

# **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS!**

## ADVICE FROM EXPERIENCED CO-TEACHERS

### **Before You Start**

- Set up your norms, boundaries and bottom lines
- Ask admin for collegial planning time and as much structured time together for planning and reflection as possible
- Take time to plan together right at the beginning
- Decide who will do what roles – discuss and clarify often
- Discuss noise level – negotiate levels that are acceptable to both parties (and students)
- Go in with a positive attitude!
- See if prep times can align at all (in some cases, it might not be negotiable)

### **Schedule**

- Ensure you schedule in regular and consistent meeting times (real and virtual)
- Make sure you plan together and reflect together (an hour a week)
- Never under-estimate the power of reflection
- Be clear about why the pairing has occurred. How will this help students and what do each of you bring to the table?
- Plan for a 5 minute reflection and debrief at the end of each session
- Build in time to just observe each other and the students – this can be valuable assessment information

### **Consistency**

- Be consistent with behavior expectations; classroom management
- Track your contact with students – be sure, between the two of you, that you are connecting with each student every day
- Establish a routine early and consistently enforce it
- Make sure every student is getting the feedback they need

### **Flexibility**

- Let go of some things that may bother you
- Be open to new ideas; accept different teaching styles
- Be aware that sometimes plans change
- Be prepared to relinquish some control

- Use one person to make sure the class keeps rolling, when a concern arises – the other person can respond

### **Play to Strengths**

- Find the silver lining; work to be positive
- Help one another whenever you can
- Take time to experiment with class groupings, compositions
- Use each other's strengths – make time to talk about what they are
- Focus on student needs as a starting point always
- Take what you learn and think about how to apply it in the future
- Plan for authentic enrichment experiences for students who need it
- Make sure each of you is leading some of the time

### **Minimizing the Challenges**

- Know when to move on; there is a time to be persistent and a time to back away
- Share the load of students who are experiencing challenges in one way or another
- Do your share of the work!

### **Curricular Understanding and Learning**

- Know that this is a benefit of working together – you will come to understand your curriculum more
- Use one another as a resource
- Share resources, ideas and expertise
- If one person isn't as familiar with the curriculum, be sure to support them and provide them with resources and prior knowledge
- Multi-grades – work together to achieve flexible and responsive solutions
- Take risks
- Inspire creativity
- Be prepared to reteach and revisit material – easier to do this with two teachers

### **Assessment**

- Clarify what an FM, MM, EU and NY look like before you assess (or even teach)
- Talk about what will be formative and what will be summative
- Make sure gradebooks are shared right at the beginning
- Share the load but take time to assess together, too, so you can construct a shared understanding

- Be open to ideas about varied ways to assess
- Designate time to work on report cards, comments, prepare for student-led conferences
- Use pre and post assessments
- Utilize rubrics and have a common understanding of the criteria

### **Communication**

- What do you have? What do you need? Make sure you have open communication
- Use email, Google Docs
- Discuss personal challenges – be aware of each other's worlds
- Be understanding
- Take time to explain the arrangement to parents
- Communicate early and often
- Discuss expectations and routines with students from the very beginning
- Address concerns immediately – do not let them fester
- Support each other's decisions
- If there is a change in plans, communicate it early
- Invite student feedback