


Understanding Co-Teaching

Learning Partners Symposium
February 10th, 2009





“Two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single physical space.”


Cook & Friend, in Murawski & Swanson (2001)

Co-Teaching is...

- Simultaneous instruction, with a heterogeneous group of students
- Done with two or more teachers (adults)
- Instruction within the same physical space
- Done in a coordinated fashion
 - needs to be pre-planned
 - involved collaboration
 - not just showing up, in-class support

Co-Teaching is...

- A vehicle for school communities to move from feelings of isolation to feelings of community and collaboration
- A method to meet the diverse needs of all students in the same classroom
- Service delivery model based on the philosophy of inclusion
- Supports collaborative practice among professionals



“Co-teaching arrangements ... are one promising option for meeting the learning needs of the many students who once spent a large part of the school day with special educators in separate classrooms.”

Friend (2007)

Defining Co-Teaching...

Handout 1

Co-Teaching: What it IS, What it is NOT

Elements of Co-Teaching	What Co-Teaching IS	What Co-Teaching is NOT
Two or more professionals	Involves at least two credentialed professionals—indicating that co-teachers are peers having equivalent credentials and thus can truly be partners in the instructional effort. The general education curriculum provides the instructional framework, with the flexibility of it being modifiable for students who require it (Fennick, 2001).	Does not involve a teacher and a classroom volunteer or paraprofessional, many of whom have not had the professional preparation to co-teach nor have they been expected to serve the role as co-teacher. This is not to say that paraprofessionals do not have important classroom roles—they just should not be asked to fulfill responsibilities of certified staff (Friend & Cook, 2003).
Joint delivery of instruction	Means both professionals coordinate and deliver substantive instruction and have active roles. Co-teachers should work to ensure that their instructional strategies engage all students in ways that are not possible when only one teacher is present (Austin, 2001; Gately & Gately, 2001).	Does not mean that two adults are merely present in a classroom at the same time. It also does not mean that the general educator plans and delivers all of the lessons while the special educator circulates. Co-teaching does not involve taking turns lecturing to the whole group (Murawski, 2002).
Diverse group of students	Allows teachers to respond effectively to diverse needs of students, lowers the teacher–student ratio, and expands the professional expertise that can be applied to student needs (Hourcade & Bauwens, 2001).	Does not include separating or grouping students with special needs in one part of the classroom or along the fringes, even if these practices are well-intentioned (Friend & Cook, 2003).
Shared classroom space	Features co-teachers instructing in the same physical space. Although small groups of students may occasionally be taken to a separate location for a specific purpose and limited time, co-teaching should generally take place in a single environment—separating it from the practice of regrouping for pullout programs (Friend & Cook, 2003).	Does not include teaching teams that plan together and then group and instruct students in separate classrooms (Trump, 1966; Geen, 1985).

Why Co-Teaching?

- Model promotes general principles of inclusion
- More parent satisfaction
- Builds and maintains positive relationships
- Often, fewer referrals for special education services
- Teachers and students are able to benefit
 - an effective practice to support all students

Student Benefits


- Children with exceptionalities have access to general education curriculum
- Reduces stigma often associated with “pull-out” model
- Promotes positive self-esteem
- Helps build stronger peer relations
- Actually increases individualized instruction
- Enhances academic performance

Teacher Benefits

- Provides opportunity for professional growth
- Reduction in student-teacher ratio
- Forum to share knowledge, skills and resources with peers
- Teachers in a resource role have more opportunity to increase understanding of the general curriculum and classroom expectations

Teacher Benefits

- Builds repertoire as to how to adapt curriculum and/or modify the level of instruction to meet needs of students
- Promotes collaborative practice between teachers
- Can increase communication between classroom teachers and teachers in a resource role




“The biggest challenge for educators is in deciding to share the role that has traditionally been individual: to share the goals, decisions, classroom instruction, responsibility for students, assessment of student learning, problem solving, and classroom management. The teachers must begin to think of it as our class.”

Ripley, in Cramer (2006)

General Challenges

- Lack of planning and organization
- Planning time together
- Relationship factors
- Administrative support
- Continuous investment of time
- Fear of change
- Poor communication
- Definition of roles/following roles



“One size does not fit all. Although co-teaching seems to be a promising practice, this does not mean that every student can have his/her educational needs met this way.”

Kohler-Evans (2006)

Co-Teaching....Preparing and Planning



How to Make a Change

- Provide purpose and structure
- Create baseline and plan for scaffold change
- Provide a visual map to guide discussion
- Keep discussions objective
- Allow many issues to be put on the table for consideration

Preparing to Co-Teach...Questions to Ask Yourself

Handout 3

Preparing to Co-Teach

Actions	Questions to Ask Yourself or Others
Assess the current environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of collaboration currently exists between general and special education? • Has there been any discussion of inclusion, collaboration, or co-teaching? • How do teachers react when they hear about students with special needs in general education classes? Who reacts favorably?
Move in slowly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is our joint understanding of co-teaching as a service delivery model? • May I co-teach a lesson with you? • Are there any areas that you feel less strongly about, in which I might be able to assist?
Involve the administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the district addressing the least restrictive environment (LRE) mandate and the inclusive movement? • Would our school site be willing to be proactive by including co-teaching? • What discipline areas will we target first? • How will we ensure that support is provided across all content areas, including electives? • Would we be able to count on administrative support, especially with co-planning time and scheduling assistance?
Get to know your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could we complete a co-teaching checklist to help guide us in discussing our personal and professional preferences? • Are there any pet peeves or issues that I should know prior to us working together? • Do we both have similar levels of expertise about the curriculum and instructing students with disabilities? • How shall we ensure that we are both actively involved and neither feels over- or underutilized? • What feedback structure can we create to assist in our regular communications?
Create a workable schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often will co-teaching occur (daily, a few times a week, for a specific unit, etc.)? • What schedule would best meet the needs of the class and both teachers? • How can we ensure that this schedule will be maintained consistently so that both co-teachers can trust it? • How will we maintain communication between co-taught sessions?

S.H.A.R.E tool

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Teaching Style Inventory

Handout 9

Teaching Style Inventory

This inventory is designed to gauge your teaching preferences and styles. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Below, you will find 12 items, each of which contains four statements about ways you might respond in your teaching, through the way you might behave, think or feel. Rank the four statements to reflect how well they describe the way you teach. Occasionally you may feel that none describe you or all describe you. In these instances you should force yourself to rank the statements in the best manner possible in order to get an accurate picture of your particular styles.

Please rank the statement that best describes your response with a 4. The next best statement should receive a 3, the next a 2, and finally the least descriptive statement should receive a 1.

1. When I teach my class, I would be most likely to:

- A. Include students' life experiences or preexisting knowledge when I introduce a concept
- B. Incorporate reading assignments that provide the background for each concept introduced
- C. Require students to learn by doing creative problem solving exercises, lab activities, and projects
- D. Engage students in problems that are outside the realm of possibility to force them to think creatively

2. When I teach my class, I would be most likely to:

- A. Suggest that students collaborate on their assignments rather than compete.
- B. Instill the relevant facts and procedures. When students cannot pass the state exam or do not have the prerequisite knowledge from my class to the next one they take, I have failed as a teacher.
- C. Assign a wide variety of tasks that facilitate learning for understanding, even though this sometimes takes longer than originally planned.
- D. Cultivate scholarship and independent thinking/reasoning skills by providing optional assignments that can be done outside of class.

3. When I teach my class, I would be most likely to:

- A. Tie concepts to applications in the real world
- B. Institute a regularly scheduled time for skill building where students practice their use of problem solving
- C. Guide students in their desire to invent new methods for solving problems and/or representing data
- D. Introduce students to the possibility that for some problems there is no right answer

Making it Work...

- Communication is key – discuss:
 - what you hope to accomplish through co-teaching
 - review teaching styles
 - how you see working together
 - how you will handle discipline problems
 - how you will handle paperwork, communication with parents, report cards, parent-teacher communication

Wagaman (2008)

Making it Work...

- Common planning times
 - important to find a common planning time
 - important to plan together – input on lessons, activities and time frame
 - discuss any problems observed among the students
 - changes that might need to be made to an IEP

Wagaman (2008)

Making it Work...

- Constructive criticism
 - consistent and continuous evaluation of strengths and areas needing improvement
 - observe each other, offer and accept constructive criticism to improve teaching abilities
 - constructive criticism should not be communicated in a negative matter
 - should be communicated in a matter directly enabling student success

Wagaman (2008)

Making it Work...

- Setting realistic expectations
 - effective collaboration requires more than two educators with good intentions
 - must examine and evaluate the models by their effectiveness vis-à-vis student learning
 - careful to focus on how the students are learning

Lawton (1999)



A Quick Word About Assessment...

Assessment & Evaluation

- Co-teaching provides an effective way to strengthen the instruction–assessment link:
 - discuss grading before it becomes an issue
 - consider a variety of assessment options
 - offer menus of assignments
 - share the assessment and evaluation load and align assessment and evaluation styles

Murawski & Dieker (2004)

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Co-Teaching Models



Different Models of Co-Teaching

- Lead and Support
- Duet
- Speak and Add/Chart
- Skills Group
- Station Teaching
- Learning Style
- Parallel Teaching
- Adapting
- Complementary Instruction

Lead and Support Model

Teacher A

- *Is always the classroom teacher*
- *Primarily responsible for planning a unit of instruction*

Teacher B

- *Is the teacher in a resource role*
- *Shares in delivery, monitoring and evaluation*

Duet Model

Teacher A and Teacher B

- *Both teachers plan and design the instruction*
- *Teachers take turns delivering various components of the lesson*



Speak and Add/Chart Model

Teacher A

- *Primary responsibility for designing and delivering*

Teacher B

- *Adds and expands with questions, rephrasing, anecdotes*
- *Records key information on charts, transparencies, screen or board*

Skills Group Model

Teacher A and Teacher B

- *Students are divided into 2-4 groups based on instructional need*
- *Each teacher takes primary responsibility for half the class*
- *Teachers may switch groups occasionally*



Station Teaching Model

Teacher A

- *Responsibility for overall instruction*

Teacher B

- *Teaches small specific skills students have not mastered*

Learning Style Model

Teacher A and Teacher B

- *Both teachers share in the design and delivery of instruction*
- *One teacher is primarily responsible for auditory and visual instruction*
- *One teacher is primarily responsible for tactile and kinesthetic instruction*

Parallel Teaching Model

Teacher A and Teacher B

- *Both teachers plan and design*
- *Class split into two groups*
- *Each teacher takes a group for the entire lesson*

Adapting Model

Teacher A

- *Responsible for planning and delivering a unit of instruction*

Teacher B

- *Determines and provides adaptations for students who are struggling*

Complementary Instruction Model

Teacher A

- *Responsible for delivering core content*

Teacher B

- *Responsible for delivering related instruction in areas of study and survival skills*

Stages to Co-Teaching

- Beginning Stage
- Compromising Stage
- Collaborative Stage

Collaboration Stage is the Goal

- Physical arrangement
- Familiarity with curriculum
- Curriculum goals and modification to level of instruction
- Instructional presentation
- Classroom management
- Assessment



Progress Through The Stages

Example: Instructional Presentation

- **Beginning Stage**
 - teachers often present separate lessons
 - one teacher is “boss”; one is “helper”
- **Compromising Stage**
 - both teachers direct some of the activities in the classroom
 - special educators offers mini-lessons or clarifies strategies that students may use

Gately & Gately (2001)

Progress Through The Stages

Example: Instructional Presentation

- Collaborative Stage
 - both teachers participate in the presentation of the lesson, provide instruction and structure the learning activities
 - the “chalk” passes freely
 - students address questions and discuss concerns with both teachers

Gately & Gately (2001)

Collaboration Won't Just Happen...

- Deliberate
- Structured
- Systematic
- Ongoing

Steele, Bell, & George (2005)

Progress Through The Three Stages

Handout 12


Tracking Our Progress Through the Three Stages

Date:	Current Stage (Beginning/Compromising/ Collaborative)	Strengths	Areas of Challenge
Physical Arrangement			
Familiarity With Curriculum			
Curriculum Goals and Modifications			
Instructional Presentation			
Classroom Management			
Assessment			

The final word...


think about it...





“The practice of co-teaching has the potential to be a wonderful strategy for meeting the needs of all students. Working in partnership with another teacher, bouncing ideas off of one another, planning and orchestrating the perfect lesson, having two pair of eyes and four hands, creating something that is better than that which each partner brings ...what better way to teach?”

Kohler-Evans (2006)



“If the goal is for all students to be fully included in the mainstream of school life, then co-teaching is a strategy that should be considered. . . . Co-taught classrooms foster an atmosphere where diversity is accepted as having a positive impact on all students, where labels are avoided, and where everyone is thought of as a unique individual with gifts and needs.”

Mitchell (2005)

Co-Teaching Resources

- A Guide to Co-Teaching: Practical Tips for Facilitating Student Learning (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2004)
- The Co-Teaching Manual (Basson & McCoy, 2007)
- Co-Teaching Lesson Planning Book (Dieker, 2007)
- Guidebook for the Magiera-Simmons Quality Indicator Model of Co-Teaching (Magiera & Simmons, 2005)
- www.education.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=190,211,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=3777

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