



Co-Teach with Confidence

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Either you know a little about co-teach or want to know more? "An accurate and useful definition of co-teaching includes these elements:

- *Co-teaching is a service delivery mechanism.*

Co-teaching exists as a means for providing the specially designed instruction to which students with disabilities are entitled while ensuring access to general curriculum in the least restrictive environment with the provision of supplementary aids and services.

- *Two or more professionals with equivalent licensure and employment status are the participants in co-teaching.*

Co-teaching is based on parity. When paraprofessionals or other adults assist in classrooms, the contribution is valuable, but it is appropriately considered support rather than co-teaching.

- *Co-teachers share instructional responsibility and accountability for a single group of students for whom they both have ownership.*

Both educators contribute to instruction as part of co-teaching. Perhaps the most significant re-conceptualization critical for co-teaching is the notion of a two-teacher classroom--rather than a one-teacher classroom with "help" available from the other teacher.

- *Co-teaching occurs primarily in a shared classroom or workspace.*

Although instructional reasons sometimes exist for physically separating students and teachers, co-teaching usually involves multiple activities occurring in one place. Of course, this implies that co-taught classes tend to be highly interactive places with high levels of student engagement.

- *Co-teachers' specific level of participation may vary based on their skills and the instructional needs of the student group.*

Especially in middle and high school when special educators are co-teaching in subjects in which they have had limited professional preparation, their skill and comfort for contributing to initial instruction may take time to develop. In such situations, care must be taken to by co-teachers to outline roles and responsibilities so that both professionals do have meaningful roles. "

Dr. Marilyn Friend, 2007

A Common Vocabulary: Inclusion, Co-Teaching, Access to the General Curriculum

Although educators use co-teaching and inclusion synonymously, they are actually two very distinct concepts. The following definitions provide a common understanding of terminology.

Inclusion is a belief system that values diversity and fosters a shared responsibility to help all students to reach their potential.

According to Villa and Thousand (2005, p.3) an inclusive belief system requires schools to create and provide “whatever is necessary to ensure that all students have access to meaningful learning. It does not require students to possess any particular set of skills or abilities as a prerequisite to belonging.” In inclusive environments, placement considerations and decisions regarding the delivery of supplementary aids and services are based on student data to assure that the needs of the student are the primary consideration. Highly inclusive schools may offer some services in separate settings. Schools that describe themselves as having “full inclusion” are often referring to where students sit rather than to the beliefs of the educators providing services.

Co-teaching is a “service delivery option, a way to provide students with disabilities or other special needs the special instruction to which they are entitled while ensuring that they can access the general curriculum in the least restrictive environment...[It] is one way that students in inclusive schools may receive their services” (Friend, 2008, pp. 12-13).

During instruction, educators assume different roles as they move between different co-teaching configurations to meet specific learning objectives and student needs efficiently.

Access to the general curriculum is a legal requirement that emphasizes the importance of aligning instructional expectations with enrolled grade level content standards mandated of all students.

For students who are enrolled in Pre-K, content standards are Pre-K Guidelines or the locally adopted Pre-K curriculum; for students enrolled in grades K-12, content standards are Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). In some instances, students with disabilities require modifications and/or accommodations to demonstrate proficiency or to develop foundational skills aligned with the grade-level standards. Access to the general curriculum means more than just being present in a general education setting; it literally means accessing the same curriculum other students access, regardless of disability.

Definition of Co-Teaching Co-teaching is a learning environment in which two or more certified professionals share the responsibility of lesson planning, delivery of instruction, and progress monitoring for all students assigned to their classroom. As a team, these professionals share the same physical classroom space, collaboratively make instructional decisions, and share the responsibility of student accountability (Friend, 2008, p. 4). Co-teachers share a common belief that each partner has a unique expertise and perspective that enriches the learning experience; together they provide opportunities for students to learn from two or more people who may have different ways of thinking or teaching. They work together to achieve common, agreed-upon goals. Paraprofessionals are not included in the definition of co-teaching because their roles are to provide instructional support. The paraprofessional is not accountable for student achievement and is not equal in licensure as certified professionals.

Co-Teaching is NOT • *Teachers teaching alternating subjects;* • *One person teaching while the other makes materials or grades student work;* • *One person teaching a lesson while the others sit, stand, and watch without function or assignment;* • *When one person's ideas determine what or how something should be taught;* or • *One person acting as a tutor.*

Villa, Thousand, and Nevin (2004, p. 2)

Purpose of Co-Teaching Today's classrooms have students with a diverse range of abilities and needs that bring unique challenges to teaching in a standards-based learning environment. Co-teaching brings together two or more certified/ licensed professionals who can use their expertise to design rigorous learning experiences tailored to meet the unique needs of all students.

- For example, general educators may have specific expertise in the areas of curriculum and instruction, classroom management, knowledge of typical students, and instructional pacing.
- Special educators may have additional expertise in the areas of differentiating instruction, monitoring progress, understanding learning processes, and teaching for mastery. Just as students have different learning preferences, teachers have different teaching styles.
- Co-teaching provides students with opportunities to learn in environments that model collaboration, demonstrate respect for different perspectives, and utilize a process for building on each other's strengths to meet a common goal. In effective co-teaching classrooms, teachers model and support these skills to create collaborative learning environments that are results-driven and standards-based.

Six Co-Teaching Approaches Co-teaching can look different from classroom to classroom. As co-teachers compare student needs and abilities to the instructional objective for a particular lesson, they must decide the best way to structure both teaching and learning. Friend and Cook (2010) identify six arrangements that are commonly found in co-teach settings:

One Teaching, One Observing Because student decisions should be based on data, **One Teaching, One Observing** allows one teacher to provide instruction while the other collects data on the students' academic, behavioral, or social skills. This observational data can be used to inform instruction and document student progress. This model allows the teachers to have valuable data to analyze in determining future lessons and teaching strategies.

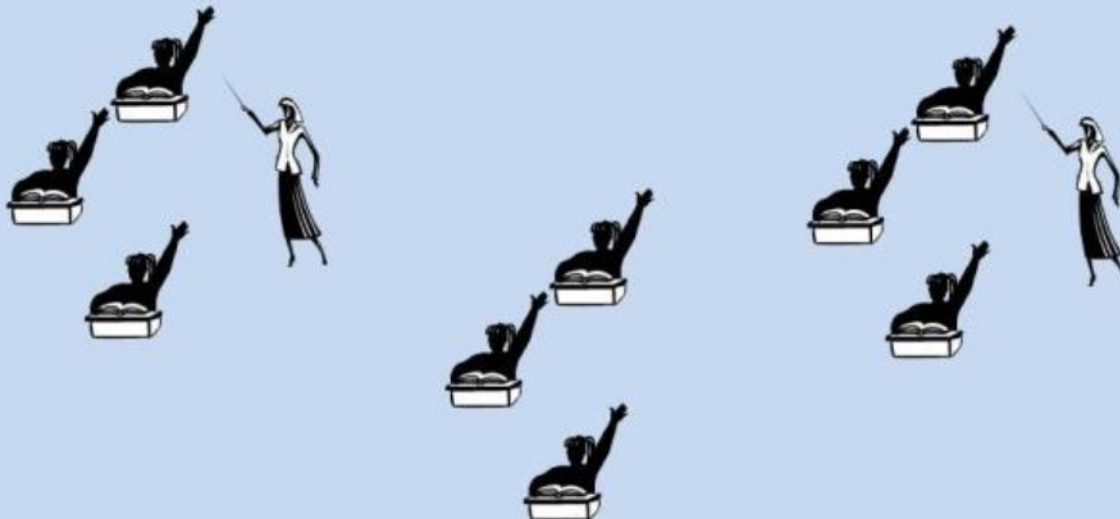


2. Station Teaching

Station Teaching allows teachers to work with small groups. Teachers begin by dividing the content into three segments and grouping students so that one-third of the students begin with each part of the content. Two groups are teacher-led and the third group works independently. During the lesson, the students rotate through the “stations” until they complete all three sections of the content. This approach is beneficial because it allows teachers to create small group activities that are responsive to individual needs.

STATION TEACHING

Teachers plan together and divide the content into segments and teach the concepts in separate stations located around the classroom. The students rotate through station/teachers to get all of the lesson content. Each teacher has a station and you could possibly set up an independent work station if your lesson and class allows.



3. Parallel Teaching

Parallel Teaching provides opportunities for teachers to maximize participation and minimize behavior problems. When teachers use this approach, they divide the class in half and lead instruction with both groups. In this approach, teachers form groups to maximize learning. Student grouping should be flexible and based on students' needs in relation to expectation(s) being taught. Students benefit from working in smaller groups and receiving instruction from only one of the teachers.

PARALLEL TEACHING

The class is divided in half and each teacher teaches the same amount of heterogeneous grouped students. Lesson planning is done jointly and both teachers teach the lesson at the same time. This brings down the student to teacher ratio, but it could get loud, so set your norms ahead of time.



4. Alternative Teaching

Alternative Teaching allows teachers to target the unique needs of a specific group of students by using student data to create an alternative lesson. During instruction, one teacher manages the large group while the other teacher delivers an alternate lesson, or the same lesson with alternate materials or approaches, to a small group of students for a specific instructional purpose.

ALTERNATIVE TEACHING

One teacher has a larger group of students, while the other teacher takes a small group. The small group can be used to preview vocabulary, reteaching, enrichment, or assessment. Important: do not always have the special education teacher take the small group and don't only place special needs students in this group. Make sure there is a good flow and ebb of student need to this grouping.



5. Teaming

Teachers using **Teaming** share the responsibility of leading instruction. While their roles may shift throughout the lesson, the key characteristic is that “both teachers are fully engaged in the delivery of the core instruction” (Friend, 2008).

TEAM TEACHING

Teachers plan together and deliver the content together. One teacher is the lead teacher while the other models, charts, and interacts with the lead teacher to guide the students to deep understanding of the lesson objectives. This requires time, commitment, and trust. Teachers also take turns being the lead teacher based on student need and expertise.



6. One Teaching, One Assisting

One Teaching, One Assisting places one teacher in the lead role while the other functions as a support in the classroom. The teacher in the supportive role monitors student work, addresses behavior issues, manages materials, and assists with student questions. Teachers must use caution when using this approach to avoid a learning environment in which the general educator provides all instruction and the special educator serves as an assistant. According to Friend (2008, p. 17), “professionals should be actively involved in all aspects of the instructional process . . . they should not be functioning like paraprofessionals.” While there may be instances in which this approach may meet an immediate student need, over-use can negatively affect the collaborative benefits that co-teaching provides.

ONE TEACH, ONE ASSIST

One teacher teaches the lesson and the other teacher assists.

This allows for minimal planning, but the “assist teacher” becomes a “glorified assistant” and the kids may not have the same respect for this teacher.



As teachers begin to establish co-teaching relationships, they tend to start with approaches that involve less coordination between team members (i.e., parallel, one assist). Gradually, as co-teaching skills and relationships strengthen, teachers begin to incorporate more approaches based on students' needs and instructional content requirements. The successful implementation of co-teaching requires time, coordination, and trust.



Co-Teaching Lesson Plan

Subject Area: _____

Grade level: _____

Content Standard: _____

Lesson Objective: _____

Essential Questions: _____

Key Vocabulary: _____

Pre-Assessment: _____

Materials: _____

Lesson	Co-teaching Approach (can select more than one)	Time	General Education Teacher	Special Service Provider	Considerations (may include adaptations, differentiation, accommodations, and student-specific needs)
Beginning: (may include: Opening; Warm Up; Review; Anticipatory Set)	<input type="checkbox"/> One Teach, One Support <input type="checkbox"/> Parallel <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative <input type="checkbox"/> Station <input type="checkbox"/> Team				

Co-Teaching

Lesson Plan

Subject Area: English

Grade level: 4th grade

Content Standard: Parts of speech

Lesson Objective: Students will be able to recognize adjectives in context

Essential Questions: What is an adjective?

Key Vocabulary: adjective

Pre-Assessment:

Materials: ball, empty bottle, picture, index card

Lesson	Co-teaching Approach (can select more than one)	Time	General Education Teacher	Special Service Provider	Considerations (may include adaptations, differentiation, accommodation, or student- specific needs).
Beginning: (may include: Opening; Warm Up; Review; Anticipatory Set)	<input type="checkbox"/> One Teach, <input type="checkbox"/> One Support <input type="checkbox"/> Parallel <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative <input type="checkbox"/> Station <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team	9:00-9:20am	<p><u>Teacher 1</u> will write definition and example of adjectives on the board.</p> <p><u>Teacher 1</u> will circulate and put sticky “adjectives” notes on random students</p> <p>Both teachers will select student volunteers to be uses as adjective models.</p>	<p><u>Teacher 2</u> will help describe adjectives with Teacher 1</p> <p><u>Teacher 2</u> will circulate and put sticky notes “adjectives” on random students</p>	<p>Give examples of adjectives on the board.</p> <p>Justin will sit at the front row.</p> <p>Give a copy of adjectives to Victor and Lesley</p>



“The greatest barrier to success is your fear of failure.”
~Sven Goran Eriksson