

## A Portrait of Co-Planning

### Guiding questions:

1. What are the strengths and areas for growth in this co-teaching partnership, particularly in relation to planning?
2. Where do you see opportunities and potential for high-quality instruction for EL-classified multilingual students?
3. What systemic factors might have affected this collaboration?
4. How might this partnership be leveraged to build capacity across the school and district?

### District Context

Located in a large, urban locale, Mountain View School District serves over 50,000 students in grades K-12, approximately ten percent of whom are classified as English Learners (ELs). Over 150 languages are spoken by students throughout the district, which is comprised of over 60 elementary, middle schools, and high schools. In Mountain View, the co-teaching model for EL-classified multilingual learners – with both a language specialist and a content teacher providing instruction together in the same classroom – has been in place for over a decade. In middle and high school, EL-classified multilingual learners attend at least one core class (e.g., math, science, social studies, or language arts) that is co-taught by a certified content area teacher and a certified language specialist who has been specially trained to teach students who are learning English. Except for newcomers, who often have one dedicated class for English Language Development (ELD), most secondary multilingual learners classified as ELs in the district do not enroll in a separate ELD course. As posted on the school district's website, the primary goal of teaching language through content is to make grade-level standards and curriculum accessible to EL-classified multilingual learners at all levels of English proficiency and to provide explicit language development based upon the language demands of the content.

Language specialists in Mountain View are supported by district-level instructional coaches. At times that support includes coaching co-teacher pairs. Other times the instructional coaches provide language specialists and content teachers with professional development.

Most language specialists co-teach three to four lessons per day (depending on scheduling), and they each typically collaborate with 2-3 different content teachers. Collaborating teachers are encouraged to use a variety of resources that have been developed by the district to support co-planning and collaboration. Additionally, there is a self-assessment rubric that collaborative teaching pairs are encouraged to complete once a year on which they individually rate their efficacy in working together as a team. Results are used at the school level and at the district level to determine what kind of professional development collaborating teachers need.

Throughout the district, EL Specialists are required to engage in at least 45 minutes of planning time per week with each content teacher with whom they co-teach. In most (but not all) cases, language specialists and content teachers co-plan during shared planning time that is specially designated for their collaboration: otherwise, they find other times during the school day to engage in co-planning.

It is in this context that we explore the co-planning practices of language specialist Tiffany on the day in which we observed her.

Tiffany is a middle school language specialist who co-teaches with two different content teachers: a 7th grade science teacher and an 8th grade language arts teacher. She has approximately one hour each day in her schedule to co-plan (with one or the other teacher), and on the day we observed, we saw Tiffany co-plan with her language arts teacher, Sheila.

Tiffany and Sheila greeted each other in the hallway and chatted about their weekends on the walk to Sheila's classroom. Although they've known each other for years, this is their first year as co-teaching partners. They spent about an hour planning together. During this meeting, Tiffany and Sheila put the finishing touches on a lesson about figurative language that they co-developed last week and would teach together later that day. They first discussed last-minute scaffolding decisions for their opening lesson activity, a "would-you-rather" question where each student is asked to share their preference between two opposing options:

Tiffany: For the "would-you-rather," I think we're good. Right?

Sheila: You wanna cross out the "because" for the newcomers?

Tiffany: I mean, I think we give them the opportunity and they'll do it if they can.

Sheila: I think Raina (a student who is a newcomer) does it a lot.

Tiffany: Raina does it almost all the time. Yeah. Let's let it happen if it happens.

In this part of the conversation, we saw Sheila (language arts teacher) suggest an additional modification for their more emergent students, removing the requirement to provide a

justification for their responses. Tiffany responded by suggesting that they leave this element in and allow students to choose how they would like to engage. She and Sheila brought up a newly-arrived student in their class, Raina, and reflected on how she has not hesitated to provide a justification for her response in the past.

As their planning continued, they double-checked how they would close the lesson, with Sheila reminding Tiffany about the wrap-up activity they planned, in which students would each share a favorite example from their main activity.

Tiffany: Okay. And then what was the closure?

Sheila: "Share your favorite."

Tiffany: Oh yeah. I like that.

Sheila: That's okay?

Tiffany: Yep. All right. Cool.

Tiffany immediately shifted their conversation to the next day's lesson, discussing the logistics for a set of quotations they would be discussing with students:

Tiffany: Tomorrow. Our quotes. I sent those to you, yeah?

Sheila: Yeah. You did. I haven't copied them, but that's for later.

Tiffany: It'll happen. It always does.

These last comments about materials – and Tiffany's confidence about the success of their planning – hint at the pattern of collaboration they have developed throughout the year.

During the rest of their hour, Tiffany and Sheila discussed a new unit that Sheila's English language arts department is developing to help prepare students for the state writing assessment. The English language arts teachers plan to use the unit schoolwide next month. Tiffany and Sheila brainstormed ways to scaffold the unit materials for EL-classified multilingual learners through anchor charts, collaborative activities, and writing organizers. They got about 1/3 of the way through the unit and decided to pick up on this work in their next co-planning session. They wanted to use these materials for their own co-taught class, but they also wanted to share them more widely: Sheila was going to share them with her English language arts team the next week, and Tiffany was going to provide them to the other language specialists in the building.

They ended the co-planning session with less than a minute to spare, and then Tiffany left for her next class.