Current Event 4: “Learning to Teach Science in Urban Schools”

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This article studied the impact of coteaching for pre-service teachers during their university training at University of Pennsylvania. Researchers wanted to see the impact of teachers in full collaboration before, during and after class time. New teachers were assigned to a cooperating teacher (co-op) where they would be teaching side by side. Traditionally, student teachers are placed in a classroom to take full control of the whole class. In a coteaching situation, both teachers would be present at all times. In this study, two new teachers were assigned to a co-op in a high school that has smaller learning communities (SLC). The class the new teachers co-taught was found in the Health SLC. The teachers were in constant dialogue and learning from each other’s strengths and experiences. The new teachers found it to be beneficial to be in a coteaching situation because it gave them the years of knowledge that they lacked. The study emphasized the pros of this continuous support.

The idea of coteaching is a brilliant idea. The study showed a very limited side of coteaching. Researchers provide a variety of evidence, from videotapes, to interviews, journals, and dialogue. These are all legitimate evidence, but there was no connection to academic success of the students in this situation. Is coteaching just a solution for teachers or is it for the benefit of students? The new teachers were also assigned in an urban high school that already has taken measures to try to improve the student and teacher connection. The high school was arranged in smaller learning communities. The academy that was chosen for their study was the Health SLC. As this situation seems very positive with only having a handful of students, focusing on one-to-one attention, it does not seem realistic in other urban high schools. Will coteaching be helpful with a larger class? Beyond the pros of coteaching for teachers, their needs to be a stronger push for the success and advantage for students. This study can make a stronger impact if there was a
connection with student success. The study needs a lot of improvement but has a lot of potential for strong impact in the education community.

As a second year teacher, I can relate with this article. When I was a student teacher, I had two great master teachers who were always discussing my strengths and weaknesses with me. One of my master teachers would sometimes “co-teach” to provide me an example of how things can be done in the classroom. We were always talking about ways to improve upon my teaching practice. One of the greatest lessons I learned in the credentialing program was to always reflect on my practices. Reflection should not always come from within, but also with colleagues and with my students. I try to remember this on an everyday basis. I strive to be better as a teacher for myself and as a teacher for my students. This article reminds me that it cannot be done alone. I am fortunate to have colleagues who are willing to constructively reflect on our practices. This article also displays so many key-teaching practices that we might forget on an everyday basis. I want to not just lay down the content but also connect with the students.