

The two teachers looked at each other in disbelief. One was a tenured secondary English teacher who had taught for 6 years in this large middle-class, suburban high school. The other was a first year special education teacher who recently received her master's degree. They had been co-teaching a ninth grade English class for 4 months, and although the beginning weeks were a bit overwhelming, they were rather proud of their cooperative and respectful relationship. They had been co-planning, co-grading, and co-teaching, and they were certain the class would go well. The students responded to the co-teachers' combined efforts, and both social and academic progress was noted for all students in the class.

The teachers were looking at their observation reports. The special education and English chairpersons had decided to observe the co-teaching class at the same time. The special education teacher read her report: it was glowing. Her supervisor recognized the adaptations that were made in the materials, saw that she worked with individual students, observed her contribution to the teaching of the mini-lesson, noted the parity she enjoyed with her co-teacher, and acknowledged the acceptance and respect of her students.

The general education teacher held back tears as she read her write-up. How could this be? She had never received an unsatisfactory observation, and prided herself on her competency in the classroom. Her supervisors had repeatedly recognized her skills as a teacher. She read through the comments—her chairperson thought there hadn't been enough time spent developing the content of the lesson and that the student group work detracted from more formal delivery of content. The chair also felt the general education teacher had relinquished too much of her role as content specialist to the special education teacher and noted there was too much interaction between the co-teachers.