and in many jurisdictions are delivered by third-party organizations. Summer programming and broader community engagement through child and family centres have not been adopted as school responsibilities.

This study investigated the partnerships between the ECEs and kindergarten teachers in the first years of implementation of the FDK program. We investigated the nature of the partnerships and possibilities for adapting the partnerships to better capitalize on the expertise and skills of both educators for the benefit of children in the program.

Partnership and Collaboration in Early Childhood Education

Co-teaching happens in childcare settings quite frequently. By contrast, teachers might collaborate with other teachers for the planning process, or with itinerant teachers or assistants, but prior to FDK it was not common for them to team-teach their classes. Dalli (2008) identifies collaboration as one of the core values of the professional identity of early childhood educators. However, collaboration is not necessarily a component of co-teaching and we cannot assume that a co-teaching relationship is collaborative. Rose’s (2011) examination of collaborative relationships in early childhood settings found that shared goals and acting for the good of those goals rather than acting as individuals is critical to successful partnerships. She notes that there may be some level of professional self-sacrifice in order for collective goals to be realized, and this may need to happen on the part of the professional with more power (Rose, 2011).

Payler and Georgeson (2013) found that the institutions within which professionals work shape their professional identities. As a result of these identities, professionals vary in their ability to be flexible, reactive, and collaborative. Therefore, the “potency” of one’s actions can be shaped by the social context. Because the FDK classroom is a new context for ECEs and teachers, it will take time for their potency to become evident and to be felt in the institution.

Studies of FDK programs have shown mixed results with effective team approaches. Finn and Pannozzo (2004) examined the presence of a teaching aide (which we might call an assistant) in the classroom as a factor in the efficacy of kindergarten programs. They found that the presence of teaching assistants was either a neutral or slightly negative contributor to outcomes. Although our study does not include teaching aides, it is interesting to note that the presence of a second adult in a classroom does not necessarily improve outcomes. Further studies are needed to understand how two trained educators might affect children’s experience in early childhood settings.

Efficacy of Co-teaching Models in Special Education

Co-teaching, the practice of two professionals with varied expertise but with professional parity, has long been used as a model to bring special education teachers into classrooms (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007; Walsh, 2012). Thus, co-teaching as an education model has been researched primarily in relation to children in the special education system. The model was developed with the underlying premise that specialist teachers and general classroom teachers should work together in one classroom, drawing on the skills that each brings to support a diverse group of children. The advantage to this model is that students can access the expertise of both educators in one location and therefore do not miss out on the support afforded by one or the other professional.

Six approaches to co-teaching, first identified by Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend (1989), are now widely accepted in the co-teaching

literature. The six approaches are as follows: one teach/one assist; one teach/one observe; tag team; station or rotational teaching; alternative teaching; and parallel teaching (see Table 1 for definitions).

Table 1. Code Definitions and Examples Found in Observations

| Code | Definition |
|-------------------------------|---|
| One teach/one assist | In this approach, one teacher instructs the class while the other teacher manages behaviour or assists individual students as needed. This approach is possible when both educators share little planning time together. It is recommended that this approach is only used occasionally, and that the two educators alternate in their roles. |
| One teach/one observe | In this approach, one individual (generally the stronger of the two teachers in the content or subject being taught) handles all instruction while the other teacher floats or observes the students. This approach requires little joint planning and is seen as valuable when both educators decide which student behaviours should be noted by the observer. |
| Tag team | In tag team teaching, both teachers plan and deliver instruction together, with each teacher equally responsible for the material in the lesson and for activities around the classroom. This can be scripted or spontaneous. This approach can lead to educators trying innovative techniques in their teaching and requires the greatest level of mutual trust between educators. It is a challenging model for new co-teachers to attempt. |
| Station teaching (rotational) | In station teaching, each teacher plans and is responsible for a different aspect of the lesson or for a different lesson entirely. There may also be independent work provided for the students. Students are divided into two or more groups depending on how many stations are available, and students either travel from centre to centre or stay in one position while a teacher or activity moves to the student group. |
| Alternative teaching | In alternative teaching, one teacher teaches the main lesson to a larger group of students while the other teacher works with a smaller group of students on an entirely different lesson. This approach can be useful when some students need highly intensive instruction for various reasons, and all students can benefit from lower teacher-student ratios. |
| Parallel teaching | In parallel teaching, the class is split in half and each teacher teaches the same lesson to half the class. Students all receive the same material and benefit from lower teacher-student ratios. This approach requires coordination between educators when planning content, and both educators must be qualified to teach the content. |

Note: Definitions derived from Friend and Cook (2010), Cook and Friend, (1995), and Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007).

Over the last two decades, many researchers have observed and examined co-teaching partnerships and practices. Results from these studies suggest that to maintain effective teaching practices, educator teams should attempt several approaches, and both team members should take on the different roles within each approach (Friend & Cook, 2010).

While co-teaching has been in the literature for several decades, there are a limited number of studies on the efficacy of this model (e.g., Hanover Research, 2012; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007; Walsh, 2012). Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007), in a metasynthesis of qualitative studies on co-teaching, found that the one teach/one assist approach was most common in practice and the special education teacher was often subordinate in the team. They also found that both teachers and students, with and without disabilities, reported benefits of the co-teaching model. However, in Scruggs et al.'s study the benefits to students' academic and skill levels were not clear. By contrast, Walsh (2012), in a study of a school-district-wide implementation of a co-teaching model over a six-year period, found improvements on standardized reading and math scores. Our study used the co-teaching model

developed in the special education literature to analyze the co-teaching practices of ECEs and teachers in FDK classrooms.

Method

Six elementary schools located in southern Ontario participated in the study. The schools are located within one school board, are publicly funded, and are under the jurisdiction of Ontario's Ministry of Education. At the time of the study, all schools were within the first two years of implementation of FDK. Of the ten classrooms represented in this study, nine were staffed by one certified teacher and one registered ECE. In the tenth class, one ECE worked with two certified teachers (one who taught in the morning and one in the afternoon in a job-share situation). Thus, a total of 10 classrooms in 6 schools participated in the study, with 11 teachers and 10 ECEs.

Many of the teachers had more experience working in the school setting than the ECEs, which is not surprising given that the ECE position in Ontario's kindergarten classrooms is new. However, all but one of the ECEs in this study had experience working with young children in childcare programs prior to working in FDK. Six ECEs had worked as substitute ECEs in FDK prior to being hired full time. Overall, the teachers had more years of experience than the ECEs, with the range for teachers being 5 to 26 years and for ECEs 1 to 15 years. The teachers all had undergraduate-level education with one teacher having a graduate degree. Nine of the ECEs had a two-year diploma, one had a three-year diploma, and two had bachelor's degrees.

Procedure

Ethical approval for this study was obtained by the researchers' university and through the school district board of education. Semistructured interviews were conducted with the 11 kindergarten teachers and 10 ECEs. During the interviews we asked for a general description of the educators and children in the class, a description of the educators' experience with implementing the new team model, and the educators' own beliefs about the program itself. In addition, we conducted two observations per classroom on two separate occasions (one in the morning and one in the afternoon). Examples from the observations were used to develop the definitions of each co-teaching approach as described in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Examples of Co-teaching Approaches Found in Observations

| Code | Example from observation |
|-------------------------------|--|
| One teach/one assist | Teacher tells ECE to keep children quiet. ECE responds that the children were not talking. Teacher hands picture cards to ECE to hold up while she reads a book. Teacher sets up a craft and tells ECE to supervise and make sure children only put 4 to 8 legs on their spiders. |
| One teach/one observe | The teacher is doing a whole group lesson. The ECE sits at the back and scans the group. |
| Tag team | During opening exercises at the front of the class with children on the carpet, kindergarten teacher and ECE take turns singing songs, asking about the date, and then they stand together to ask about the life cycle of a butterfly. |
| Station teaching (rotational) | These examples largely consist of independent work on the part of children. In one example, the ECE is working with children at one centre to plant seeds. The kindergarten teacher is working on report cards, with occasional interjections about children's behaviour. The kindergarten teacher has a "work table" and the ECE circulates to all the other centres. |
| Alternative teaching | The ECE enters the classroom and sees that a child is crying while separating from her parent. The ECE takes her hand and sits with her while the teacher begins to talk about the calendar and date. |

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|-------------------|--|
| Parallel teaching | The ECE takes junior kindergarten students into one room to work on activities designed by the teacher, while the teacher works on similar curriculum with senior kindergarten children in another room. |
|-------------------|--|

These definitions, along with the definitions in Table 1, were used to identify examples of co-teaching approaches in the interviews. Two researchers analyzed all of the interviews and a third researcher then reviewed the analysis and worked with the first two researchers to build consensus on the categorization of the interview statements into the co-teaching approaches.

Findings

Overall, the teacher and ECE interviews yielded similar results. While all approaches to co-teaching were described to some extent, the one teach/one assist approach was by far the most frequently described approach. It should be noted that there are limitations in quantifying the frequency of codes from interview data, since there is variation between subjects in terms of how much they talk and how many statements they use to describe a single phenomenon. However, Table 3 shows the overwhelming dominance of the one teach/one assist approach in the interviews. Descriptions provided by the participants, particularly of approaches other than the one teach/one assist approach, were sometimes described in hypothetical terms rather than as something that actually occurs in practice.

Table 3. Number of References to Co-Teaching Approaches During Interviews

| Co-teaching approach | Teacher interview | ECE interview | Total |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------|
| One teach/one assist | 126 | 125 | 251 |
| Tag team | 27 | 6 | 33 |
| Alternative teaching | 61 | 99 | 160 |
| One teach/one observe | 23 | 10 | 33 |
| Station teaching (rotational) | 46 | 20 | 66 |
| Parallel teaching | 10 | 7 | 17 |

One teach/one assist approach

While all of the teams described examples of the one teach/one assist approach, five teams described it as the main approach in their classrooms. Of these five teams, the teachers and ECEs agreed that this was the approach most commonly used. Rafaella,¹ a teacher, reported that her understanding of ECE and teacher roles from the administration is that “I teach curriculum and they [ECEs] teach the domains, like social, emotional, cognitive. I want to combine those two together because they are meant to be working hand in hand.” Rafaella reported that her role is to teach. She claims that because the ECEs do not get any planning time, “it is very challenging, [to] collaborate with Ambrosia, who is the ECE in the room.” This lack of planning time for the ECE results in a one teach/one assist approach with Rafaella always taking the teaching role and Ambrosia taking the assist role because Rafaella does all the program planning. This co-teaching approach was echoed by Ambrosia, who believed that the “roles are not clear to a lot of teachers and principals. The teacher felt that behaviour management was not her job ... and that our job was to correct behaviours and do her prep work.” Both Rafaella and Ambrosia gave some examples of the alternative teaching approach, but this may have been a way for the two educators to work independently of each other rather than to collaborate. Similarly, Lilibeth, a teacher, reported that

there’s just not enough time for us to meet during the day, there’s just no time. So I’ll go in or I’ll tell her the day before, “I’m working on this, and you’ll do this; I’ll do this.” And then if she has a suggestion then fine, if not we just follow my model of what I set out to do and she’s very willing. She just accepts what I said.

¹ All names used in this article are pseudonyms.

Dillon, the ECE working with Lilibeth, also described a one teach/one assist approach for the team: “In the end the last word is from the teacher. I can always say what I feel and she always takes that into consideration.” The one teach/one assist pattern was evident, and the ECE deferred to the teacher as the expert. However, the educators in this team both felt that they got along well, and from the teacher’s perspective, there was some give and take. The teacher described the benefits of having two adults in the classroom: “If there’s a child you’re having trouble with and you’ve tried everything, you [can ask the ECE:] ‘can you try?’” Although this is an example of an attempt at a tag team approach, overall this team used a one teach/one assist approach the majority of the time and did not frequently alternate their roles.

Likewise, Heidi, a teacher, described a tag team approach, but it was limited to the planning process she did with other kindergarten teachers. This approach was not extended to her relationship with Emma, the ECE in the classroom. Heidi stated that her role as the teacher was

to implement the program based on curriculum, to team-teach with the other colleagues, and to keep my ECE abreast [of] what, on a daily basis, even a weekly basis, what we’re planning to do. I already have the plan in motion from my colleagues and then I ask my ECE, “do you have anything to add?”

The one teach/one assist approach may be a result of teachers’ and ECEs’ understanding (or misunderstanding) of each other’s profession. This is evidenced by Savannah, a teacher, who said that teachers and ECEs “come from two different schools, we come from obligations and legalities and they come from a different school of thought.” She tells Austin, the ECE in the classroom, “this is what we are doing today, or as the periods go I’ll say this is the next thing we are going to do.” Austin also thought that there were differences between the two professions. He said, “The teachers, they’ve never done this. As ECEs we’ve worked like this [full-day with this age group], so we know. I think they’ve also learned from us.” He reported that his role is to “assist the teacher” and that he is responsible for “behaviour management in the classroom, [making] sure that [the] children are playing nicely and listening to instructions and the rules ... and also just assisting the children one-on-one on cutting, pasting, anything that they need.”

One interesting reflection on the interviews is that the educators’ beliefs may not reflect their practice. In one case, Eve, a teacher, said that she believes she engages in a tag team approach, but examples throughout the interviews demonstrate that the one teach/one assist approach is dominant, with Eve doing the planning. However, Eve does combine outdoor play with another kindergarten classroom so that the children are supervised by the other kindergarten team and she and Sienna (the ECE) “get a half an hour where we can prep, and discuss and talk about things.”

The interviews indicate that both teachers and ECEs believe that the one teach/one assist approach is the most prevalent approach in their co-teaching practice. The ECE is often responsible for behaviour guidance and supervision of play activities. This differentiated role could translate into an alternative teaching approach where each educator has a distinct but equally valued role, but at this stage of implementation, the alternative teaching approach is not prevalent.

One teach/one observe approach

Lena and Mia (teacher and ECE respectively) were the only team that described the one teach/one observe co-teaching approach. Lena had a special education background, and for this reason she was familiar with co-teaching approaches. The one teach/one observe approach was used frequently in this team, with both Lena and Mia observing and making notes. Lena said that as Mia gained experience, she would likely do more of the observations on her own. Lena acted as a mentor to Mia, and as such there were also examples of the one teach/one assist approach. Many of the observations that were an important part of this team’s practice happened in centre activities, although these centres were also sites for the station teaching approach. In this partnership the one teach/one observe approach is dominant, but our interviews indicate that Lena and Mia also engaged in one teach/one assist and station teaching approaches as well, where the two educators were using stations to work with different children on different tasks. This team has the most variation in terms of the range of approaches identified. Both Lena and Mia focused primarily on child outcomes in their descriptions of their team’s approach to teaching. The one teach/one observe approach was done primarily in the context of assessing and documenting students’ work and not as part of instructional practice.

Tag team approach

Of the 11 teams participating in this study, only one team described what could be defined as a tag team approach to teaching. Dana, the teacher, had transferred schools in order to work in the FDK program. Of the 11 teachers participating in the study, Dana had the strongest understanding of a tag team approach. She said, “All the decisions have to be made jointly. Of course both of us have our strengths and weaknesses, but I think we are really good at pairing our strengths.” Dana and Misaki’s ECE classroom is organized by centres, or stations, but the roles of the educators in this team do not indicate a primarily station teaching approach where they have separate responsibility for different stations. This is because they rotate throughout the room in a team teaching approach, sharing responsibility. Misaki, the ECE, also has a strong sense of collaboration. She said, “As a whole we pretty much do everything together. We share all of the responsibilities. So, you know, sometimes, I’ll do one thing and Dana will do one thing. And then the next day we switch.”

Dana said, “These are the students and this is their class, and I’m a teacher and yes that’s great, and that’s an ECE and that’s great, but we’re, like, we’re here for the kids, right?” Her belief that “all the decisions have to be made jointly” helps to set the tone for a tag team approach.

Alternative teaching approach

The alternative co-teaching model was the dominant approach used by two of the 11 teams, but was represented in most of the interviews. Robin, a teacher, reported that she and Amber, her ECE partner, divide responsibilities, with Robin explicitly stating that she has responsibility for math and literacy. Amber viewed herself as the expert on play and discipline. Robin has had experience working in a co-teaching model, albeit with another teacher, and based on that experience she preferred an alternative teaching approach with distinct responsibilities for the curricular domains. She provided the following example to illustrate the approach:

I’ll take this group of kids with me and we’ll do the science while you [the ECE] focus on the reading assessment with this group of kids. Or, during reading centres, how about you [the ECE] take these three kids and you do three kids at a time and rotate?

The alternative teaching approach is evident when one professional takes the lead in the class and the other focuses on a small group of children for more intensive instruction.

Parallel teaching approach

Of the 11 teams, only one team described a parallel approach to teaching, where the class is split in half and each teaches the same lesson to their group of children. In this partnership, Chelsea, the teacher, clearly dominated the partnership. Chelsea did not agree with the full-day kindergarten model. She said:

They use the word team a lot, but clearly it is not a team. It’s only a team from 9:00 to 3:30 and the fact that we’re both in the same room and we’re both working with children. But, aside from that, the planning, the trying to decide how we want this program to look, there’s virtually no connection.

Chelsea shared that she does 100% of the planning, completes all the children’s assessments, and is responsible for reporting. She stated that she “absolutely [does] not” work together with Alexis, the ECE, and she believes this is a consequence of undefined ECE roles and responsibilities. She says, “It’s still not clear. The role of the ECE was never clearly defined from the start. It still hasn’t been defined.” In parallel teaching, the students are divided into two groups and each educator teaches a group. This parallel teaching approach involves Alexis carrying out a plan that has been developed by Chelsea.

Discussion

A range of co-teaching practices was described in the interviews. However, most of these practices were not described as being a regular part of the daily routine. The interviews indicate that both teachers and ECEs believe the one teach/one assist approach is the most prevalent in their co-teaching practice. The ECE is often responsible for behaviour guidance and supervision of play activities, while the teacher has the management role and defines the lesson plans. This differentiated role could translate into an alternative teaching

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approach where each educator has a distinct but equally valued role. However, at this stage of implementation, the alternative teaching approach is not prevalent.

Both teachers and ECEs were unclear about their roles in the classroom, and they described this as an important influence on their co-teaching partnership. Many of the references throughout the interviews to a tag team approach were actually hypothetical (i.e., this is what they think they are supposed to do), but the concrete examples described illustrate the one teach/one assist approach as predominant. All of the classrooms we observed were organized with centre-based activities; therefore, there is the possibility for the station teaching approach to occur. However, the observations indicate that few of the educators use this type of classroom organization as an opportunity to circulate and divide teaching duties.

The parallel teaching approach in this study was an example of how one team that was not functioning well was dividing their work so that they did not have to interact. However, in a high-functioning team, this approach could be effective, with each educator having responsibility for a distinct group of children while working on the same activities and being able to also work on separate tasks. Similarly, the alternative teaching approach, where each teacher is responsible for distinct activities, would allow at least some of the planning to be done independently.

Although the efficacy of co-teaching has yet to be established in empirical studies of the model (Hanover Research, 2012), qualitative studies have identified factors that educators believe are helpful in co-teaching. These include administrative support, planning time, training, and compatibility of the team members (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). Most educators in this study identified planning time and professional development as critical to the co-teaching model, with varying degrees of administrative support for their work. For both teachers and ECEs, the power dynamics in their relationships are important. In order for both educators to be contributors and for the children to be beneficiaries of the expertise of the educators, the relationship requires respect, communication, and, above all, parity in the partnership (Scruggs, et al., 2007). For Moss (2013), fostering the partners to first develop a shared understanding of the educational goals involved with the emphasis on how the child learns means that both ECEs and teachers would need to work to combine their respective areas of expertise and knowledge and develop pedagogical practices that are their own. There were indications in this study to suggest that additional partnership supports would help with continued growth in the partner relationships.

The co-teaching model provides a framework to both teach educators alternate ways to work in partnerships, and to train teachers and ECEs in team approaches to support better implementation of the team teaching policy. The findings from this study indicate that there is potential to expand the repertoire of co-teaching practices between teachers and ECEs. The co-teaching practices explored in this study are adapted from special education models, but future research could explore models unique to kindergarten classrooms. In addition, future research should explore the effects of FDK educator partnerships on children's experiences in the classroom.

In summary, the following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

1. Co-teaching educators should reflect on their roles and relationship to better understand how they function as a team.
2. Co-teaching teams should expand their practice to include other co-teaching strategies. In this study, alternative teaching and parallel teaching were identified as potentially valuable approaches in kindergarten classrooms.
3. Clarification and support for acceptable roles from administration would allow a broader interpretation of how these teams can work together.
4. Planning time and professional development were identified by both teachers and ECEs as necessary for co-teaching. It is therefore recommended that these be addressed through administration and leadership.

While the partnership between teachers and ECEs is relatively new, some teams have now been in place for approximately 5 years. Now that the FDK implementation is complete, it is important to ensure ongoing support for these teams and to value the contribution of both educators. These recommendations provide opportunities to promote and improve the partnership and expand the ways in which these professionals are working together.

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PARTNER TEACHING: A PROMISING MODEL

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This paper describes an ethnographic case study of a partner or co-teaching classroom in an urban preschool classroom. As part of a larger project that evaluated classroom size and team teaching structures in Kindergarten classrooms in several high poverty urban schools, one successful co-teaching classroom was studied further. Systematic observations of this classroom occurred over the course of one academic year and additional individual interviews and focus group interviews were used to gather the data. While evidence of high adult collegiality and a culture of high achievement were noted; several troubling findings surfaced. The partner or co-teachers suffered from too little effective instructional leadership in support of their abilities to develop good partner or co-teaching skills. These white female teachers also exhibited an inability to engage in critical dialogue and reflection related to the dynamics of race in their relationships with parents of African American children. The authors use a critical framework to suggest that these findings are not innocuous but, in fact, are hidden relations of power that explain the absence of positive parent-teacher relations among white teachers and children of color in this urban school.

Key words: teacher teams, partner-teaching, co-teaching, race relations, instructional leadership, high poverty urban Kindergartens

Introduction

Urban schools continue to exhibit lower student achievement than national expectations and norms. Various programs such as smaller classrooms, co-teaching or partner teaching have been implemented in elementary schools to reduce the number of children assigned to one teacher and foster more teacher-student involvement and teacher support for learning (Biddle & Berliner, 2002). This ethnographic case study presents findings from a study of a co-teaching or partner-teaching Kindergarten classroom in a large, very poor, urban district. The predominantly African American students (28

out of 30) displayed above average readings scores as compared to their peers in 7 other Kindergarten classrooms in the same district. High teacher collegiality among the partner or co-teachers was evident. However, several troubling findings surfaced. These included: lack of critical reflection among the partner teachers, lack of instructional leadership to support the partner-teaching relationship, and the inability of the white teachers to understand dynamics of race in their relationships with parents. These findings support the existing notion that classroom models in which teachers work together rather than in isolated settings to serve students who are at risk for

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academic failure hold promise for higher student achievement. Moreover, appropriate support from administrators and relevant education is essential in order to help white teachers understand the challenges of negotiating race differences in becoming more culturally competent in urban schools.

Purpose and Structures of Partner Teacher or Co-Teaching Classrooms

The literature contains descriptions of various structures or versions of team teaching, co-teaching, or partner-teaching that have existed in K-12 settings for many years (Cunningham, 1960, Cuban, 1993, Browne & Evans, 1994, Lee & Smith, 1996, Bishop & Stevenson (2000), Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 2000, Musanti & Pence, 2010). Team teaching, co-teaching, collaborative teaming and partner-teaching are some of the terms associated with the practice of teachers working together with the same group of children in common settings. Interest in various approaches to these teacher arrangements is widely evident and ample professional literature which advocates for and describes procedures for developing, implementing and sustaining collaborative teacher arrangements exists (Hough & Irving, 1997; Lee & Smith, 1996; McCracken & Sekicky, 1998). These practices most often occur in elementary classrooms and middle school programs (Bishop & Stevenson, 2000; Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 1999, 2000; Tonso & Jung, 2006), although more recently, such arrangements are increasing in secondary classrooms (Roth, Tobin, Carambo & Dalland, 2004; Eick & Ware, 2005; Eick, Ware & Jones, 2004) and in university classes, particularly in programs for pre-service teachers (Robinson & Schaible, 1995; Scantlebury, K., Gallo-Fox, J. & B. Wassell, 2008).

The purposes of these arrangements vary. They have been increasingly sought and utilized in programs that require the shared expertise of regular and special education

teachers when children with disabilities are placed into general education classrooms (Rice, Drame, Owens & Frattura, 2007; Blanton, Griffittin, Winn, & Pugach, 1997; Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 2005; Pugach & Johnson, 1995; Gleason, Fennemore, & Scantlebury, 2006; Kluth & Straut, 2003). Co-teaching or partner-teaching has been documented in programs aimed at creating smaller teacher-student ratios in large classrooms in urban schools. In these programs, larger numbers of children are placed into classrooms with two teachers when facilities do not permit separate smaller classrooms (Graue, Hatch, Rao, & Oen, 2007).

In other cases, team teaching occurs when new or apprentice teachers can benefit from the extended pedagogical expertise of veteran teachers (Eick, 2004; Eick, Ware & Jones, 2004; Scantlebury, Gallo-Fox, & Wassell, 2008) or when experienced teachers with different areas of expertise share their content knowledge with teachers less knowledgeable in those areas (Murphy, Beggs, Carlisle & Greenwood, 2004).

Collaborative teaching practices, in general, are thought to facilitate stronger teacher communication and collaboration, greater instructional innovation and, in some cases, positively change the professional and interpersonal dynamics of schools. Collaborative teaching structures enhance professional skills of teachers because they learn from one another (Fishbaugh, 1997; Mostert, 1988). Interdependence and self-management among teachers increases, as well as members' overall responsibility for the groups' performance as a whole. It also appears to tighten the connection between teachers' work and student outcomes because work is more often organized around students rather than academic disciplines. This leads to greater comprehensive knowledge of and responsibility for student learning and outcomes (Crow & Pounder, 2000).

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Forms of collaboration offer opportunities for critical analysis of teaching practices (Roth & Tobin, 2002), and support teachers abilities to acquire and optimize pedagogical knowledge (Eick, 2004, Eick & Ware, 2005). Collaborative arrangements greatly expand the teaching resources of teachers (Roth, et. al., 2004) and promoted co-generative dialogues of teaching practices and pedagogical knowledge leading to co-construction of meaning and development of mutual relationships that benefit themselves and their students (Musanti & Pence, 2010; LaVan, S.K. & Beers, J., 2005). Others have found that teachers with diverse content knowledge and teaching experiences who are in collaborative relationships with other teachers helped to improve the attitudes of these teachers toward some subjects and their abilities to teach these subjects (Murphy, Beggs, Carlisle & Greenwood, 2004). These findings indicate that professionals from various fields of education are

increasingly interested in creating structures for working together, rather than in isolated settings, to serve students, improve schooling and increase their own knowledge and professional growth.

Several different types of arrangements and terminology are used to describe collaborative teaching in schools today. These may be central to the organization of an entire school, or practiced only within some portion of a school by fewer teachers. These might include: interdisciplinary teams, multidisciplinary teams, teacher collaboration, team teaching, and partner teams. Table 1 offers names and brief descriptions of types found in existing literature. For our purposes here, we use the term, partner teacher or partner-teaching, since these terms fit the type of teaching arrangement in which teachers were organized as associate partners within one classroom.

This study evolved from another primary study in which we studied eight separate

Table 1: Collaborations and Teams: A look at the various terms

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Interdisciplinary Teams | This team consists of three to five teachers with different talents and knowledge across disciplines that come together to provide integrated or thematic curriculum or instruction. In middle schools, interdisciplinary teaming has been around since the mid 1960's (Alspaugh & Harting, 1998). Within the middle school construct, each student is assigned to a team of teachers with various (usually core) disciplinary strengths who fill both instructional and advisory roles (Alspaugh & Harting, 1998). |
| Multidisciplinary Teams | Teachers share instructional responsibilities for particular content as a team, but take responsibilities and work from their disciplinary specialty. (Pitton, 2001). |
| Teacher Collaboration | Includes teacher professional learning teams where teachers come together in job-embedded professional development focused on learning together as colleagues to improve instruction and student achievement. (Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 1999). Teacher collaboration may also occur as peer mentoring or coaching, where experienced or master teachers join or lead a team of less experienced teachers. |
| Team Teaching | Team teaching is practiced within the same discipline or, in elementary schools, within the same grade or across grades when several teachers come together for short periods or an entire year to share some instructional responsibilities. This type of teaming usually refers to two or more teachers (Anness, 2000). |
| Partnering | Two staff members are involved in the instructional collaboration (Bishop & Stevenson, 2000). |
| Co-teaching | Refers to a special education or ELL specialist joining a mainstream teacher within a classroom full time or for ongoing portions of time to provide instruction that includes all students (Bishop & Stevenson, 2000). |

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Kindergarten classrooms in four different schools (two classrooms in each school) over the course of one academic year. One of the most startling differences in the quality of teaching and learning was evident in the only classroom that housed 30 children with two teachers and one part-time instructional aide in a partner-teaching model. The classroom culture was positive with evidence of active learning, caring relationships among teachers and students. We were encouraged by the evidence of higher reading scores among all the children in this classroom and we sought to better understand the partner-teaching model and its possible implications for improved urban classroom teaching and learning. In the section that follows, we detail our research project; our findings and the implications of these findings for practice.

Context & Methods

Our research involved conducting systematic observations over a period of one academic year in the partner-teaching Kindergarten classroom. Observations occurred once per month by one or both of the researchers. Subsequent individual and focus group interviews of the teachers and the school principal were also conducted and descriptive data on the school including informal conversations with other teachers, school demographics and children's achievements on classroom-based assessments were also collected.

Participants

This partner-teacher classroom featured two full-time teachers, one part-time instructional aide and 30 Kindergarten children. Twenty-eight of the children were identified as African American and two were white.

Data Analysis

Our data analysis process followed a qualitative approach of thematic analysis. This process involved "coding and then segregating

the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description (Glesne, 2006, p. 147). Both researchers began the data analysis process simultaneously with data collection. Each reflected on their observations, memos, field notes, and interview data. The researchers "categorized, synthesized, searched for patterns, and interpreted the data that was collected" (Glesne, 2006, p. 147). Codes were determined after multiple readings and combined into categories that represented the partner-teaching relationship and other classroom dynamics. Similar categories emerged from the individual interviews and the focus group interviews.

Observations

Students in this classroom were always actively engaged in learning during each of our monthly visits and behavior issues were noticeably less frequent in this classroom as compared to the other classrooms in our study. The teachers seemed to enjoy a strong collegial relationship. High levels of students' achievement in reading surpassed the other seven classrooms in our larger study even though children taught in this classroom had similar backgrounds and identities as the other children in our larger study. Research supported our observation as others have noted that smaller "partner teams" of two teachers allow students and teachers to grow as a learning community (Bishop & Stevenson, 2000).

As former early childhood educators, we were particularly interested in the developmentally-appropriate learning activities and the engagement with learning exhibited among the children in this classroom. These children moved seamlessly through pleasant days that included computer instruction and play, small teacher-led reading groups, lots of hands-on activities, listening and manipulative play, large group discussion and activity, independent reading time and one-on-one instruction. They were highly engaged in their

learning and activities included purposeful and high interest activities. Kindergarten level reading or higher, beginning computer skills and abilities, minimal discipline problems and student enthusiasm for learning were central in our observations. Moreover, an atmosphere depicted by affection and warmth among adults and children with keen attention to children's needs and high expectations for their learning was evident.

We were also intrigued by the strong collegial relationship among these teachers. They seemed to truly enjoy their partner teacher relationship and their talk, actions, and non-verbal exchanges contributed to the positive ambiance of the classroom. In mid-year, we followed our observations with individual interviews of both teachers. We, then, conducted a follow-up focus group interview that included both teachers at the end of the school year. The focus group interview was an important strategy since we were eager to understand how the teachers talked about their relationship as partner teachers and the ways that they interacted together around common topics (Morgan, 1997). The focus group interview was set-up in a naturalist, interactive format. We (the two researchers) and the two associate teachers engaged in a lively dialogue that was guided by our questions: What reflective teaching practices do they employ in their work together? What can they tell us about the nature of their highly collaborative relationship? How did they establish such a strong working relationship? In the following sections, we discuss two categories of findings. The first involves the positive findings gleaned from this partner teacher classroom. The second category reveals those characteristics of good partner-teaching that were absent or weak in this case, which we labeled as critical findings. Each of these two broader groupings contains three smaller categories of findings as detailed below.

Positive Findings

Adult Collegiality

Positive examples of sustained teacher collegiality were observed in this partner-teaching classroom. The two teachers and the instructional aide worked very well together and classroom activities moved along smoothly and matter-of-factly on every day of our observations over the academic year time period. The three teachers (two full-time and the part-time instructional aide) exhibited and articulated great respect for each other. Each of them indicated that they really liked to work with the other and described the partner-teaching arrangement as personally satisfying and professionally invigorating. The part-time instructional aide took on much more of an instructional role in the classroom than in other classrooms we observed in the larger study. She read stories to small groups of children and helped children individually with computer directions or in other small group activities as needed.

The two partner teachers instructed the key small group lessons - i.e. small reading group instruction or small group math activities and the major responsibility for student learning fell to them. But, it was clear that everyone had responsibility for the success of the classroom. All the adults directed or referred children to other teachers if it seemed that the other could answer a question or serve them better. They openly asked for others' advice on teaching in specific way and they frequently commented on children's progress to one another during the day. "Mrs. D___, you should see the ways that Thomas' reading is improving. You'll be so happy". Such comments were typical interactions.

The adults communicated with each other warmly throughout the day. They shared information about lessons plans, student needs, and other classroom issues. They reflected together on students' progress and shared discipline strategies or other classroom structuring

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measures with one another. The instructional aide was also included in all of the 'teacher talk' and exchanges among them.

The overall atmosphere or climate of this partner teacher classroom, we noted, was much more comfortable, child-centered, engaging, and positive as compared to the other seven classrooms in the initial study. Teachers regularly encouraged students by giving them praise and encouragement. For example, a child said, "Look at this house I drew," and the teacher responded, "It's so colorful and it's part of a wonderful community, good job." Or this example of a teacher giving a large class instruction on the learning center they will be working on next. "Stay on the rug. Thank you for sitting criss-cross apple sauce and making kind decisions."

Teachers consistently used redirecting or structuring comments to cue children into appropriate behavior or actions. They commented on those children who were already engaging in appropriate behaviors and used their praise to entice others to perform the same actions. For example, one day, we overheard Mrs. G. make this comment to the other teacher, Mrs. R.,

Two boys have had a rough, tough day," "Let's fix the problems. We have a nice school. When listening to the teachers and doing the right things, you are growing and getting bigger. I love the way [so and so] is working hard. I love the way Ariana is learning new things. I love the way people are learning to be big.

Culture of Learning

An essential element of good early childhood teaching is the ability to meet the diverse learning needs of the group while differentiating instruction to meet varying student levels and individual needs. Achieving a balance between meaning-based methods and skills instruction is especially challenging in

early childhood classrooms. This classroom had some appropriate independent activities mixed with small group activity. Teachers individualized some activities based on the student's interests and needs. It was not unusual to see one of these teachers sitting with an individual student to review a concept or offer some remediation, even though we noted that independent paper and pencil "seat work" was rare in this classroom.

In this partner-teaching classroom, all independent work was organized well and was developmentally appropriate. For example during one typical observation, we noted that of the six small learning groups in this classroom during one part of the day, three groups were with teachers and three groups were working independently. One of the independent groups consisted of three girls who listened and read along to a taped recording of a story called 'The Marketplace.' They read the story together in unison with the taped version. Then, one girl stood up to get the wooden pointer from the other center and she held up the book and pointed to the words as the rest of the group followed along. At another small independent group, four children at a magnet table arranged letters to spell vocabulary words that were listed in then-language notebooks. Meanwhile, other children were worked independently on the same computerized reading program. About eight brand new Dell computers were arranged in rows along one side of the classroom and the children navigated through these reading programs without teacher assistance. All of this occurred as three additional independent groups of children worked on literacy skills with each of the three teachers. There were 27 children, in all, present on this particular day. Quiet talking, some giggling among children, the quiet sound of teachers giving directions and the rustling of students moving about the classroom freely were all evident.

Early childhood classrooms should offer

multiple opportunities for children to select and pursue ideas and conduct activities independently or in small and larger groups. Learning centers are an effective way to support these goals and children should be encouraged to select activities that allow them to develop a range of skills in all developmental areas (Neuman & Bredekamp, 2000). These practices were clearly evident here. The partner-teaching classroom was organized with six different learning centers with clear directions and purposeful structures that were set up for meaningful activities. Children were engaged in the activities and worked well with one another in their small groups or independently. They remained focused and engaged in activities and we witnessed very few behavior problems. This was a positive early childhood learning environment.

High Student Achievement

While state mandated tests for children do not begin until the third grade in this state, teachers used criterion based testing methods on an informal basis along with other non-standardized or teacher-made assessments. This allowed the teachers to chart the progress of the students throughout the course of the year. The partner teacher classroom used "On the Mark" testing. Using this measure, students are shown a new book that they have not read before. The teacher provides a brief verbal description and then asks the student to read the book out loud while the teacher records a running record. After the book is read the student is asked several comprehension questions. The student might be able to read the text without any problem, but might have great difficulty comprehending what they have just read. If this is the case, the student remains at their current reading level and are not moved up to the next stage. When the student is able to read an unseen text without error and have fewer than two errors in comprehension, the student is moved up to

the next stage. By the end of Kindergarten, in order for the children to be proficient, they need to be instructional or independent at a level C book. (Instructional indicates where the reading instruction is to begin and independent refers to reading and comprehending with few errors). Children in this classroom exhibited above average increases in reading and comprehension abilities when compared to the other seven Kindergarten classrooms in our initial study. At the end of the school year, two students in this classroom were reading at a second semester 1st grade level, while at least six students were reading in higher Level books G, H, etc. These findings were particularly noteworthy considering the vast amount of research documenting the poor reading achievement of African American students in urban settings. Research suggests that these students are at an increased risk for failure due to poverty, linguistic differences, home literacy practices, and cultural differences (Washington, 2001). It is interesting to note that while the school as a whole might be slightly below average on state testing, this kindergarten classroom scored above average on reading assessments.

Our research above supports existing notions that teaming can contribute to creating a climate in which teachers improve their classroom management and instruction (Anness, 2000; Strahan, Bowles, Richardson, & Hanawald, 1997). However, we maintain that there is more to pedagogy than effective classroom management and age-appropriate instruction. Pedagogy involves the development of affirmative and engaging relationships among teachers and children, parents and teachers, administrators and teachers, parents and children, all of which foster the climate and conditions that ultimately might lead to success and change for children in high poverty settings.

The findings that we present next dramatically alter the positive results of this study.

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These findings came out of the data collected but were less apparent than the visible data gleaned from observations and interviews. In these findings, we regarded our research findings from a critical perspective - one intent on the examination of the relations of power within the social, cultural, and political contexts of this classroom, school and community. Our critical analysis critiques particular social practices to examine the ways everyday practices (or the absence of particular practices) reflects hidden relations of power that can lead to oppressive relations, and/or the silencing, marginalization, or absence of one group in relation to the privilege of another (Giroux, 1997; Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996). Such regard supports a deconstruction of the nuances of human interaction, behavior, and relationships in order to understand diverse meanings, contradictions, and omissions in what is said, not said, written or acted out in social situations. In the section that follows, we describe findings including the absence of instructional leadership, a missing discourse about race and a lack of teachers' abilities to critically reflect on their everyday practice.

Critical Findings

Lack of Instructional Leadership

Certainly, a positive relationship between the longevity of the teacher team and student outcomes has been documented (Felner, Jackson, Kasak, Mulhall, Brand, & Flowers, 1997) and was apparent here. These partner teachers had a solid working relationship that seemed to contribute to positive student learning outcomes. To our surprise, we learned that they had worked collaboratively and operated as a team with little to no direction from their building administrator and no formal training or development in skills that fostered partner-teaching relationships for nearly a decade. The only training these teachers received occurred when they were initially 'assigned' to partner teach during the first year

of implementation. This training consisted of visiting two other partner teacher classrooms in the district.

Horwich (1999) explains that a lack of training can lead to friction between partner teachers as well as unsuccessful lessons and teaching. While this was not the case here, we did discover that nearly all of the other teachers observed as part of our larger study, had tried and failed in their attempts to partner teach, or had never attempted to implement a partner teacher model due to a lack of knowledge about partnering or the availability of adequate support to do so. Given the accelerated learning of the children in this classroom and the apparent benefits of an effective partner team, we lamented the evidence incurred here that indicated the lack of training and support for partner-teaching led to the demise of, lack of interest and/or commitment to these arrangements in other classrooms that might benefit children.

Our research confirmed Browne and Evens' (1994) claim that the implementation of partner-teaching is most often haphazard and without clear objectives. This partner team was borne almost entirely out of chance and the congenial match of teachers. They had successfully worked together for nearly 10 years, a feat more explicable by personal tenacity and matching temperament than by any support, instructional leadership, or team development efforts. These teachers explained that their success solely on their abilities to "get along" with each other. They claimed they "fit" well together because neither teacher wanted to be the "leader" or "in control" And held onto the belief that "two heads were better than one."

Administrative support for this classroom consisted only of the building principal's arrangement of the weekly teaching schedule to allow collaborative lesson planning time among them. These teachers shared one weekly common planning time, a time they

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kept sacred for the exchange of instructional planning, curriculum development and case review of students. This one measure of support from the principle, although a noteworthy practice well known to facilitate effective teacher collaboration and influence learning, seems alone hardly sufficient to foster successful partner-teaching across wide range of teacher team structures (Flowers et al, 2000).

Little research exists on the work of administrators in the development of strategies to help teachers learn to become more collaborative (Evans & Mohr, 1999; Tucker & Coddling, 2002). Thus, partnering efforts within schools are constrained or facilitated depending on how tensions and differences are managed by teachers, themselves. While other research has claimed that teacher partnerships with designated leaders function better than those without leaders (Crow & Pounder, 2000), we see indications that contradict this assertion in this case. Perhaps more equalitarian teacher models such as the one we studied here have greater potential than assumed thus far. More efforts to provide training and professional development on teaming might encourage other teachers to seek out these relationships and/or strengthen of the relationships of existing partner teachers. School leaders, unfortunately, seem unaware of their critical role they may play in promoting and supporting effective teaming practices beyond administrative arrangements (Turk, Wolff, Waterbury, & Zumalt, 2002).

Missing Discourse in Race 'Talk

These white teachers' indicated inadequate abilities and comfort speaking about the racial tensions that manifested in their classroom of predominately African American children. Through our focus group interview, it was clear to us that these teachers struggled to know how, when and to whom they should speak with in the handling of the racial issues that they faced daily. While the school teaching

faculty and the administration of this school was approximately 80% white, nearly all of the instructional aides, kitchen and custodial staff were African American. Overall, the school student population in the building is 91.7% African American, 2.7% Asian, 1.3% Hispanic, 2.0% White, and 2.3% Other. In this classroom, there were 28 African American students and 2 white students, yet our questions of teachers and the principals revealed that little articulated attention was paid to these differences in racial identities among children, teachers, parents and staff. Racial issues were not discussed in any purposeful ways. For example, when we asked the classroom teachers how they deal with the racial issues that must invariably come up between them and parents, they said, "You know, the issues that do come up surprising are more like Blacks against whites, not the other way around." These white teachers perceived the African American parents' as aggressive or defensive, particularly when interactions involved discipline of their children. They seemed unable to understand why this occurred. As a result, they tended to avoid any confrontations with the African American parents, a situation that lead to limited parent involvement and strain between children's home and school life. Issues of race were not taken up by the teachers or the school administrator (also a white woman) in any sophisticated ways that might lead to a deeper understanding of power relations at work between white teachers and white administrators and African American parents and staff at the school. Some avoidance behavior resulted and teachers positioned themselves defensively. They were unable to examine or reflect on their privilege as white teachers in their relationships with parents. In fact, some of their responses to our questions indicated that they did exhibit racial bias and some defensiveness with regard to their reluctance to discuss or confront issues because of their race. "We do have, [issues with parents] and we have had issues *that way*

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[authors' italics]. And we talk about it in front of the African American teachers and they admit, they say you know, unfortunately, if you're Black you could say what you want, but because you're not, you can't."

The opportunity to help children explore issues of race or to delve more deeply into these differences was not taken up by these teachers or their administrator. Their comments revealed a startling level of inexperience in the exploration of issues around race and in their abilities to negotiate tensions that occur across race lines, despite their many years teaching in this setting and community. We assert that this limits their abilities to affirm the racial identity of their children in their classroom and to involve African American parents into the classroom and their children's education. Opportunities to build meaningful relationships were thwarted by the discomfort and avoidance of race talk. Not once, during any of our classrooms visits did we notice any of the African American parents present in the classroom.

Engaging parents is vital in forming a bridge between home and school (Lumpkin, 2010). Research suggests that teachers need to understand and build on existing forms of parental involvement in order to extend the culture awareness (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). While content and pedagogical knowledge remain critical to teaching, a teacher's ability to deal with social contexts, ambiguity, and the unpredictable are qualities that are an important, necessary part of effective practice and success in urban classrooms (Chamberlain, 2005).

Lack of Critical Reflection

Nearly all of the collaborative dialogue among the partner teachers concerned the logistics of sharing of teaching and classroom duties. It did not extend into deeper levels of reflective practice that might support stronger, more robust development of teaching practices, understanding of socio-cultural and/or

racial issues or increase their parental involvement. When asked about the nature of their "teacher talk" with each other, one commented, "I don't think we've ever really sat down and ever had a philosophical discussion." This might stem in part from the high demands placed on teachers to meet district-mandated benchmarks derived from state standards for student achievement. One of the teachers said, "so much of what we do is in line for our learning targets so we know why we're doing this in reading and why we're doing this in writing... it's for the outcome we want." Daily conversations and planning sessions were used to organize and implement instruction, not to reflect on the practice of teaching.

A key benefit of teacher talk is the opportunity for teachers to gain multiple perspectives. As we construct new knowledge collectively we learn about others and ourselves in ways that enable us to critically reflect on and critique our experiences and examine what shaped our perspectives. Hart (1990) maintains that the development of awareness and growth leads to positive change and empowerment within our thinking and actions.

Reflection with others is an important step in professional growth. Bruner (1990) suggested that when people talk about their own experiences, they learn to better understand themselves and (re) construct new identities through changed beliefs and actions. We not only learn from others, we learn about ourselves by talking and interacting with others. When the process of reflection involves others, we enhance our ability to determine and to shape our own educational philosophies, instruction, and responsibilities to students' growth. This critical element was missing from the partner teachers' reflections with each other and with other adults. In order for growth and development to occur, reflection encompassing multiple perspectives is crucial for building new knowledge.

Discussion

Partner-teaching in this kindergarten class appeared to contribute positively to student achievement and the creation of a positive learning culture in the classroom amid an atmosphere of adult collegiality. Our case study revealed that, in this case, such structures can help to produce orderly, successful, age-appropriate learning communities for young children in high poverty urban schools. However, it is also clear that teachers need more than time and space to create, sustain and enhance positive partnering relationships and classroom structures. They need strong, knowledgeable instructional leadership that is purposeful and designed to meet the challenges facing teachers who choose to team with others.

In our research, instructional leadership was inadequate and the success of the teaching partners was left mostly to chance, almost entirely reliant on the abilities of the teachers to get along with each other, organize themselves and create a classroom that worked for them and their students with little guidance and effort forthcoming from the building principal or other administrators in this large urban district.

This may be due, in part perhaps, to the fact that school administrators have little preparation or training in the leadership of such initiatives within their schools. Certainly, common planning time and scheduling of classes are entities that principals are able to arrange and govern (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010), but these administrative tasks should not constitute the entirety of their intervention and guidance of teacher teams. The development of effective teams is an evolutionary process (Jackson & Davies, 2000) and needs to be regarded as a one that requires consistent support and attention over time. Effective instructional leadership in schools that house partner-teaching arrangements needs to consider the dynamics of establishing and enriching the relationship between teachers. Staff

development initiatives that focus on team building and/or group dynamics are essential.

Research suggests that although good schools are often led by administrators who regard themselves as “instructional leaders,” the work of most building administrators has historically tended to be managerial in nature, related more to budgeting, scheduling, and complying with regulations than to directly improving instruction or creating conditions that support children’s learning (Cuban, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1997). Our case study inquiry did not yield an exception to these articulated notions.

Importantly, this case reveals the promise that partner-teaching provides a space for potentially fostering critical reflection and facilitating the growth of teachers’ knowledge beyond the planning of instructional methods and assessment of student learning. Structured planning time consistently given to teachers to work together for classroom planning can also serve as an important site for teacher development in other ways. Talking about teaching and the issues and dilemmas of the acts, processes and dilemmas that surround the work, with colleagues, can not only improve one’s own practice as a teacher, but can offer purposeful support for others to construct meaning around political, social and cultural aspects of everyday events. Not only will this strengthen the learning process for all involved but lead to a culture of learning about teaching through sharing of knowledge, insights and experiences about practice, relationships and experiences. Certainly, colleagues can serve as an important source to support meaning-making. As Kain (2001) has noted already, teachers should “use team time to talk about teaching, not just troubles with kids” (p. 212). This type of structure, however, stems from the vision, creativity and commitment of instructional leaders who value and offer support for high quality teacher talk as venue for teacher development.

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Reflecting on one's teaching and pedagogy from a socio-cultural perspective can lead to deeper understandings of phenomena of our interactions with others, since such knowledge is often mediated through oral or written language (Vygotsky, 1978). As one reflects by speaking with others, they are led to question and revisit their teaching from different perspectives.

Time to make sense of their experiences as teachers and as members of a partnership or team is crucial. This can become an exercise in conscious raising, where teachers as learners are helped to consider what it is they are doing, what it means, how it came to be this way, and then how they might do things differently (Smyth, 1989). Partner-teaching lends itself to this variety of experiences. Garmston and Welman (1998) believe that such exchange among teachers taken up as consistent practice "builds a sense of connection and belonging... [and] connects individuals to their underlying motivations and mental models" (p. 30).

Collegial approaches that encourage dialogue, reflection and critical inquiry, where teachers spend time talking, planning, and thinking about their work as teachers and as partners or team teachers, is challenging to achieve in today's schools, given the pressures of time and quantity of learning required, but is fully necessary if we are to realize our goals to increase learning of all students. Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (1996) are adamant that schools are currently structured for failure because of this isolation and privacy from colleagues who might be able to help teachers' learning. They maintain:

Today's schools are organized in ways that support neither student learning nor teacher learning well. Teachers are isolated from one another so that they cannot share knowledge or take responsibility for overall student learning. (p. 195)

As the demand for accountability in teacher education increases, it is hoped that findings from research that clarifies benefits of partner-teaching and its potential to lead to regular habits of reflection among teachers will also indicate the potential for increased student learning and improved parent and school relationships.

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1996) suggest the future success of teachers' learning will be dependent on our abilities to create "new images of what, when and how teachers learn" (p. 598). Only through such changes can we expect to enlarge the capacity of teachers' to be responsible for student learning. Learning to be reflective involves conceptualizing issues, problems or events and reframing them within the context of one's own learning so that new avenues can be explored or other choices made about situations or events. Framing reflection as a social practice has been an emphasis of educational theorist Solomon (1987) who has long voiced the view that teachers' understandings become more real and clearer as teachers speak about them to each other.

Deep critical reflective inquiry involves scrutiny of personal beliefs, something that is achievable if teachers are supported in the sharing of the narratives from their lives and classrooms (Schubert & Ayers, 1992). If an atmosphere of trust has been established, critical reflection is likely to proceed. When narratives become the raw material for deeper reflection professional meanings develop, personal beliefs are revealed, and teaching is examined critically (Henderson & Hawthorne, 2000). Reflection on teachers' beliefs and the relationship between self-belief and action in the classroom is, indeed, crucial if the partnership is to move into more critical inquiry. In this way, teachers do not rely solely on external authority for guidance and validation, but can look at their own work with critical inquiry to initiate change (Chamberlin, 2005).

In this classroom, an acknowledgement of alternate perspectives about race and race relations among white teachers and African American parents was a glaring missing component among teachers that made establishment of good community and family relations difficult, if not impossible. Students, classrooms, schools, and communities shape the landscape from which teachers gather material to inform their practice. In this case, the racial issues were the 'elephant in the room,' so to speak. Moreover, young children are developing their racial identities as part of this initial schooling experience. For many in this racially segregated neighborhood school, this Kindergarten experience is their first close and consistent relationship with white people. In our society, white and lighter skin are tacitly understood as the preferred, dominant norm, so teachers' abilities to address color differences are important and have bearing on young children's self-esteem and racial pride (Tatum, 1997). The messages that children receive about the obvious skin color differences they notice between themselves and their teachers are very important, particularly since these often connote relative worth of oneself. Moreover, subtleties in the use of language and attitudes, if unexamined, certainly will translate dominate views of racial inferiority in the classroom among teachers and students that effectively reinforces the marginalization of people of color in our society. These biases, evident in the books children read, or the messages they glean from media and in the null or implicit curriculum (Eisner, 2002) of schools, must be countered by adults in schools. Teachers need some sophistication of understanding these processes of privilege and power and the ways they are played out in the daily life of their classrooms and in their relationships with parents of color (Kailin, 2002).

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ITEM: gb #9-416

STANDING COMMITTEE: **TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS**

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, March 30, 2021

ITEM: Miss McCullough/Mr. Foley/Mr. Monfredo (December 4, 2019)

Request that the Administration consider incorporating the campaign entitled "RESPECTfully" when the Sex Ed Curriculum is established.

PRIOR ACTION:

- 12-19-19 - Referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.
- 9-15-20 STANDING COMMITTEE ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS
(Considered with gb #9-288 and gb #0-31.)
See Prior Action under gb#9-288.

BACKUP: (Consider with gb #9-288 and gb #0-31.)

STANDING COMMITTEE: **TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS**

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, March 30, 2021

ITEM: Mayor Petty/Miss Biancheria/Mrs. Clancey/Mr. Foley/Ms. McCullough/
Ms. Novick (January 8, 2020)

Request that the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports recommend a comprehensive, inclusive, evidenced-based sexual and health curriculum and an appropriate level of increased classroom time for health education to the school committee for the FY21 budget.

PRIOR ACTION:

- 1-16-20 - Mayor Petty announced that the Senate passed the Sex Ed curriculum bill and it is now at the House for deliberation. Superintendent Binienda requested that the content of this bill be aligned with the frameworks from DESE. Mr. Monfredo made a motion to hold the item. Mayor Petty suggested that Ms. McCullough invite representatives from the Public Health Department to the Standing Committee meetings. Mayor Petty stated that this has been an issue for too long and that the state and Administration have done nothing and the students are the ones who are the recipients of the failure to come up with a comprehensive plan. He has waited a year for the state and thinks that having the transparent discussions in the Standing Committee is the right thing to do. He opposed the request to hold the item. He stated that he wants a Sex Ed curriculum by September 2020. Mr. Monfredo withdrew his motion to hold the item and made the following motion:
Request that the Administration create a plan for a Comprehensive Sex Ed Curriculum.
Ms. McCullough stated that in conversation with the Clerk, that all items pertaining to the Sex Ed curriculum be taken along with this item. Superintendent Binienda believes that the Administration can write its own curriculum by grade level by June 2020 and combine it with what the law states.
Mr. Monfredo withdrew his second motion.
It was moved and voice voted to refer the item to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.
Referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.
- 9-15-20 STANDING COMMITTEE ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS
(Considered with gb #9-288 and gb #9-416.)
See Prior Action under gb#9-288.

BACKUP: (Consider with gb #9-288 and gb #0-416.)

STANDING COMMITTEE: **TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS**

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, March 30, 2021

ITEM: Administration/Ms. McCullough/Miss Biancheria/Mrs. Clancey
(November 24, 2020)

Response of the Administration to the request to provide an update on Special Education testing to include the types that are taking place, the timeline updates and any other pertinent information.

PRIOR ACTION

- 11-19-20 - (Considered with gb #0-362.)
On a roll call of 7-0, the item was referred to the Administration.
- 12-3-20 - (Considered with gb #0-362.1)
On a roll call of 7-0, the items were referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.

BACKUP:

Annex A (1 page) contains a copy of the Administration's response to the item.

Testing Timelines and Updates

| Meetings Held | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Meetings Type | August 1, 2020 - October 31, 2020 | August 1, 2020 - March 4, 2021 |
| Initial | 79 | 259 |
| Early Childhood | 43 | 164 |
| Re-Evaluation | 82 | 344 |
| Annual Review | 1,591 | 4,219 |
| Miscellaneous (amendments, Extended Evaluation, Progress, Covid Compensatory Services) | 71 | 248 |
| Total | 1,886 | 5,234 |

| Meetings Needed | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Meetings Type | August 1, 2020 - October 31, 2020 | As of March 4, 2021 |
| Initial | 376 | 199 |
| Early Childhood | 33 | 84 |
| Re-Evaluation | 395 | |
| Annual Review | 1,664 | 395 (to be broken down) |
| Total | 2,468 | 678 |

| OSEL Evaluations Completed | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Meeting Type | 19-20 School Year (Most from March-June) | 20-21 School Year (Resumed in-person in October) |
| Psych Assessments | 478 | 312 |
| Home Assessments | 211 | 29 |
| Behavior Assessments/FBA | 62 | |
| Total | 751 | 341 |

STANDING COMMITTEE: **TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS**

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, March 30, 2021

ITEM: Mr. Monfredo/Miss Biancheria/Mrs. Clancey/Ms. McCullough/Ms. Novick
(February 12, 2021)

Request that the Administration collaborate with community agencies, retired teachers and other groups, to study the feasibility of establishing a summer learning program to assist K-8 students.

PRIOR ACTION:

2-25-21 - Mr. Monfredo requested that the Administration consider formulation of a committee by early April.
On a roll call of 7-0, the item was referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.

BACKUP:

The district will begin planning for summer programming after the March 29, 2021 return to hybrid.

- To date, WPS has provided letters of support/input to two community applications for summer programming grant proposals (Woo Labs and the Latino Educational Institute).
- WPS met with Generation Teach and will hope to implement this program in summer 2022 for middle school and in support of the Future Teachers high school students. See: <https://www.generationteach.org/>
- Further outreach to retired teachers and other groups will be done over the next two months as funding and plans are finalized.

ITEM: gb #1-86

STANDING COMMITTEE: **TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS**

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, March 30, 2021

ITEM: Administration (March 9, 2021)

To consider approval of the following courses:

- US History Survey
- Foundations of Modern Biotechnology
- Applications of Modern Biotechnology

PRIOR ACTION:

3-18-21 - On a roll call of 7-0, the item was referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.

BACKUP: **The Administration recommends that this item be filed due to approval taken at the School Committee Meeting that was held on Tuesday, March 23, 2021.**