

Co-Teaching

Fact Sheet

Definition

Co-Teaching is defined as two or more adults simultaneously instructing a heterogeneous group of students in a coordinated fashion.

Why Co-Teaching

As co-teachers - a general and a special education teacher will plan lessons and teach content together to a class of special and general education students. Your co-teaching will support academic diversity in the general classroom and provide all students with access to the county and state curriculum. Co-teaching fosters the following:

- Provides specialized instruction
- Increased options for flexible grouping of students
- Enhanced collaboration opportunities for the teachers
- Another professional to help problem solve
- Flexibility to try things you could not achieve alone
- Collaboration in classroom and lesson preparation
- Sharing of classroom management
- Diversity and size of today's classrooms
 - Reduce student/teacher ratio
 - Increase instructional options for all students
 - Diversity of instructional styles
 - Greater student engagement time
 - Greater student participation levels

Preparing for Co-Teaching

Co-teaching can be a wonderful experience when on-going planning and communication are in place beginning on day one. Here are six helpful steps when preparing for a co-teaching experience.

1. Establish rapport.

The general classroom teacher and the special education teacher need to establish a relationship -- even before the students enter the building. Get to know each other on a personal level. After all you will be together the entire year. What things do you have in common?

When the two of you have a comfortable relationship and rapport with each other, the children feel more comfortable in the classroom. Students can sense tension as well as harmony within the learning environment. A positive relationship will help minimize misunderstandings and motivate you to resolve problems before they escalate.

2. Identify your teaching styles and use them to create a cohesive classroom.

Are you a hands-on teacher who loves doing experiments and using manipulatives? Does your co-teacher use the textbooks first and then supplement with experiments and manipulatives? How do you manage behaviors? What are your discipline styles?

Instructional and discipline styles are just two factors you need to examine so that you can combine the best of both teachers' styles to create a cohesive classroom. Find a balance that makes everyone comfortable.

When planning lessons together, you can use your two styles to complement one another and thus enhance the lessons and the delivery of instruction. Creating a cohesive classroom with consistent expectations occurs when both teachers are on the same page with instruction and discipline styles.

3. Discuss strengths and weaknesses.

How can you utilize each instructor's strengths and weaknesses? A good way to do this is to have each of you make a list of strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes. Then take the lists, compare them and highlight the strengths that are dominant for one teacher and allow that person to be the lead teacher in those areas. By using these strengths, you can differentiate your instruction to meet the needs of a larger group allowing for individualized instruction.

4. Discuss Individualized Education Program and regular education goals.

To create Individualized Education Program (IEPs), the special educator must involve the general educator in the special education process. Students in special education belong to both educators, so the general educator must be informed about the IEP for each child. Otherwise, the two teachers cannot effectively execute the plans. It's difficult to educate a child if you are unaware of his or her special needs. It is important to discuss the modifications and accommodations as well as the goals and objectives to ensure student success in the classroom. The special and general education teacher can work together in meeting the student's goals and ensuring adequate progress.

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In the same way, the general education teacher should discuss with the special education teacher his or her goals for the students, as the general education students belong to the special education teacher as well. Both educators should be addressing the goals, objectives, and mandatory curriculum for that grade level.

5. Formulate a plan of action and act as a unified team.

You have to make decisions constantly throughout the year, so if you formulate a plan of action in the beginning of the year, disruptions will be minimal. Consider the following items in your plan of action:

- Scheduling
- Expected classroom behaviors
- Classroom procedures, such as class work, homework policies and turning in work
- Consequences of not following rules and procedures
- Grading
- Communication between home and school

Talk about what you will tolerate as well as how you will respond to actions that are not acceptable. Be consistent when dealing with parents, and meet as a team for conferences. Determine your roles in advance so that you do not contradict each other or foster misunderstandings during the meeting.

6. Take risks and grow.

A wonderful aspect of co-teaching is that it allows you to take risks, learn from each other, and grow as professionals. Co-teaching provides a safety net when you take risks in your instruction. When you try something new and it doesn't work, you have another teacher in the room who can step in with another technique or lesson that works, or point out the area of difficulty, or assist in redirecting the lesson. When you are the only teacher in the room and a lesson fails, you often have to stop and move on and then analyze later why the lesson fell apart -- without the assistance of someone else in the room observing the lesson.

What Co-Teaching is NOT:

- Simply dividing the tasks and responsibilities among two people.
- For example, co-teaching is NOT:
 - One person teaching one subject followed by another who teaches a different subject
 - One person teaching one subject while another person prepares instructional

- materials at the copier or corrects student papers in the teachers' lounge
- One person teaching while the other sits and watches
- When one person's ideas prevail regarding what will be taught and how it will be taught
- Someone is simply assigned to act as a tutor or assistant

Co-Teaching is a way:

- To build stronger connections between teachers and students
- To provide both support and professional development for cooperating teachers
- To better meet PreK-12 student needs
- For teachers to enhance their communication and collaboration skills
- For teachers to build strong relationships

Types of Co-Teaching

Lead and Support

One teacher leads and another offers assistance and support to individuals or small groups. In this role, planning must occur by both teachers, but typically one teacher plans for the lesson content, while the other does specific planning for students' individual learning or behavioral needs.

Adapting Model

Teacher A leads, while Teacher B wanders the room, providing adaptations as needed.

Station Teaching

Students are divided into heterogeneous groups and work at classroom stations with each teacher. Then, in the middle of the period or the next day, the students switch to the other station. In this model, both teachers individually develop the content of their stations.

Parallel Teaching

Teachers jointly plan instruction, but each may deliver it to half the class or small groups. This type of model typically requires joint planning time to ensure that as teachers work in their separate groups, they are delivering content in the same way.

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Alternative Teaching/Complementary Instruction

One teacher works with a small group of students to pre-teach, re-teach, supplement, or enrich instruction, while the other teacher instructs the large group. In this type of co-teaching, more planning time is needed to ensure that the logistics of pre-teaching or re-teaching can be completed; also, the teachers must have similar content knowledge for one teacher to take a group and re-teach or pre-teach.

Team Teaching/Duet

Both teachers share the planning and instruction of students in a coordinated fashion. In this type of joint planning time, equal knowledge of the content, a shared philosophy, and commitment to all students in the class are critical. Many times teams may not start with this type of format, but over time they can effectively move to this type of co-teaching, if they have continuity in working together.

Speak and Add/Chart

Teacher A leads and Teacher B adds visually or verbally.

Learning Style

Teachers plan lessons and divide responsibilities by learning modalities. Teacher A might plan a visual and auditory component, while Teacher B plans tactile/kinesthetic component.

Skills Group

Teachers divide students into more homogeneous subgroups and provide leveled instruction.

Documentation of Co-Teaching

Co-teaching services are documented on the IEP as special education services (Direct) in the general education environment (GEE) for a specified amount of time. The time is the length of the class period or the length of time the special education teacher is in the co-taught class.

The information developed from the following resources:

National Education Association

<http://www.nea.org/tools/6-steps-to-successful-co-teaching>

University of Kansas

<http://www.specialconnections.ku.edu/?q=collaboration/co-operative-teaching/teacher-tools/types-of-co-teaching>

St. Cloud State University

<http://www.stcloudstate.edu/soe/tqe/coteaching/>

Anne M. Beninghof

www.ideasforeducators.com

anne@ideasforeducators.com

WVDE Office of Special Programs

<http://static.k12.wv.us/teachiep/documents/Services%209/FAQ%20-%20Services.pdf>

B. Special Education Services	Direct/ Indirect (D or I)	Location of Services Gen. Ed =GEE Sp. Ed. =SEE	Extent Frequency per	Initiation Date m/d/y	Duration
ELA (Co-taught)	D	GEE	200 minutes per week	1/26/17	1/18
Reading Comprehension (Soc. St.)	D	SEE	200 minutes per week	1/26/17	1/18