Co-Teaching:
Principles,
Practices,
and
Pragmatics

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Co-Teaching: Principles, Practices, and Pragmatics

Overview

The *No Child Left Behind Act* and the reauthorization of federal special education legislation have brought increased pressure for educators. School reformers have set higher standards and teachers are responsible for ensuring that students meet them. Students with disabilities and other special needs generally are expected to achieve the same success as other learners, and so there is an increased emphasis on educating them in general education settings. And all educators are finding that an increasing number of students come to school with any of a variety of problems that make them learners at-risk. Among the many ideas and options for meeting these diverse yet somehow related challenges, one that is receiving widespread attention, is co-teaching.
The purpose of this workshop is to provide both an overview of co-teaching as well as detailed information about planning, implementing, and evaluating *co-* teaching programs. Participants will have the opportunity to explore both the conceptual and the operational aspects of this innovative approach to service delivery as well as learning other collaborative skills that can help co-teachers succeed in teaching ALL students.

Objectives

At the conclusion of this workshop participants will be able to

1.   Define co-teaching and distinguish it from terms such as collaboration, team teaching, and inclusion.

2.   Relate co-teaching to current trends toward collaboration in public schools, both in general education and in special education.

3.   Provide a rationale, supported by philosophy, research, and recent legislation for implementing co-teaching.

4.   Discuss critical components of a teacher's model for co-teaching.

5. Describe a process and activities for teachers to analyze their readiness to co-teach.

6. Identify and discuss with the collaborative aspects of co-teaching.

7. Outline school and district factors that influence co-teaching effectiveness.

8. Describe at least six different types of co-teaching arrangements, and determine situations for which each is appropriate and inappropriate.

9. Identify key topics to that should be addressed with co-teachers prior to co-teaching.

10. Describe strategies for addressing pragmatic issues related to co-teaching (e.g., scheduling, planning time, assignment of students to classes, amount of co-teaching).

Cook & Friend (2004)

The Basics of Co-Teaching

During this part of the workshop you will learn...

1.   The definition and characteristics of co-teaching.
2.   The roles that para-educators and others play in co-teaching.
3.   Co-teaching's relation to other school inclusive practices.
4.   The rationale for including co-teaching as part of students' programs and services.
5.   A five-part model for effective co-teaching and its importance for co-teaching.

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Co-Teaching as a Service Delivery Option

DEFINITION

- Two (or more) educators or other certified staff

- Contract to share instructional responsibility

- For a single group of students

- Primarily in a single classroom or workspace

- For specific content (objectives)

- With mutual ownership, pooled resources, and joint accountability

- Although each individual's level of participation may vary.

Cook & Friend (2004)

What Co-Teaching Is Not

In the rapidly evolving world of special services and supports for students, terminology often becomes an issue. For clarification, these are some terms often used in confusion with co-teaching:

- Collaboration

  Although it is generally preferred that co-teaching be collaborative, it might or might not be. *Collaboration* generally refers to how individuals interact, not the activity they're doing. Thus, any activity—including co-teaching, and problem solving, consultation--may or may not be collaborative. This topic will come up again later in the workshop.

- Team teaching

  The term *team teaching* is often used to describe the situation in which two general education teachers combine classes and share instruction. In an elementary school, this might occur when two fourth grade teachers decide to open the portable that divides their rooms and teach the entire group as one. In a secondary school, this might occur when an English teacher and a history teacher combine two classes to present an American studies course. Co-teaching is different from this type of team teaching in two important ways: First, in co-teaching the teacher-student ratio is drastically improved. Second, in co-teaching, two significantly different orientations toward teaching are blended. Finally, team teaching in the middle school literature often refers to a process for planning interdisciplinary instruction, but not sharing instructional delivery.

- Inclusion

  Although co-teaching is integral to the inclusive practices in many schools, it is not a requirement for inclusion to occur. *Inclusion* refers to a broad belief system or philosophy embracing the notion that all students should be welcomed members of a learning community, that all students are part of their classrooms even if their abilities differ.

Rationale for Co-Teaching

Why would the staff at a school decide to use co-teaching as a service delivery option? Here are some of the reasons experienced co-teachers provide:

1. Co-teaching is one way to deliver services to students with disabilities or other special needs as part of a philosophy of inclusive practices. As a result, it shares many benefits with other inclusion strategies, including a reduction in stigma for students with special needs, an increased understanding and respect for students with special needs on the part of other students, and the development of a sense of heterogeneously-based classroom community.

2. In co-taught classrooms, ALL students can receive improved instruction. This includes students who are academically gifted or talented, students who have average ability, students who are at-risk for school failure as well as students with identified special needs.

3. In co-teaching, the instructional fragmentation that often occurs in other service delivery options is minimized. Students benefit by not having to leave the classroom to receive services. At the same time, the special service provider or other co-teacher has a better understanding of the curriculum being addressed in the classroom and the expectations for both academics and behavior.

4. Co-teachers often report that one of the most noticeable advantages of sharing a classroom is the sense of support it fosters. Co-teachers report that when they have a spectacular lesson, someone is there to share it, and when they have a particularly challenging day, someone really knows just how difficult it was.

5. And……

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Taking a Moment.........

We've just completed a segment of workshop material that may have a direct impact on co-teaching at your school or your plans to create or revise co-teaching as a service delivery system. This page is included in your packet to enable you to spend a few minutes capturing critical information that you want to take back to your school to share with others.

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a.

b.

c.

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e.

2. Based on the information most critical to you, what points do you wish to remember to take back to school to share with others?

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A Teacher's Model for Co-Teaching

I.   **THE CORNERSTONE: A PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS**

The members of successful co-teaching teams share several common beliefs that constitute a philosophy or a system of principles that guide their practice.

II.   **INDIVIDUAL PREREQUISITES**

Individual teachers voluntarily bring certain characteristics, knowledge, and skills to the co-teaching situation.

A.   Co-teachers have personal characteristics that enable them to work effectively with another adult.
B.   Co-teachers have sets of common knowledge and skills.
C.   Co-teachers have discipline-specific knowledge and skills.
D.   Co-teaching is voluntary.

III.   **THE PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP**

Co-teachers have unique professional relationships.

A.   The professional relationship is built on parity, communication, respect, and trust.
B.   Co-teachers make a commitment to building and maintaining their professional relationship.

IV.   **CLASSROOM DYNAMICS**

The interactions in a co-taught classroom are unique to this teaching arrangement.

A.   Co-teachers clearly define classroom roles and responsibilities.
B.   Co-teachers' instructional interactions reflect their professional relationship.
C.   Co-teachers successfully maintain the instructional flow of the whole class by providing support to individual students.
D.   The curriculum in co-taught classes explicitly addresses academic, developmental, compensatory, and life skills and reflects the needs of students in the class.
E.   Co-teachers monitor their efforts.

V.   **EXTERNAL SUPPORTS**

External support facilitates successful co-teaching.

A.   Administrators support co-teaching
B.   Appropriate professional development activities enhance co-teaching.

Based on Adams, L., Cessna, K., & Friend, M. (1993). Effectiveness indicators of collaboration in special education/general education co-teaching: Final report. Denver: Colorado Department of Education.

Co-Teaching in the Big Picture

In most schools, co-teaching cannot exist alone as the means through which inclusive practices are implemented. Instead, co-teaching should be one out of a wide variety of service delivery systems that provide supports to students with special needs. These are some of the other service delivery options that need to exist:

- Consultation

  In consultation, professionals skilled in working with students with special needs meet on a regular basis with teachers to problem solve. A school psychologist, behavior specialist, speech-language therapist, or special education teacher might serve as a consultant. By meeting to identify a problem, systematically developing an intervention, gathering data , and judging the intervention's effectiveness, teachers and consultants can maximize student learning.

- Teaming

  Grade-level elementary teams (or primary -intermediate teams), middle school teams, and interdisciplinary or department high school teams meet regularly to discuss curriculum and problem solve about students. Special educators and other support providers can join these teams to help create strategies and interventions as well as to address issues related to curricular adaptations. This helps to make communication more consistent and more efficient.

- Informal problem solving

  Teachers in inclusive schools often need to meet one-to-one to proactively or reactively problem solve regarding students they share. For example, a classroom teacher and a special education teachers might meet to discuss whether a student with an IEP who has violated a school rule should receive special consideration or be excluded from the upcoming field trip.

- Instruction in a separate setting

  Although the goal in an inclusive school is for most instruction to occur in general education settings, occasionally student needs indicate this is not appropriate. Examples of situations in which instruction in a separate setting might be indicated include a student needing physical therapy that cannot be integrated into classroom routines, a student who needs highly specialized articulation therapy, and a student not learning as expected so that diagnostic teaching is needed.

- Collegial staff development

  A hallmark of inclusive schools is the sense that there is always new information that can help teachers better address student needs. If teachers and administrators attend workshops, classes, or other staff development opportunities, they share what they have learned with colleagues. Topics might include instructional techniques, approaches for responding to student behavior, and strategies for promoting staff collegiality.

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Co-Teaching Approaches

During this part of the workshop you will learn...

1. Guidelines for selecting an approach for co-teaching.
2. Six specific approaches for structuring a co-taught class.
3. Suggestions for making each co-teaching approach maximally effective.
4. Lesson plan ideas for each co-teaching approach.

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Basis for Selecting a Co-Teaching Approach

Co-teaching is most effective when the approaches used are deliberately selected. Here are four factors to weigh in selecting a co-teaching approach:

1.   **Student characteristics and needs**.

      The first considerations in thinking about co-teaching approaches are student characteristics and needs. For example, if students tend to become disruptive during transitions, an approach should be selected that minimizes transitions. Conversely, if students need extra motivation, an approach with frequent changes might be preferred.

2.   **Teacher characteristics and needs**.

      Co-teaching will be different in different classrooms and at different times of the school year based on teacher characteristics and needs. For example, if co-teachers vary significantly in their teaching styles, it might be best to select approaches that enable them to teach independently. Alternatively, if co-teachers work easily together, a more shared approach might be appropriate.

3.   **Curriculum, including content and instructional strategies.**

      The content to be taught and the instructional strategies that are most effective for addressing the content are additional considerations in selecting co-teaching approaches. Highly structured content and procedures, such as teaching steps in a process, would require one approach while less structured content, such as a discussion of ideas, would suggest another approach.

4.   **Pragmatic considerations**.

      The preference for co-teaching approaches should also be tempered by the pragmatics of the setting. For example, in an open school, noise is a consideration in selecting an approach. In a crowded classroom, an approach not particularly dependent on space might be the best choice.

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Co-teaching Approaches

1.   **One Teach, One Observe.** One of the advantages in co-teaching is that more detailed observation of students engaged in the learning process can occur. With this approach, for example, co-teachers can decide in advance what types of specific observational information to gather during instruction and can agree on a system for gathering the data. Afterward, the teachers should analyze the information together.

2.   **One Teach, One Drift.** In a second approach to co-teaching, one person would keep primary responsibility for teaching while the other professional circulated through the room providing unobtrusive assistance to students as needed.

3.   **Parallel Teaching.** On occasion, student learning would be greatly facilitated if they just had more supervision by the teacher or more opportunity to respond. In parallel teaching, the teachers are both teaching the same information, but they divide the class group and do so simultaneously.

4.   **Station Teaching.** In this co-teaching approach, teachers divide content and students. Each teacher then teachers the content to one group and subsequently repeats the instruction for the other group. If appropriate, a third "station" could require that students work independently.

5.   **Alternative Teaching:** In most class groups, occasions arise in which several students need specialized attention. In alternative teaching, one teacher takes responsibility for the large group while the other works with a smaller group.

6.   **Team Teaching:** In team teaching, both teachers are delivering the same instruction at the same time. Some teachers refer to this as having "one brain in two bodies." Others call it "tag team teaching." Most co-teachers consider this approach the most complex but satisfying way to co-teach, but the approach that is most dependent on teachers' styles.

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1.   One Teach, One Observe

One of the advantages in co-teaching is that more detailed observation of students engaged in the learning process can occur. When one teaches and one observes during co-teaching, the teachers should decide in advance what types of information are to be gathered during the observation and should agree on a system for gathering the data. Afterward, the teachers should analyze the information together. That is, observation should be a deliberate part of the lesson, not just teachers' incidental checks of student activity.

WHEN TO USE

- In new co-teaching situations
- When questions arise about students
- To check student progress
- To compare target students to others in class

AMOUNT OF PLANNING

- Low

SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

- Which students initiate conversations in cooperative groups?
- Which students begin/do not being work promptly?
- Is Anne's inattentive behavior less, about the same, or greater than that of other students in the class?
- What does James do when he is confused during an assignment?

OTHER COMMENTS

- If you use blank NCR form or carbon paper, you can make two copies of your data at once--and share immediately.
- Once you're experienced co-teachers with a mutual sense of comfort, observation of each other can serve as a form of coaching.

2. One Teach, One Drift

In some cases, the most effective use of two adults in one classroom is to have one person keep primary responsibility for teaching while the other circulates through the room providing unobtrusive assistance to students as needed. Although this approach to co-teaching has value, it is also often over-used, possibly because it makes few demands for change on the part of the teachers.

WHEN TO USE

- When the lesson lends itself to delivery by one teacher
- When one teacher has particular expertise for the lesson
- In new co-teaching situations--to get to know each other
- In lessons stressing a process in which student work needs close monitoring

AMOUNT OF PLANNING

- Low

SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

- "This is my absolute favorite lesson to teach. Am I wrong to want to teach it myself?"
- How well do the students understand the steps to follow in long division?
- Are all students following as they learn how to take notes?
- "I've never taught geometry or worked with this teacher. I need to get a sense of the flow of the class."

OTHER COMMENTS

- This approach is not particularly useful to help focus student attention. Instead, it has the risk of distracting students during large-group instruction.
- Each teacher should have the opportunity to lead instruction and drift if this approach is used.

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3. Parallel Teaching

On occasion, student learning would be greatly facilitated if they just had more supervision by the teacher or more opportunity to respond. In parallel teaching, co-teachers are both teaching the same information, but they divide the class group and conduct the lesson simultaneously.

WHEN TO USE

- When a lower adult-student ratio is needed to improve instructional efficiency
- To foster student participation in discussions
- For activities such as drill and practice, re-teaching, and test review

AMOUNT OF PLANNING

- Medium

SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

- More students would have a chance to share their alternative ending to the story if they are split into two groups.
- If each teacher took a group of students and presented environmental issues--one from the point of view of business and industry and one from the point of view of environmentalists--the class could later have a spiritedly discussion on the topic.
- Student use of the science materials could be more closely monitored if the group is divided in half.

OTHER COMMENTS

- This approach gives each teacher an active--but separate-- instructional role in the classroom.
- Any topic with multiple dimensions can be presented using this approach if the groups are then brought back together for discussion.
- Students can be strategically placed in the two groups.

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4.   Station Teaching

In station teaching, teachers divide content and students. Students rotate from one teacher to another and also to an independent station so that each teacher repeats instruction three times and each student accesses both teachers and the independent station. If appropriate, the third station could be set up to require that students work in pairs instead of independently.

WHEN TO USE

- When content is complex but not hierarchical
- In lessons in which part of planned instruction is review
- When several topics comprise instruction

AMOUNT OF PLANNING

- Medium

SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

- During language arts instruction when one station will address comprehension of a recently-read piece of literature, one station will focus on editing of a writing assignment, and one station will consist of an activity related to a skill being taught.
- In social studies to examine the geography, economy, and culture of a region or country.
- In math, to teach a new process while reviewing applications of other concepts already presented.

OTHER COMMENTS

- Variations of station teacher, carried out across two days, are sometimes more appropriate in secondary settings with traditional class periods.
- If students cannot work independently, two groups can be formed. If a student teacher is available, four groups might be arranged.

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5.   Alternative Teaching

In most class groups, situations arise in which a small group needs to work with one teacher while the larger group works with the other teacher. In alternative teaching, the large group completes the planned lesson while the small group either completes an alternative lesson or the same lesson taught at a different level or for a different purpose. This arrangement might take an entire class period, or it might be used for just a few minutes at the beginning or end of a lesson.

WHEN TO USE

- In situations where students' mastery of concepts taught or about to be taught varies tremendously
- When extremely high levels of mastery are expected for all students
- When enrichment is desired
- When some students are working in a parallel curriculum

AMOUNT OF PLANNING

- High

SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

- The large group completes a practice exercise related to the concepts just taught; the small group receives additional direct instruction
- The large group checks homework; the small group is pre-taught vocabulary related to the day's lesson
- The large group is working on projects in small groups; the small group is being assessed. All students will be assessed across two days.

OTHER COMMENTS

- For this approach to be successful, the purpose for the small group and its membership should vary.

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6.   Team Teaching

In team teaching, both teachers are delivering the same instruction at the same time. This implies that each speaks freely during large-group instruction and moves among all the students in the class. Instruction becomes a conversation, not turn-taking.

WHEN TO USE

- When two heads are better than one or experience is comparable
- During a lesson in which instructional conversation is appropriate
- In co-teaching situations in which the teachers have considerable experience and a high sense of comfort
- When a goal of instruction is to demonstrate some type of interaction to students

AMOUNT OF PLANNING

- High

SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

- In science, one teacher explains the experiment while the other demonstrates using the necessary materials.
- In social studies, the teachers debate U.S. foreign policy issues.
- In language arts or English, the teachers act out a scene from a piece of literature.
- As the steps in a math process are taught, one explains while the other does a "Think Aloud" activity.
- One teacher talks while the other demonstrates note-taking on the board or an overhead projector.

OTHER COMMENTS

- This co-teaching approach is affected more than any other by individuals' teaching styles.
- This is the most interpersonally complex co-teaching approach.

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The Pragmatics of Co-Teaching

During this part of the workshop you will learn...

1. Classroom issues that effective co-teachers discuss and clarify.
2. Ideas for deciding how much co-teaching should occur and who should be involved.
3. Strategies for creating co-teaching schedules.

TOPICS FOR CO-TEACHERS TO DISCUSS

1. Instructional content and expectations for students.

2. Planning, including time to do it and who does which part.

3. Instructional format, including who will do which part of the instructional delivery.

4. Parity, or how it will be clear that both educators have the same status in the classroom.

5. Space, related to both students and teachers.

6. Noise and each educator's tolerance for it.

7. Instructional routines.

8. Organizational routines.

9. The definition of "help."

10. Discipline procedures for the classroom.

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11.   Safety matters (e.g., for students with hearing impairments).

12.   Feedback, including when and how to discuss issues with each other.

13.   Student evaluation, including grading.

14.   Teaching chores such as grading, duplicating, assignment preparation, and so on.

15.   Responsibilities and procedures for substitutes.

16.   Confidentiality.

17.   Pet peeves.

18.   Other _____

       _____

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Parity, Parity, Parity

How do you and your co-teaching partner convey to students that your teaching relationship is truly collaborative, that it is a partnership based on parity? The following checklist might help you to think through ideas about how you, your teaching partner, and students can observe parity or its absence! NOTE: Do keep in mind that how many of the following parity signals pertain to your situation depends on many factors.

Already Do	Should Do	Not Applicable		
_____	_____	_____	1.	Both teachers' names on board.
_____	_____	_____	2.	Both teachers' names on report cards.
_____	_____	_____	3.	Both teachers' handwriting on student assignments.
_____	_____	_____	4.	Both teachers with space for personal belongings.
_____	_____	_____	5.	Both teachers with adult-size furniture.
_____	_____	_____	6.	Both teachers with a lead role in the classroom.
_____	_____	_____	7.	Both teachers talk during instruction.
_____	_____	_____	8.	Both teachers give directions or permission without checking with the other teacher.
_____	_____	_____	9.	Both teachers work with all students.
_____	_____	_____	10.	Both teachers are considered teachers by the students.

Finding Time for Collaboration

Most professionals express concern about the time needed to form collaborative working relationships with their colleagues, particularly for activities such as co-teaching. They also worry about setting realistic expectations regarding time for collaboration. Although there is no secret to enable you to make more minutes in the day, these are some of the ways--some for elementary settings and some for secondary settings--professionals are making the most of the time they do have available:

1.   Have two classes team to release one teacher (e.g., two fourth grades, a third grade and a fifth grade).

2.   Use other adults to help cover classes--including principals, assistant principals, counselors, social workers, volunteers, paraprofessionals, psychologists, and supervisors. Of course, be sure to follow local policies on who can supervise groups of students.

3.   Find funds for substitute teachers--some sources include grants from your state or local foundations, parent-teacher organizations, and disability advocacy groups.

4.   Find "volunteer" substitutes--retired teachers, members of social or civic organizations, teacher trainees from local universities

5.   Use instructionally relevant videotapes or other programs supervised by part of the staff to release the other part of the staff for planning.

6.   When school-based staff development sessions are scheduled, arrange for them to begin late or conclude early with the saved time being used to collaboration.

7. Experiment with a late arrival or early dismissal day. This time can occur once per week, once per month, or once per grading period. Typically, the school day is lengthened and the additional minutes are "banked" to provide the release. The time thus created must be used in working with colleagues. It is not additional individual preparation time nor is it time to be spent on large-group, formal meetings.

8. Stay late after school once per month, but make it enjoyable by bringing snacks, flowers, music, or other pleasant "atmosphere" items. If you bring walking shoes, you can accomplish both exercise and collaboration!

9. Treat collaboration as the equivalent of school committee responsibilities, especially if you are operating a pilot program. Time that others in school spend in committee meetings is spent working collaboratively.

10. In elementary schools, divide labor for instruction to save time. That is, have each teacher take the lead for preparing materials for different lessons, making enough copies for all involved.

11. Reduce other work to have time to meet--for example, have students correct each others' work or create self-correcting materials.

12. For special educators, reserve time in the daily schedule that is not obligated to specific responsibilities. Use this time flexibly with lunch, planning, and other time to meet with teachers.

How Many Students with Special Needs
Should Be in a Co-Taught Class?

One very common question concerning co-taught classes concerns the proportion of students with IEPs or other special needs assigned to such classes. Although is no single right answer to the question of how many students, here are a few ideas to keep in mind:

- In an elementary school or a small secondary school, all students with disabilities are sometimes grouped into a single section, classroom, or team. Terms such as "inclusion class," "inclusion classroom" or "inclusion team" might even be used. Generally, it is inappropriate to group students with disabilities in this manner, unless student needs are very mild and behavior is not a problem.

- In some schools, a decision is made that everyone should participate in the education of students with special needs. In these schools, the approach used is "one for you, one for you, one for you," with students being distributed equally across classes or sections. This approach has a tremendous risk of making it virtually impossible for special service providers to adequately address or even monitor student needs.

- One effective strategy for distributing students is to have teachers at a grade level or on a team, or the special education teachers assign students based on their knowledge of the students and their classmates.

- In secondary schools, it sometimes happens that co-taught classes receive a disproportionately high number of students at-risk, the logic being that with two teachers these students will have a better educational experience. The problem with this approach is that it may result in a *de facto* segregated class being formed, one that looks very similar to a traditional special education class. Students do not have positive role models when this occurs, and the philosophy of inclusive practices is undermined.

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- Professional common sense is the most logical way to make decisions about the number of students with disabilities or other special needs to place in a co-taught class. If a student with a moderate or severe disability is enrolled, the class should not also have several students with significant behavior challenges. If several students with learning disabilities are similar in need, it might be best if they are placed in the same location so that services can more readily be delivered.

- In addition to students with disabilities, students at-risk also should be considered in determining class composition. Just a few students with significantly higher needs than other students can affect the learning standards. The goal is to maintain the standard for most learners while making needed accommodations for students who need them.

- Yet another consideration in assigning students for co-taught classes concerns students receiving assistance through other programs. For example, in elementary schools a number of students may be enrolled in a reading program or an ESL program. Generally, students should not be grouped into classes on the basis of services received. However, the number and intensity of all services in a classroom is a factor to review when assigning students.

- In middle schools and high schools, assigning students sometimes becomes problematic because schedules are built by computer. Few teachers report that the computer scheduling is adequate. Two alternatives exist: Either teachers (usually the special education staff) can schedule students by hand prior to computer scheduling, or they can modify students' schedules after the computer has generated them. In most cases, when the latter system is employed students needing in-class assistance who are assigned singly in a class are re-assigned to a co-taught class.

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How Much Co-Teaching Should One Special Service Provider Do?

Special service providers, including special education teachers, school psychologists, social workers, counselors, occupational therapists, speech/language therapists, and reading specialists, sometimes wonder what a reasonable amount of co-teaching is. They ask how many different classrooms they should be expected to support through co-teaching. Here are a few ideas related to this topic:

- If co-teaching is a new service delivery option, it is better to implement it on a small scale--even in a single classroom setting--rather than to attempt a broad-based initial program. Co-teaching typically requires the educators involved to re-visit and re-think some of the most essential beliefs they have about teaching and learning. Expecting this to occur throughout a school or even in several classrooms at the outset is not realistic.

- Experiences co-teachers report that they are able to truly co-teach in four-to-six classrooms at any one time. If they need to provide services in additional classrooms, co-teaching is not used. Instead, some type of more limited support (for example, working just with certain students) is provided in some classrooms.

- In an inclusive school, all special service providers should have opportunities to co-teach, even teachers or others who are in so-called "self-contained" settings. Staff members, with administrative support, should identify times for this type of co-teaching to occur. It might be for a limited amount of time each week, or it might be for a limited part of the school year.

- Amount of co-teaching is strongly affected by other role responsibilities. A school psychologist with significant responsibility for assessing students and preparing reports clearly cannot spend large period of time co-teaching. Special education teachers with large caseloads or responsibilities for other meetings likewise will be limited in their availability for co-teaching.

Cook & Friend (2004)

Should Co-Teaching Be Voluntary Only?

Even experienced co-teachers indicate that co-teaching should only occur if both individuals participate willingly. Although this idea has intuitive appeal, the matter is somewhat more complicated. Here are a few questions to consider:

- At what stage of development is your co-teaching program?

  In new programs, it is understandable to use volunteers. The professionals who take the risks to develop the program and work out the various challenges that will occur should be those who do so willingly.

- On what basis are decisions made about who will co-teach?

  A teacher who is reluctant to work with a colleague may have valid reasons. For example, a teacher who is very near to retirement might simply be too close to exiting his or her profession to undertake this significantly different approach to instruction. However, if a teacher does not want to participate because of not wanting to work with certain students or not wanting to share instruction, a serious problem exists.

- What about student needs?

  Co-teaching should be arranged when students need this rather intensive, in-class service delivery option. If it is based on student need, care should be taken that teacher preferences are kept in an appropriate perspective.

- What are the other options?

  If a teacher does not want to co-teach, what happens? In some elementary schools, principals have moved teachers to different grade levels because of the need to establish co-teaching at their original level. In high schools, some teachers have lost preferred schedules because of the need to have co-teaching during certain class periods in certain subjects.

Friend & Cook (2004)

Taking a Moment………

We've just completed a segment of workshop material that may have a direct impact on co-teaching at your school or your plans to create or revise co-teaching as a service delivery system. This page is included in your packet to enable you to spend a few minutes capturing critical information that you want to take back to your school to share with others.

1. What are the five most important points that have been made during the just-completed segment of the workshop?

    a.

    b.

    c.

    d.

    e.

2. Based on the information most critical to you, what points do you wish to remember to take back to school to share with others?

    a.

    b.

    c.

    d.

    e.

4. What are the questions or concerns you have (for the workshop group or colleagues at school) you have at this time?

Cook & Friend (2004)