



Partnership for Public Education

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
 INITIATIVE**

COTEACHER HUDDLES



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What is a Coteacher Huddle?

Coteaching is a model used to support teacher learning during the student teaching practicum. This model provides opportunities for teacher candidates to observe, practice, seek help, and engage in debriefs on student learning and instructional shifts during their student teaching experience. It also results in teacher candidates engaging in learning opportunities that are qualitatively different from the traditional gradual release model of student teaching (Soslau, Gallo-Fox, & Scantlebury, 2018).

A coteacher huddle occurs when two or more teachers use short, focused meetings either before, during, or after a lesson, to discuss shifts or adaptations to coplanned instruction (Tobin, Zurbano, Ford, & Carambo, 2003). The huddle often occurs during instruction, taking the form of a brief conversation between the clinical educator and the teacher candidate, may discuss the enactment of teaching decisions and collaboratively determining if adjustments are necessary. One goal of the huddle is to develop coteachers' adaptive teaching expertise and adaptive help-seeking skills (Soslau, Kotch-Jester, Scantlebury, & Gleason, 2018).

Overview of the Research

In a recent study Soslau, Kotch-Jester, Scantlebury, and Gleason (2018) determined how teacher candidates' participation in huddles changed over time. Tracking how often teacher candidates initiated a huddle, what meaning the candidate made of the huddle, and what the candidate reported learning as a result of the huddle. The study showed how huddling, which is a key feature of coteaching, provides a unique learning opportunity for teacher candidates to develop adaptive teaching expertise (Soslau et. al, 2018). All participants in the study (clinical educators and teacher candidates) received formalized coteaching professional development on: (1) coplanning, (2) construction, and (3) coevaluation. During the professional development sessions, huddling was introduced as a strategy aimed at developing candidates' ability to notice and respond to pupil cues, along with contextual differences that necessitate an adaptation to their enactment of coplanned lessons (Soslau et. al, 2018).

Huddle Logs

Teacher candidates' huddle logs were examined weekly. Candidates documented whether the huddle took place before, during, or after a lesson, along with who initiated the huddles and a summary of what was discussed in the huddles. The log allowed the candidates to articulate what they learned as a result of huddling. Table 1 shows these results for eight elementary special education, 17 elementary and four secondary science student teachers. Teacher candidates initiated approximately the same number of huddles as clinical educators, Secondary science students initiated more huddles than their elementary peers. This may be attributable to the longer history of science education using coteaching as a model for student teaching (over 15 years (compared to 5 years for elementary teacher education). Several secondary science clinical educators had first experienced coteaching during their student teaching.

Table 1

Number, percentage and initiator of huddles for elementary special education, elementary/middle school English and secondary science programs.

	ETESP (n=8)	ETE/MSE (n=17)	SSE (n=4)
Teacher Candidate	265 (47%)	543 (45%)	279 (52.5%)
Clinical Educator	285 (50.5%)	533 (44%)	248 (47%)
Other Teacher	13	112	0
Other	1	24	4
TOTAL	564	1212	531

Table 2 shows the timing of huddles. Coteachers initiate huddles, either before, during, or after lessons. As shown in Table 2, elementary education candidates were equally as likely to initiate huddles across the three time points. While science education majors were more likely to implement huddles during the lesson. This may be because science lessons have longer allocated times (between 50-100 minutes of instruction) compared to subject specific teaching times in elementary schools. Thus there were likely more opportunities to initiate huddles, which could have contributed to the differences in percentages across the three groups.

Table 2

Number and timing of huddles for teacher candidates in special education, elementary, and secondary science programs.

	ETESP (n=8)	ETE/MSE (n=17)	SSE (n=4)
Before	176 (31%)	378 (31%)	171 (32.5%)
During	225 (39%)	477 (39%)	277 (53%)
After	172 (30%)	365 (30%)	77 (15%)
TOTAL	573	1220	525

The Value and Importance of Coteacher Huddles

Coteacher huddles provided benefits to teacher candidates and clinical educators. For example, huddles

1. Enable unique ways for coteachers to seek and exchange feedback
2. Allow opportunities for immediate in-the-moment adjustments on teaching practices to address pupil needs
3. Facilitate help-seeking practices during instructional time/normalizes help-seeking as a part of teacher learning
4. Foster coteachers' noticing skills to identify needs for instructional changes
5. Develop coteachers' adaptive teaching expertise when practicing and rehearsing real-time adjustments
6. Allow for corrections, enhancements, and necessary modifications without interrupting lesson flow
7. Allow candidates to access their clinical educators' invisible thinking to co-select alternative instructional approaches

Table 3 shows the topic teacher candidates and clinical educators discussed in the huddles.

	ETESP (n=8)	ETE/MSE (n=17)	SSE (n=4)
Classroom Management	206 (36%)	420 (33%)	171 (32.5%)
Whole Group	108	195	81
Small Group	98	225	99
Instructional Approach	111 (19%)	205 (16%)	66 (12.5%)
Pacing/Sequencing	51 (9%)	145 (11.5%)	67 (13%)
Clarifying Directions	54 (9%)	119 (9%)	63 (12%)
Modeling	40 (7%)	119 (9%)	12 (3%)
Questioning	33 (6%)	80 (6%)	12 (2%)
Correction/Enhancement in Content	14	45	15
Reminders	43	76	27
Other	22	47	73
TOTAL	573	1256	525

Classroom management was the most frequent huddle topic for all teacher education candidates, equally divided with issues related to managing the class and responding to individual students. Instructional approaches, the pacing and sequencing of lessons and clarifying directions were also important huddle topics (Soslau et. al, 2018). An example of teacher candidates' takeaways from the huddles is given below.

"Today's huddle was called by my CE (clinical educator) pertaining to the read aloud. We discussed effective ways to shorten the lessons to allow more time for instruction. We opted to eliminate the grammar activity to make more time for writing practice. I learned the importance of time and prioritizing, and also it is okay to modify scripted lessons to better fit the needs of your students (*Special Education Candidate, Elementary Teacher Education, September 29, 2016*)."

"I am so happy she huddled up with me so I could repeat the directions one more time for the students since they needed this extra support. If she had not huddled up with me, I may not have noticed the confusion and the students would not have understood and benefited from the pre-reading tea party (*Middle School English Candidate, Elementary Teacher Education, October 26, 2015*)."

Conclusion

Huddling provides a unique learning opportunity for teacher candidates to develop adaptive teaching expertise and adaptive help-seeking skills (Soslau et al., 2018). Results indicated that huddles provided candidates opportunities to develop their adaptive teaching expertise. Such adaptive expertise enables teachers to modify their planned instruction based on real time pupil cues, make adjustments to scripted curriculum guides sensitive to contextual demands, and balance experimental teaching approaches with risks to pupil learning and well-being (Soslau, 2012). Knowing that single solutions to teaching and learning problems are never applicable across multiple contexts and types of pupils, the ability to identify issues and adapt one's teaching practice is an essential skill for new teachers to develop (Soslau et. al, 2018).

Policy Recommendation: What Should Be Done?

Teacher educators, educational instructors and school leaders could support clinical educators and teacher candidates on ways to engage in impactful coteacher huddles. Clinical educators and and teacher candidates could continue to rehearse and learn how to huddle prior to the start of coteaching placements. Further, coteachers could regularly reflect on their huddle-supported learning. Among the many benefits of coteacher huddles is a reduction in loss of instructional time and improved adaptive teacher expertise, both of which are crucial in strengthening academic achievement in Delaware schools. Fostering teacher candidates adaptive teaching expertise prior to their full-time post-graduate teaching careers, through coteaching huddles, will provide benefits for Delaware students.

Work Cited

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