

Are you Performing with a Band or Singing Karaoke? Rethinking Co-Teaching Roles to Serve EL-Classified Multilingual Learners

Lois & Mitch

Lois (ELD) and Mitch (content) are both relatively new to teaching, each having taught for almost three years now. Both have certifications in ELD and social studies and share a classroom where they co-teach four sections of U.S. history to 10th graders on an alternating-day schedule. Co-teaching is relatively new in their district, and this is their second year as co-teachers.

On a Friday afternoon during their hour-long shared planning time (which occurs three times weekly), Mitch and Lois both have laptops open and are revising shared documents and slides from a lesson they'd taught last year—part of a unit on Indigenous People's movements—that they will be teaching again next week. They modify documents while bantering back and forth about their shared plan. As planning time ends, they both go to the whiteboard to write and divvy up a list of remaining tasks.

Before students arrive on Tuesday morning, Lois and Mitch review their plan and discuss a few tweaks they're making based on how the lesson went yesterday with another class period. Both teachers greet students as they enter, asking them about afterschool activities, other classes, and video games.

When the bell rings, teachers give directions for a “gallery walk” of posters students created previously about U.S. Supreme Court cases involving tribal sovereignty. Students review posters individually or in pairs, some using English and some discussing in Spanish. They return to their seats to record brief court case summaries and answer the question, “What do these cases tell us about tribal sovereignty, or the relationship between the U.S. government and tribal communities?” Mitch calls on multiple students to share responses, which Lois records on the whiteboard.

Next, Mitch and Lois project the day's slideshow, beginning with a vocabulary focus. Lois tells students that she and Mitch had been reflecting on a previous lesson and noticed that students seem to be confused about what “land use” means. Thus, they decided to provide students with a more comprehensive definition of the term, which the teachers demonstrate using images of buildings, dams, and a drought-ridden landscape.

In the next part of the lesson, Mitch and Lois alternate between who is speaking as they describe three different land-use conflicts between the U.S. government and specific tribes. Each takes turns presenting one of the perspectives: for example, for the Keystone Pipeline, Mitch talks about the U.S.'s desire for oil, while Lois explains the tribe's concern about spills and contamination. Throughout this presentation, students are listening and writing down key points in a structured notetaking document. Lois and Mitch quickly check-in about the lesson's timing while students finish their notes.

After Mitch and Lois finish presenting the conflicts, students choose one of the three issues to research, either individually or in small groups. They flip to the next page of their notetaking document where an organizer guides them to find information on approaches taken to solve the conflict, current impacts, and possible future steps to resolve the conflict. As students research topics online, they engage in lively discussions with each other about information they find. Lois and Mitch circulate around the classroom to observe and help as needed. In one such instance, Lois works with a pair of EL-classified MLs, Adriana and Imelda. They ask Lois about the meaning of words they have found in their online research, like "shrine." As they talk about that word, Imelda observes that it's "like la Virgen at my aunt's house."

Chelsea & Ethan

Chelsea Rogers is an experienced ELD teacher working in a district that has used co-teaching for more than ten years. She co-teaches two 11th grade English classes with Ethan Sanders, an ELA teacher with whom she has worked for three years, and one section of math with a different co-teacher. In addition to co-teaching, Chelsea also serves on the school leadership committee, manages the intake of all new multilingual students, and serves as her school's lead ELD teacher.

Chelsea arrives at Ethan's door before the bell rings, but in the movement from one classroom to another, she has lost track of her keys. Fortunately, Ethan has arrived moments before to unlock the room. Although it is Thursday, Chelsea hasn't been in Ethan's room since last week because she was pulled out to screen a newly arrived student. However, Chelsea feels ready for the day's lesson thanks to the 90-minute dedicated co-planning time she and Ethan had the day before. With the goal of focusing on character development in *The Great Gatsby*, Chelsea and Ethan have chosen a brief passage from chapter five for a close reading activity. In the few minutes before students arrive, Chelsea and Ethan review the lesson plan and hash out details, such as deciding to give students time to talk to each other about the main prompt before their writing time. Students take out their books and turn to chapter five. Ethan reads aloud, while Chelsea projects the text onto the screen using a bookmark to help students follow along.

After a few minutes of reading, with pauses during which either Ethan or Chelsea asks a question or clarifies a plot point, the co-teachers pass out copies of a graphic organizer and the short passage for close reading. In table groups, students discuss changes in *Gatsby's* character and fill in the graphic organizer using examples from the passage. Co-created by Chelsea and Ethan to support students in taking notes about the character of *Gatsby*, the organizer has four columns with the headings of speech, thoughts, actions, and looks, each with picture icons. Chelsea has also added a few sentence starters for EL-classified MLs at earlier stages of writing development. Chelsea and Ethan each sit with individual tables and ask questions to prompt discussion.

Finally, students work on writing their own claims about *Gatsby's* character development based on their group notes. To help them do so, Chelsea projects an example claim on the screen, and with students' help, dissects and labels the claim's parts. Students begin writing, and some copy the sample sentence structure and punctuation but revise the content with their ideas. Before class ends, students share their claims with partners and provide each other with feedback using a rubric. The following period, Chelsea and Ethan repeat the same lesson for a new group of students.

At the end of the day, the researchers ask to debrief with Chelsea, and Ethan offers to stay too. As they co-reflect on the lessons, Chelsea suggests a few tweaks to help EL-classified MLs access more vocabulary, and Ethan says he will add a word bank for tomorrow's lesson that he will teach to a different group of students while Chelsea meets with school administration to talk about registration for incoming students.

Byron & Henry

ELD teacher Byron works in a new middle school whose co-teaching model is in its first year. He has ELD and social studies certifications and co-teaches regularly with four different content teachers, although he also consults with several others around lesson planning.

Byron begins his day in a 6th grade ELA class: as the bell rings, he leaves his own classroom and weaves through the school hallway with his cart of supplies. As Byron enters the classroom, he greets the content teacher, Henry, before finding a seat with a group of three students at the front of the classroom, one of whom is an EL-classified ML (Martin). As students get settled, Henry welcomes them. Since the co-teachers did not co-plan this lesson, only then does Byron realize that students are working on character relationships in small group “book club” discussions. Byron listens as Henry asks students to start independent reading and sets a classroom timer for ten minutes.

Byron notices that while Martin appears to be reading their book, *Other Words for Home*, Joey and Tristan, the other two students at his table, are talking among themselves. He asks them to return to their reading; as he does so, Henry circulates the classroom and checks in with other students. Byron quietly approaches Henry to see if there is another small group reading *Other Words for Home*, and if they could switch Martin to that group, since his current one has frequently been off task. Settling back into his seat, Byron works on his computer until Henry ends silent reading time.

Henry then begins a minilesson about character relationships, focusing on the idea of complicated relationships, both in real life and books. As Henry revisits a complicated friendship of his own, Byron listens from his seat. Henry includes two short turn-and-talk opportunities during the mini-lesson, but students at Byron’s table are a bit confused and only begin talking when Byron initiates and then leads these conversations. Henry then asks table-groups to work together to fill out a T-chart about the “dos and don’ts” of good relationships followed by a character web activity, which asks students to write defining characteristics for different characters from their book (e.g., where they are from).

As Henry circulates around the room, Byron turns to the students at his table, who look at him expectantly. For each step of the assignments, he asks questions to prompt them to develop and write down answers. At times, their conversation is interrupted by behavioral disruptions from nearby tables. Before Byron’s group can complete the activities, the period ends, and Henry dismisses the class. Gathering his things to move to his next co-taught class, Byron quickly checks in with Henry about students’ progress. He then darts to his next class across the building.