

Co-Teaching Across Geography and Supporting Individualized Career & Academic Plans (ICAP)

Creating Opportunities for Rural Students



Executive Summary

Dove Creek High School and Middle School, in Dolores County School District 2, wants to give its students the same opportunities found in large urban districts, but it struggles to attract quality teachers to its rural location that can teach all the subjects of interest to students. To address this, it has paired a local teacher with a virtual teacher to co-teach core classes such as pre-algebra, Algebra I and II, and pre-calculus for students in grades 8-12. As a result, students can now graduate having completed more advanced coursework, better prepared for success in college. In addition, to support students' Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP), the district further leverages supplemental courses supported by Colorado Empowered Learning and delivered by [Colorado Digital Learning Solutions](#). These allow students the opportunity to explore their specific interests, emphasizing the connection between

Stats



Dolores County School
District RE 2



Dove Creek, Colorado



Small Rural PK-12



225 Students

The Idea

Allowing a local teacher to co-teach a course with a virtual teacher in core subject matter areas can ensure that student needs are met in regions where a teacher shortage would otherwise limit student opportunities. Similarly, guidance counselors who might otherwise struggle to find students learning opportunities that support their Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) can leverage supplemental courses with virtual teachers to create these opportunities.

How it Works

Identify a Subject Matter Area: Dove Creek was concerned that its students did not have the basic math skills required by grade level standards and for future success. Broadly, math teachers were too overburdened with planning and grading to help students catch up. As a result, math seemed like an ideal candidate for the co-teaching model, although it certainly could be applied to other areas.

Define the Role of the Virtual Teacher: The virtual teacher from Colorado Digital Learning Solutions delivers the supplemental courses supported by the Colorado Empowered Learning program to ensure that the curriculum aligns with state standards, while providing support on grading, lesson plans, prep work, and tutorials.

Define the Role of the Local Teacher: The teacher in the classroom pulls the lessons and either projects them on the board or has students access them from their computers. The teacher then teaches the materials to the class, addressing areas of confusion based on student needs. The local teacher can focus on strong teaching instead of preparation and grading, differentiating instruction across the class and thus improving the overall quality of learning for students.

Select the Right Teacher: The site coordinator can also continue to serve as a traditional classroom teacher with the support of a paraprofessional, treating the site coordinator role the workload equivalent of one class. To ensure effectiveness in both roles, it is important for the site coordinator's classroom to be near the library, making him or her more accessible to support the para. The site coordinator and the para should talk daily about kids that appear to be struggling, watching their grades, and developing plans to support them. The para can then implement the plans, with the site coordinator checking in with each student roughly twice a week

Coordinate with School Team: the school guidance counselor and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) coordinator both also partner with the site coordinator to identify students that are strong independent learners and would thus thrive in a digital setting as well as opportunities to leverage digital learning for credit recovery.

Customize Support: some students don't need anything from the site coordinator at all. Other students require intensive support, where the site coordinator will print out the grade sheet in sequential order to tell the student what to do and when to do it and/or work with students at

the end of the day to catch up on missed work. Still other students need support somewhere in between. If a course has multiple parts, the site coordinator can help break those parts down for the student, reviewing the first part together.

Leverage the 4-day Week: The 4-day week has also been a learning opportunity around responsibility. Digital course assignments will be due on Fridays and the student is required to plan for this, even though the school is otherwise not open on this day. Those who do not complete their assignments can be recommended for "Friday school." South Routt's library is open 12PM-4PM Fridays and supported by two certified teachers. Students who fall behind in their classes, both digital and traditional, thus have an opportunity to come in and have the support of a teacher to catch up and receive coaching on how to work through the directions provided. The lessons in time management and planning for digital coursework, however, have proven effective: typically only 10% of online students make use of Friday school.

Coordinate with Online Teacher: the online teacher is the expert in the subject matter area, determining the coursework and grading all assignments. The site coordinator handles follow up with students, logging into the digital system each Sunday to check on grades and working with students to figure out why grades are not where they needed to be when that's the case. The site coordinator typically only needs to have an active dialogue with the digital teacher when students have a story for why they have not completed their work that seems implausible. The clear division of responsibilities ensures effective and clear support for students.

Purpose & Impact

Scheduling Flexibility

South Routt has a very tight schedule with one teacher supporting each of science, history, art and physical education. As a result, students often struggle to fit everything they need to take into their schedule - the supplemental courses are a necessary strategy for addressing scheduling conflicts.

Additional Educational Opportunities

Moreover, the catalog available through Colorado Empowered Learning and delivered by Colorado Digital Learning Solutions offers a wide range of courses that the district would be unable to provide - over 100 offerings. For a budget that is the equivalent of half an FTE, the supplemental program makes it possible to schedule 30 kids at any time of day and hour, in a given year, across 18 different classes. It is simply not possible to find one person that could monitor those kids at every hour of the day and is an expert in all of those subjects. South Routt has talked about cutting the digital learning budget on and off over the last 14 years, but in the end, the district cannot get as much fill for the schedule in any other way. While they have not yet put a student in a Mandarin class, they can also feel proud knowing that the option is there for those who want it.

Student Success

And best of all, with the support of Brenda in the site coordinator role, students are excelling in their digital classes. Currently, 25 students are enrolled in the program, and historically over 95% of students received passing grades in their courses. And they are learning important study skills and independent learning techniques that will prepare them for success in college, career, and life.

Lessons Learned

Make sure that you have the time with the kids. It is critical to designate a time and place for digital learning and to supervise students while they are doing it. The site coordinator needs to be involved with students from the beginning. For those new to the site coordinator role, you can use a back door in the system to familiarize yourself with the course content, helping you to identify strategies for supporting students, such as printing out tutorials. As a teacher becomes more experienced as a site coordinator, this will no longer be necessary.

Make sure to obtain commitment from the students. The course has to be meaningful to the students or they will not succeed in it. Strategies such as the commitment contract, the course registration fee, and the required reimbursement for course costs if the student fails the course can all help support this.

About Colorado Empowered Learning

Colorado Empowered Learning is the implementation support program that aims to help educators statewide combine the use of technology with great instructional practices. Program services are delivered by non-profit providers Colorado Digital Learning Solutions and iLearn Collaborative.