



The Think Inclusive Podcast

Season 8, Episode 11

Marilyn Friend | Co-Teaching

Marilyn Friend (00:07):

I know whether or not you are heading toward inclusiveness by how often you use the word. If you are a school that talks about the third grade inclusion class or the seventh grade inclusion team or high school English does inclusion, math doesn't. I don't know what it means to do inclusion. I have to tell you, I think we do lunch.

Tim Villegas (00:32):

Hello and welcome to season eight, episode 11 of The Think Inclusive Podcast presented by MCIE. I'm your host, Tim Villegas. Guess what, y'all. This is the final episode of season eight. Stay tuned at the end of the episode for a preview of season nine, starting in August. This podcast features conversations and commentary with thought leaders in inclusive education and community advocacy thinking inclusive exists to build bridges between parents, educators, and disability rights advocates to promote inclusion for all students. That's right, y'all. All means all to find out more about who we are and what we do, go to thinkinclusive.us, the official blog of MCIE, and check us out on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Tim Villegas (01:23):

Now today on the podcast, we talk with Marilyn Friend, renowned expert and author of numerous books and articles on co-teaching. We discuss what is co-teaching and what does it look like? Do schools have to provide a co-teaching service model? And how does co-teaching further the practice of inclusive education? But first, last time on the podcast, we asked you what your biggest challenge to advocating for inclusive education was. And we had a ton of great responses. And so here are some of the ones that stood out. "General education teachers needing behavior support," "the exceedingly slow pace of systemic change," "authentic buy-in from general education." This one was "being the mom I'm not taking seriously. I feel the eye rolls. No support from administration." "Lack of training and current research," "just being heard," "funds or financial limitations," "ableism," "the pressure to prove something just to be included," "unaddressed biases towards people with disabilities," "lack of individual or shared support for children who need more," "other parents or peers who do not understand what inclusive education is." I hope that was helpful for you to hear. If you are advocating for inclusive education and you are running into challenges like the ones we highlighted, you are not alone. Thanks for listening to the Think Inclusive Podcast. We are so glad you're here. After the break, our interview with Marilyn friend.

Tim Villegas (03:35):

Inclusive education is hard work, and for schools and districts that want to be more inclusive but don't know where to start, it can seem impossible. MCIE can help. We've been partnering with educational systems across the United States and the world for three decades, and know how to build systemic

inclusive school practices, transform educational services, increase the rate of placement of learners with disabilities in general education, reduce removals and suspensions, and improve outcomes for all students across all school settings. To schedule a free initial consultation and find out how we can help contact us at mcie@mcie.org, or visit our website mcie.org.

Tim Villegas (04:50):

Why don't we start off by asking what exactly is co-teaching?

Marilyn Friend (04:57):

That's a great place to start, because you're right. There's a lot of misunderstanding about co-teaching. I ask professionals that question every time I'm going to do some work on this topic, and I'll say, "What is co-teaching? Just jot down a phrase." And invariably, the answer is collaboration, teamwork, partnership, which sounds really nice. The problem is that's what I call co-teach 1.0, it puts the emphasis on the grownups. And it says, you know, if we like each other, if we get along, then we'll work together in the classroom. Contemporary co-teaching is different. The definition of co-teaching is that it is a service delivery option. It is a mechanism through which students with disabilities receive the special services to which they are entitled. That's a very different starting point. We're starting with looking at what students need, which is where we should start. It also clarifies that two adults in the classroom is not necessarily called co-teaching.

Marilyn Friend (06:07):

If it's two general education teachers, two classroom teachers, which in some places it is, that's usually called team teaching, a little bit different. If it is a teacher and a paraprofessional or a paraeducator, that's called classroom support. Because even when paras are wonderful people and do great work, they are not in the classroom as a peer to the classroom teacher, and it's not appropriate to call it co-teaching. So there are a lot of little ins and outs on this. So it's a service delivery option to people with equivalent licensure, one a specialist, usually a special ed teacher, sometimes a teacher of kids learning English or another specialist. They're pooling their responsibilities, pooling accountability, sharing one physical space to ensure that all students receive their education.

Tim Villegas (07:05):

So you said it's a option, but if it's an option, then it sounds to me that schools don't have to provide this option as a service delivery... As in their service delivery.

Marilyn Friend (07:22):

You're right about that. And what you'll find is that if you go read front to back, first word to last word federal special ed law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. What you'll find is that co-teaching is not mentioned in any way, shape, or form. Pretty much most professionals know there's a continuum of alternative placements: general ed, resource, self-contained, et cetera, et cetera. Sadly, those were written when the law was first implemented, which has been oh, late 1970s for full implementation. So the law is actually a little bit dated. Co-teaching was not part of that. And typically placement was associated with intensity of need. And so there was no mention in federal law. Someone asked me not too long ago, "Well, okay, so it's not in federal law, but what about states?" And so I contacted representatives from a number of large states where I know they are very supportive of co-teaching and it is a recommended practice. And I was told that because federal law doesn't require it, neither do states. And so even if there are guidance documents, and it's encouraged, and state rep/state folks do

professional development, it is not required. And so sadly it does not exist everywhere. And there are still some places that think it is quote unquote "easier" to just take quote unquote "those kids" somewhere else, which is sort of that old fashioned, the way we address student needs is to fix them somewhere else.

Tim Villegas (09:08):

How does co-teaching further the goal of worldwide inclusive practices? We talked about, you know, the law in the United States. But what about worldwide?

Marilyn Friend (09:23):

Co-teaching, when and where it is implemented. And by the way, a little aside, there is considerable interest in a lot of parts of the world related to co-teaching. Just as part of the more general push toward inclusive practices, birth to death, you know, this is just the education version of it. But what you get in terms of inclusiveness are the three educational pieces that have to be in place. First, you get physical integration. It's very hard to be inclusive if there's not simply the physical integration of students. If some students are in a different place, they are not part of the learning community. That's the first part. The second piece is social integration. If students are not in classrooms with their peers, it's very difficult for them to have friendships for them to interact for them to learn appropriate interaction skills if they don't have them. For other students to learn appropriate interaction skills. And so co-teaching creates an opportunity for social integration.

Marilyn Friend (10:29):

Third, and most importantly, it creates an opportunity any place it's done for instructional integration. And it ensures that learning, first of all, that learning is occurring, that it is learning. That is, I'll say this at the risk of offending some people, potentially a little more rigorous because it is what is expected of all students. And it's not something that is shaded by what is going on somewhere else. It is being embedded in the learning opportunities of that classroom with the specialized instruction embedded as well. So that it also reduces the need for students to generalize. Anybody who's ever worked with students with disabilities knows the problem. Something is taught in a separate setting. And then the student is somehow by magic supposed to make it, understand it, and transfer it into a general ed setting. And it doesn't happen. Well, if you think about inclusive education for the educational environment, co-teaching provides all kinds of access plus the rigor and for the U S of course, it also meets LRE requirements. It has a lot of potential. And when implemented, well, it of course accomplishes what's most important, which is spectacular outcomes for students,

Tim Villegas (11:58):

In your opinion, what prevents us from really being a truly inclusive society?

Marilyn Friend (12:08):

I'll try to address that without sounding too much like an academic.

Tim Villegas (12:13):

Okay.

Marilyn Friend (12:15):

I have a fairly strong grounding in social psychology. And so that's my lens. It's not that I think this is the only way to think about the challenges and how come we're not an inclusive society, but it's one way. You know, if you go back to older works like Howard Becker's "Outsiders" dealing with criminals. It's the notion of people, society, not necessarily individuals. Society wants to know who's them to know that they're not us. And there is this rather gigantic systemic need to feel reassured by being able to paint a line between us and them. Now, this applies in a lot of things. Yes, Howard Becker's work started with criminality, but it also has to do with race, it has to do with culture, and it has to do with disability. And until we can figure out ways to tackle that deep need to know, to be reassured by making sure that others are them, not us. I think it's a very, very tough issue. And I think that we do that of course by working on the education system, because the more that we can teach children from the day they enter school that we're one, that it is about diversity. We are not trying to paint lines between groups. I think we'll have some progress, but it's going to be slow. It's been a very long, long, long journey.

Marilyn Friend (14:03):

And I think that's true, not just in the US, I think that's true in a lot of places. And like I said, I know that's not the only way to think about it, but if you think about schools and you think about how people respond to kids, what do we do? We put a label on a student and anyone who's really honest will say, the chances are that one student has a label. It is not inevitable, but close to it, that expectations are different. That there is a percent, not all by any means, but a percent of classroom teachers who will say, "it's the kid, it's not me" and make other comments that really are doing that dividing. Until we're willing to have those critical conversations. And it's pervasive. As a faculty member, once we were talking to the department chairs, I was a department chair. We're talking about diversity. And the comment was all about race. The comments were all about race and culture while I was chair of the department that included special ed. And so I said, you know, this conversation is not complete because you're making decisions and excluding an entire group of individuals who are a rather substantial group of people. And the answer was, well, that's not the same thing. That's not really as important. Woah. Sorry. That's not a very optimistic thing to say, but it's realistic. And I don't think it's that unusual.

Tim Villegas (15:34):

Let's talk a little bit about the models of co-teaching. Cause that's another thing I think that gets misunderstood. Can you talk about, you know, when you think about co-teaching, a lot of people think about one, you know, one teach one assist, right? So could you address that? And then what, what other kinds of co-teaching are there?

Marilyn Friend (15:59):

In co-teaching world, and this has evolved gradually. at the very early stages of co-teaching, the models were not clearly articulated. Since then, they've been clearly articulated and now they are distinguished by frequency of use and variations. So the six basic approaches are one teach one observe, that's one teacher with the kids, the other teacher is gathering data, which is sometimes necessary. Second one is called station teaching. The most common model, although there are many, is students are in three groups, sometimes heterogeneous, sometimes skills. Both teachers are working with kids. There is an independent group. Often technology-based students working on tailored work and the students rotate from group to group, or the teachers go group to group. In the very fundamental model, all the students interact with both the teachers and do the independent work. But again, that one has just zillions of ways to do it. Lots of options.

Marilyn Friend (17:07):

The third approach is called parallel teaching. Students in two groups, sometimes heterogeneous, sometimes skill grouped, but never high half low half. Ooh, that's a recipe for disaster. And the two teachers are doing essentially the same instruction, but perhaps with different materials or at different levels of complexity. They don't switch groups. Two groups, we don't switch. Fourth, alternative teaching. Most students are doing one activity. There was a smaller group pulled to the side for a reason. It could be review. It could be remediation. It could be enrichment. It could be the students who were absent for four days. And so that small group changes. The rules of thumb vary which teacher takes it, vary the purpose of it, vary which students are in it. And then it can be very effective. Fifth approach is called teaming. Teaming is the two teachers together in front of the whole group of students.

Marilyn Friend (18:17):

Last one is one teach one assist. It's the one you mentioned. One teach one assist is where one person, almost always the general educator, is leading the class. The other person is doing what I facetiously call kid whisper and walking around, talking to individual students, trying to keep students focused. Or sometimes people will try to justify it by saying, "Well, we take turns leading. I lead one day, my partner leads the other day." And of course, then I asked the question, "Why are we paying two salaries for that?" But that's maybe a little abrupt. Now, the way this has evolved, that's where we started. And the six approaches, the six structures are still there, but now we distinguish high use, low limited use. High use: stations, that three group rotation, parallel, two groups each of us working, alternative larger group smaller group. All three of those are really critical because both people have active teaching roles.

Marilyn Friend (19:16):

The whole point of this is intentional increased instructional intensity. How about that? The four i's? And we get that by having both people teaching. Limited use. Some people are surprised. Teaming is limited use. Long time ago, and some people were trained this way, they were told that that was the epitome of co-teaching. One brain, two bodies bouncing off of each other. I really do talk with administrators about this, that you can't really pay two salaries to have one lesson delivered. And that the whole purpose of this is kids in groups. And then the other two, one teach on, observe. It's fine. It needs to happen, but it's limited. You know, how much time do we need to do that? More beginning of the year, more with a student with a problem, more with a student on a behavior plan. And one teach one assist in my perfect world it would be under 10% of co-teaching. Even though research still finds that it is most commonly used and least effective.

Marilyn Friend (20:16):

So those are the basics. Now, if we had three days, I would start doing variations on them. And the trick to all of this is to help people understand that we want two people teaching. Rule of thumb is two thirds to three quarters of all co-teaching time should be with students in small groups, because then you get value from both people. Then you have ways to put students in groups to address those special needs. And the more they're in whole group, the less likely that is to happen. That means we have to change some habits. In some places, teachers will say, "Oh, we do the instruction first. Then we put them in groups." And so of course, half the time they never get to the groups because the instruction takes too long. It's also kind of like, okay, so who said you have to do it in that order? Why can't we do the instruction in a small group while the other group does a review or does skill work, specific skill work? We don't have to do a whole group lesson first. That takes some convincing sometimes.

Tim Villegas (21:23):

I wonder if you've ever heard someone say special education teachers should only be teaching special education students.

Marilyn Friend (21:34):

What I really would never want to see is an arrangement where two teachers in a classroom, but someone has said, and this does happen once in a while, the special educator only works with kids with IEP. What a waste, what a travesty, how insulting could we be to students and to teachers? Now I want to say, there's an adult version of this. For the adults, there is something called role reciprocity. Don't you love it. I have a whole vocabulary around all of this. Role Reciprocity says you're the general ed expert and I'm the special ed expert. But as a special ed person, I'm going to learn curriculum from you so that I can help deliver it. As a general ed teacher, you're going to learn some of the specialized techniques from me so that you can help deliver them. So we expect both teachers all in working with everybody in the classroom.

Marilyn Friend (22:26):

Some students will benefit because of the specialized techniques that come there. What's not okay, I'm going one step past your example, is this: Once in a while, you'll hear, co-teachers say, "Oh, Marilyn. We have so many kids with so many problems. We do everything for everybody." Well, if we're doing that, I'm going to put on my little advocate hat, and I'm going to come in and say, well, that's really nice, but this student has this little thing called an IEP. And that means this student is entitled to something that goes beyond what everybody gets. What is that? And there has to be an answer to that because special ed is not doing everything for everybody. There's an indication that the student needs something value added in addition, and it can be worked out. You know, we teach an acronym based strategy to a group of students, any age, slap it on an anchor chart, put it on the wall and point at it. Well for students with IEPs, we break it down and we do systematic instruction across three weeks. We practice it. We memorize it. We apply it incrementally. It can be the same strategy, but it was taught completely differently. Then we're in the clear, but I don't find a lot of people draw those distinctions and people really should be careful because if it's done for everybody, it's not really specially designed instruction.

Tim Villegas (23:50):

Why don't you tell us maybe some, I know you have a large number of books and articles and stuff like that, but is there anything in particular, if someone was listening to this conversation and says, "I would really like to know more, maybe something that Marilyn's written." Can you recommend a book to somebody?

Marilyn Friend (24:12):

Yeah, you don't want the textbooks because they're too expensive for most people. But I do self-publish a book called "Co-Teach" and it is all about co-teaching, it's a teacher-friendly book. It has activities at the end of it. And the place to find the order form for that is coteach.com. No hyphen, no hyphen. Or my email address. I'll give it because everybody knows that it's marilynfriend@marilynfriend.com. It's really hard. And I can send that to you. If you are beyond the basics and you want to know more about the instruction that teachers do, another book that I do is called "Specially Designed Instruction for Co-Teaching" and that the books are complimentary. The first one, all the chapters are about co-teaching except one about instruction. The other book, all the chapters are about instruction, except one on co-teaching. So they're mirror books, depending on the audience. And again, they're both on the order

form. So if people are interested, I'm happy to share that information with them. And that was done because I thought we needed practitioner books, not textbooks, on this topic. Partly because the cost is much less and the language can be a little friendlier and the examples can fit more real people.

Tim Villegas (25:32):

Well, Marilyn Friend, again thank you so much for being on the Think Inclusive Podcast. We appreciate your time.

Marilyn Friend (25:39):

Thank you. It was a pleasure to be here.

Tim Villegas (25:46):

That will do it for this episode of the Think Inclusive Podcast. Subscribe to the Think Inclusive Podcast via Apple podcast, the Anchor app, Spotify, or wherever you listen to podcasts. Have a question or comment? Email us at podcast@thinkinclusive.us. We love to know that you are listening. Thank you to patrons Pamela P, Veronica E, Kathleen T, Mark C, Sara C, Kathy B, and Sonia A for their continued support of the podcast. Like I said at the beginning of the show, this is the last episode of season eight. And next month we will officially be going to two episodes a month with some special bonus episodes and mini series podcasts in the works. So to close out the season of the Think Inclusive podcast, I wanted to bring on Kayla Kingston, MCIE's communication specialist, to tell you what we have in for next season starting in August. Kayla has been working behind the scenes with editing as well as communicating with our podcast guests. Kayla, what are some guests and topics people can look forward to for season nine?

Kayla Kingston (26:58):

Thanks Tim. And hello everyone. I'm usually the one scheduling guests, taking notes during the interviews, and helping Tim edit the podcast. But today, I'm here to tell you all about the fantastic interviews and content we are producing for you starting in August.

Tim Villegas (27:15):

Great. Let's hear it.

Kayla Kingston (27:17):

Well, for our first podcast in August, we have author Eric Garcia who wrote the book "We're Not Broken: Changing the Autism Conversation." It's a unique combination of reporting and memoir where Eric shares stories of his life as an autistic person, as well as interviews with all types of autistic people across America.

Tim Villegas (27:36):

Yeah, that was a fun interview. And I'm gonna really try to fit his list of top five albums into the episode. Music is a huge part of Eric's life and for the titles of his book chapters, he uses song titles. So that's pretty amazing.

Kayla Kingston (27:54):

Yeah, I loved it. And then in September we have another author who happens to be a Think Inclusive alum, Emily Ladau. We interview her about her new book, "Demystifying Disability." I really enjoyed how she uses a conversational style to communicate topics like ableism, disability etiquette, and how to speak out against disability stereotypes in the media.

Tim Villegas (28:17):

Yes. Can't wait for us to publish that one. And in case you're wondering about bonus and mini series episodes at the end of the year, we'll still plan on having another "best of" episode as well as some current event podcasts throughout season nine. What I'm also really excited about is the mini series podcasts that we have in the works right now. There's three of them. One is on critical race theory, another on self-determination for secondary students. And finally, one on the history of inclusive education.

Kayla Kingston (28:50):

Yes, it is definitely going to be a great season.

Tim Villegas (28:54):

Well, thanks, Kayla. Thanks for all your work with editing and producing this season of the podcast. Really appreciate it.

Kayla Kingston (29:01):

No problem.

Tim Villegas (29:03):

All right. This podcast is a production of MCIE, where we envision a society where neighborhood schools welcome all learners and create the foundation for inclusive communities. Learn more at mcie.org. From everyone at MCIE, thanks for your time and attention. And remember: inclusion always works.

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