

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR CO-TEACHING

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR COOPERATIVE TEACHING

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### **Abstract**

Many schools have been faced with the challenge of meeting the needs of its diverse learners. Many districts have turned to co-teaching as the answer to the question of how to meet the needs of all students. The review of the literature follows the history of special education from self-contained all the way to inclusion, touching on the laws that have been passed to help assure that each student is guaranteed access to the least restrictive environment possible. Co-teaching is shown as an effective approach to meet the needs of the students. Five approaches have been thoroughly explained and then a full and complete professional development program has been designed to be implemented in a rural school district in western New York.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	4
Methodology.....	16
Professional Development Project for Co-Teaching.....	22
Discussion.....	50
References.....	55
Appendix	

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this project is to design a professional development program on co-teaching for elementary teachers responsible for teaching general education and special education students in a rural school. Co-teaching is a very important piece to the puzzle of success for many special education students. As an elementary teacher I have been expected to co-teach every year for the past five years. Like many, I have had both good and bad experiences when it comes to co-teaching. There are many contributing factors when it comes to how successful a co-teaching model will be. In my opinion, both teachers need to take responsibility for the students' learning. It is not just the special education teacher's responsibility to tend to the special education students. Both teachers are responsible for all the students. Also, to be successful both teachers need to have adequate planning time together. Without collaboration one educator may not be prepared, which will lead to failure. In addition, each teacher needs to be open minded and accepting of new ways to teach. Both new and veteran teachers can be apprehensive when it comes to co-teaching. Veteran teachers like to think that their way is best while new, inexperienced teachers tend to take the role of monitor where they quickly become merely an on-looker. In my experience many special education teachers would rather break off with a small group and work only with the special education students. By doing this they fail to see the positive outcomes that could come with heterogeneous grouping of the students. I believe that if from the start expectations are made clear and specific roles are assigned, many of these issues will be eliminated.

Using a method of co-teaching in an elementary classroom has become widely practiced. Due to new mandates for documentable achievement by all students, many

schools have turned to inclusion to better meet the needs of their special education population. As schools have adopted co-teaching, it has left many teachers unsure and unaware of the exact expectations. In many situations teachers have very little support or training when it comes to co-teaching. Teachers who work together are left to figure it out and decide what will be the plan of action. In most cases teachers are paired by administrators and just told that this is intended to be a co-teaching model of instruction. Often, no literature or training is provided.

Students who experience and are taught within a co-teaching model have the potential to benefit immensely when this model is properly implemented. Special education students have the benefit of multiple learning opportunities within a co-teaching model. Tobin (2005) states, “there are five basic models as described by Vaughn, Schuman, and Arguelles (1997) one teach-one assist, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and teaming”(p.756-786). Depending on the model that is chosen for the specific lesson, varying amounts of preparation is required. Gately and Gately (2001), describe this beginning stage as developmental “in which communication is often guarded and classroom teachers tread more slowly to determine role expectations”(p.42). Once barriers are broken down and expectations are clear the doors are open for many more opportunities. In an audio recording a teacher who was participating in a co-teaching study states, “I do not think that the success will be achieved in a class where the teachers have no plan. Teachers should know what to do so that they can enter into this class and teach the lesson”(Gurgur & Uzuner, 2010, p.317). Each teacher needs to be prepared on a daily basis in order for students to benefit from a co-teaching experience.

The lack of a clear plan for educators to follow is a problem in many districts. Teachers need proper professional development when it comes to co-teaching. They should be aware of the many different models available. Teachers have this idea of a co-teaching model where it has to be the general education teacher doing the teaching and the special education teacher monitoring and tending only to the special education students. In reality there are many different options available as noted above. Making these models successful and available is an integral part of co-teaching. Co-teaching is affecting more and more schools as the push for inclusion and a least restrictive environment increases. The push to include students with disabilities is an ever occurring issue in many settings.

Nevertheless as efforts to include students who have disabilities in general education have increased and have become institutionalized under multiple reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the practice of co-teaching continues to be implemented in schools. It provides a means for special education and general education teachers to support one another in their common goal of providing a high-quality education to all of their students in the shared setting of general education classroom. (Pugach & Winn, 2001, p.44)

A high quality education needs to be the goal of both administration and teachers. Because of such programs like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and now Race to the Top (RTT), everyone needs to be working towards the same goal. Teachers and administrators need to be working toward the goal of giving all students an opportunity to learn in the least restrictive environment.

By implementing co-teaching schools are raising the chances of having struggling students succeed. Not only will students have the benefit of learning from two different teaching styles, but they can also receive the extra support they need. By placing special education students back in the general education classroom, there is much more opportunity for student growth through, socializing, scaffolding, and grouping. There is a strong push for co-teaching in the schools and with that comes the need for proper professional development and training.

In the attached professional development plan for co-teachers teachers and administrators are presented with a plan to implement co-teaching into the classroom. The main problem with implementation is that teachers are not given the necessary training to be successful with co-teaching. In this plan, administrators are also provided with materials to observe and monitor co-teaching. This professional development plan goes step by step through the five models of co-teaching providing follow up and support for educators and administrators. The following literature review begins with the history of special education and follows the chronology of development of the practice of co-teaching.

## **Literature Review**

### **History of Special Education**

Special education has not always been as structured as it is known for in today's school. "Prior to legislation requiring public education for children with cognitive or emotional disabilities, deafness, blindness or the need for speech therapy, among others, parents had few options other than to educate their children at home or pay for expensive

private education” (Special Education News p.1,2009). The working middle class could not afford a private education and the lower class was not able to adequately educate their children at home. Parents began to grow more and more frustrated with the public school system’s unwillingness to reach out to their special education children. Parents began to form advocacy groups. The goal of these groups was to cast light onto the educational needs of children with disabilities. The history of special education can be followed chronologically through many critical events. In 1950 the National Association for Retarded Citizens (NARC) was founded. Several factors can be held responsible for the establishment of NARC. One being, widespread exclusion from school of children with IQ’s below 50. The second, long waiting lists for admission to residential institutions and the conditions in many state institutions.

In the 1950’s and 1960’s, the Federal government, with the strong support and advocacy of family associations, such as The NARC, began to develop and validate practices for children with disabilities and their families. These practices, in turn laid the foundation for implementing effective programs and services of early intervention and special education in states and localities across the country (Twenty five years of progress p. 3,2007).

Although these two events had an impact on the education of children with disabilities, it was not quite enough. Landmark court cases such as, *Brown V. the Board of Education* (1954), *PARC V. Commonwealth* (1972) and *Mills V. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972), made it so states were held responsible for educating children with disabilities. *Brown V. Board* stated that “the right to education was a right that must be

provided to all on equal terms”(Critical Events in the History of Special Education p.2 2010). PARC V. Commonwealth contested a state law that specifically allowed public schools to deny services to children who have not attained a mental age of five years at the time they would ordinarily enroll in first grade. The state agreed to provide access to free public education to children with mental retardation up to the age of 21. In Mills v. Board of Education the U.S. district court ruled, that school districts were constitutionally prohibited from deciding that they had inadequate resources to serve children with disabilities because the equal protection clause of the fourteenth amendment. These court cases paved the way for new and better legislation. The courts took the position that children with disabilities have an equal right to access education as their non-disabled peers. All of these advocacy groups gained huge support from John F. Kennedy. Since he had a mentally retarded sister he supported new legislation for educating the students with special needs.

“Both enacted in 1975, two federal laws would change this: the education for all Handicapped Children Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Act” (Special Education News p.1). These two laws set the stage for some major changes in special education. IDEA states that any school that accepts federal funding must provide special education to qualifying children with disabilities. Austin (2001), believes that since the mid 70’s there has been a shift in special education due to laws that came out of the court cases.

Since 1975 public schools have moved from a position recognizing that students with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education with adequate support services to one in which the placement of such

students supercedes the concerns about the quality and type of service provided.

Early in the 1980's Public Law\_94-142 required programs and services for children ages 3-21. P.L. 94-142 was a precursor to IDEA. This was the law that established individualized education plans (IEP) and the concept of least restrictive environment (LRE). From the 1980's on there have been amendments added to IDEA to better support children with disabilities.

Throughout our nation's history, special education has gone through many changes. The definition of what special education is has also changed. The United States Department of Education (1999), defines special education through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as, "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities, a record of such an impairment, and being regarded as having such an impairment"(p. 4, 2012).

The New York State Department of Education defines special education as,

Specially designed individualized or group instruction or special services or programs, and special transportation, provided at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. Such instruction includes but is not limited to that conducted in classrooms, homes, hospitals, institutions and in other settings. Such instruction includes specially designed instruction in physical education, including adapted physical education. (p.3)

For the purpose of this paper, special education will be defined as "specially designed instruction that meets the unique needs of an exceptional child" (Algozzine,

Algozzine, Marsink, 1988, p.259). Because the definition of special education is so broad many things can fit into the category. Special education is not specific to placement, instruction, or number of children per adult. The focus of this literature review will be on “specially designed instruction.” Methods of co-teaching are all specially designed to help children with disabilities. “Many professionals suggest that students with learning or other disabilities are better and more efficiently served in regular education classrooms with the support of special education personnel”(Harbort, Gunter, Hull, Brown, Venn, Wiley, & Wiley, 2007, p.13).

There are many teaching techniques involved in special education; in order for a school system to decide which one is best a variety of ideas must be evaluated. Each student is unique and performs differently in different environments. All students can equally benefit from a wide array of teaching techniques not just special education students.

For years many believed that students with special needs belonged in self-contained classrooms. More recently the move toward inclusion has hit the mainstream. “A concern in recent decades has not been whether teachers have used specific forms of instruction and not others but whether students even had access to the educational opportunities afforded to all other students” (Jackson, Ryndak, & Wehmeyer, 2009, p. 175). As far back as 1978 mainstreaming was mentioned. In the early stages, mainstreaming was thought of as just placing the special education students into regular classrooms and leaving them to try and keep up. That very well may have been the case, but as time went on and the push for a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) continued, the advocacy and teaching methods also did.

With the help of advocacy groups the acceptance, support, and knowledge of the benefits for inclusion have become more apparent to educators. This is evidenced by Jackson, Ryndak, & Wehmeyer (2009), who state, “Our results further support the view that inclusive education, defined in terms of general education contexts and age- and grade level curriculum content, can provide benefit to students with extensive support needs” (p.190). The advocates for inclusion could see where special education was headed.

The beginnings of co-teaching can be traced as far back as the 1950’s. Many parents and educators were questioning the best practices of school systems. “Educators in the United States and other developed countries were questioning traditional school structures and procedures and their efficiency and effectiveness” (Hanslovsky, Moyer, & Wagner, 1969). Because of the questioning taking place the talk of new procedures in the classroom began to happen. The practice of isolating the children with disabilities into a separate environment was seen as not effective. Educators were starting to realize that these students could benefit greatly by being in a general education classroom. One of the first models of co-teaching was based on effectiveness and efficiency. A teacher who was focused on a certain topic would lead a lecture to a large group of students, both special education and general education students. Since this was based on effectiveness and efficiency, delivering a lecture one time versus four was better. The next step involved breaking the students into smaller groups and following up with extension activities led by remaining teachers. This version is much different than what we would typically see in today’s classroom, but it shows the roots of the co-teaching model.

**Inclusion becomes the main focus.** Stainback, Stainback & Bunch state, “Educating all students in regular education.... is simply the morally and ethically right thing to do. Segregation has no justification. It is simply unfair and morally wrong to segregate any students, including those defined as disabled, from the mainstream of regular education class” (Dorn, Fuchs, Fuchs., 1996, p. 16) . This statement suggests that all students both special education and general would benefit from a regular education classroom. It is both morally and ethically wrong to deny students the benefit of inclusion and segregating students based on their special needs and disabilities is wrong.

On the argument for segregation Dorn et al (1996) express concern regarding the ability of general education teachers to address the needs of special education students. They state, “in particular, full inclusionists express unrealistic optimism about the ability and willingness of regular classroom teachers to accommodate a much greater diversity of students” (Dorn et al., 1996, p.16). Having regular classroom teachers on board is not always the easiest thing. Teachers are often overwhelmed with the duties they already have. Having special education students in their class can add an unwanted stress. Differentiated instruction can sound overwhelming to many teachers who are not familiar with it although, many teachers do this everyday. Arguably, every child in a regular education class is not the same and teachers do things to help to reach all of the students in their classes. Grouping students heterogeneously can be a very successful strategy in an inclusion classroom and can benefit all students involved.

### **The shift from self-contained classrooms to LRE**

Although, not an entirely new concept of education. New York State’s (2012) definition is as follows,

Least restrictive environment means that placement of students with disabilities in special classes, separate schools or other removal from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that even with the use of supplementary aids and services, education cannot be satisfactorily achieved.

By placing students in the LRE schools are providing the student(s) the special education that is needed by the student while providing an education to the maximum extent possible to the student and the other non-disabled students. “Instead, educators have developed a new version of an old concept-the assumption that an essential quality inheres in place in that, we believe they-as well as those who advocate the separation of students on a categorical basis-are in error”(Dorn, et al., 1996, p.17). Dorn and colleagues express that in years past the argument for separation is not justifiable. For years educators have believed LRE is the best choice for educating exceptional students.

There are many benefits to educating exceptional students with general education students. Students are granted the opportunity to learn from one another through different grouping strategies and scaffolding. Also, in cases of co-teaching there is another teacher in the room to offer to support to the students. Some models suggest that the extra teacher in the room not discriminate between general education students and special education students and teach all the students. All students would gain additional advantages to a LRE.

Overall the push for eliminating self-contained and heading toward a LRE for students has come a long way. Schools have embraced the idea of keeping students in an inclusive setting unless the student is unable to achieve academically in the classroom.

There have been many shifts in education, especially in special education. The move from a self-contained environment to a LRE has brought about many changes and new ideas like cooperative teaching. “Renewed and increased emphasis on educating students in the least restrictive environment, embodied in the most recent reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 ” (Friend, Cook, Chamberlain, and Shamberger, 2010). Schools have been searching for a way to meet the needs of every child through the most recent reauthorization and co-teaching seems to be the most effective way, but effectively implementing the technique presents all new challenges to many professionals. There is a lack of knowledge throughout the professional teaching field when it comes to cooperative teaching and thus calls for the need for professional development in this area.

Friend et al. (2010) define co-teaching as,

“Co-teaching may be defined as the partnering of a general education teacher and a special education teacher or another specialist for the purpose of jointly delivering instruction to a diverse group of students, including those with disabilities or other needs, in a general education setting and in a way that flexibly and deliberately meets their learning needs (p.11).

Throughout the special education literature most professionals define co-teaching in relatively the same way. The use of the word specialist is not to be mistaken for teacher’s aide. The specific design of co-teaching is to be carried out by trained teachers. Hepner and Newman (2010) define co-teaching as “an educational model that provides support to students with learning disabilities and also provides opportunities for high-performing

students to be academically challenged” (p.67). Having students in a LRE would challenge them. Since the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act there has been a high interest in co-teaching. Friend et al. (2010) found,

Interest in co-teaching has intensified considerably. One key factor contributing to this interest is the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, including the requirements that all students, including those with disabilities, access the general curriculum; be taught by highly qualified teachers; and be included in professionals’ accountability for achievement outcomes.

The authorization of NCLB brought on many changes for schools. No longer could students with disabilities be placed in a separate classroom for the entire school day. Teachers now have to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all their students. One major obstacle was getting teachers to effectively work together in the same classroom to benefit the needs of the students. Another definitional component that is important “specifies that the educators deliver substantive instruction. They (special education teachers) do not supervise a study hall, support a single student, and monitor students who are listening to a guest speaker, or assist in delivering instructional add-ons that are related only marginally to the curriculum of the general education classroom” (Cook & Friend, 1995, p.2-3).

**In order for co-teaching to be effective** there are certain guidelines that must be followed and maintained throughout the duration of the co-teaching relationship. Many educators enter into co-teaching with different expectations about what their exact role is. Many educators place a huge emphasis on teacher compatibility. Pugach & Winn (2011)

found that, “personal compatibility, as well as volunteering, was central to the success of co-teaching” (p.39). This is not surprising. One tip for co-teaching is to “build professional relationships and create opportunities for teachers to discuss their strengths and weaknesses” (Friend, 2007, p. 51.). The more characteristics they have in common when it comes to educating students the higher the likelihood of success.

Another piece to co-teaching being effective is when both teachers know and understand their responsibilities within the chosen model of co-teaching. Each model presents itself with different responsibilities for both teachers. The special education teacher is not to be seen as a helper. This often happens because there is a lack of content knowledge among special education teachers. This problem could easily be addressed with proper amounts of planning time. If teachers were allotted proper planning time it could help to reduce the issue of limited planning time. “As in conventional marriage, skipping the time to develop a strong relationship may lead to communication problems and misunderstandings, as well as ending the relationship” (Sileo, 2011, p.32). This is an important point. When teachers are thrown together with no prior experience of working together and do not spend adequate time getting to know one another and how each run her classrooms, things can go bad very quickly. Realizing one another’s goals and objectives is key. This relationship can only be formed through the use of proper common planning time. Sileo (2011) recommends that “teachers should first discuss their philosophy of education, specifically how they feel about teaching together in an inclusive classroom”(p34). By having this discussion both teachers are able to understand one another and the other’s ideas about education. Conderman (2011) states,

“Co-teachers need to use the approach that best matches the instructional objective and the teachers’ area of expertise, and each teacher should experience both the lead and passive instructional roles” (p.27). This all falls under having the adequate amount of planning time. During planning crucial decisions are made about technique, roles, responsibilities, student grouping, assessments, etc.. When a co-teaching team lacks proper planning time lessons fall short and in turn only hurt the students. Clear objectives and student learning outcomes must be maintained throughout the entire relationship.

**There are five methods of co-teaching.** Hepner and Newman (2010) explain all five models: One teach-one assist, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and team teaching. One teach, one assist is just like it sounds “one member of the team teaches while the other assists” (Hepner & Newman 2010, p.68). Usually the content specialist teaches while the special education teacher assists her with any number things in the classroom. The second method is station teaching, which is “Often used when teaching complex topics. In this model co-teachers develop three learning activities related to the learning goal. Two of the activities are led by the co-teachers and the third activity is designed to be completed individually or in pairs” (Hepner & Newman 2010, p.69). The next model is parallel teaching. Parallel teaching reduces the student to teacher ratio. “This method encourages participation, allows for increased peer interaction, or promotes hands-on activities. In parallel teaching both teachers teach the same lesson to half the class” (Hepner & Newman 2010, p. 69). The fourth method is known as alternative teaching. This model works very well in classes with a wide range of abilities. Alternative teaching is a great way to introduce vocabulary, re-teach

concepts, provide small group instruction on writing etc.. The fifth model is team teaching or teaming. “Team teaching requires a significant amount of planning and trust and is very effective. In team teaching, teachers may lead a discussion together, each adding their input and asking questions as they come up” (Hepner & Newman 2010, p.69-70). In all five models there is a need for training and planning. Without proper training none of these models would be effective in the classroom. With all five models there are specific roles and responsibilities for both the general education teacher and the special education teacher.

The history of co-teaching can be traced back for many decades and as you can see the need for the development of a co-teaching program is necessary. The shift from a self-contained model to a LRE has taken a long time to implement. Now through federal mandates, schools are required to provide a LRE to all students, but many have no established plan on how to implement the above stated models of co-teaching.

## **Methodology**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this curriculum project was to design a professional development program on co-teaching for elementary teachers responsible for teaching general education and special education students at Sherman Central School. There is an ongoing push for inclusion of special education students and this leaves general education teachers struggling to meet the needs of all students. In many cases a special education teacher is assigned to a classroom to help with those students, but this leaves both teachers unsure of their specific roles in the classroom. Many professionals are uncomfortable with assigning tasks to another professional, so one usually takes the backseat in educating the class. In reality there are more efficient ways to run a classroom using co-teaching

models. Most of the teachers at Sherman Central School are familiar with the concept of having another professional in the room with them while they are teaching. Although, this does not mean that the other professional is wanted and/or used effectively for the allotted time period. Through this curriculum project it is my intent that teachers, both special education and general education, will gain a broader understanding of the term co-teaching and improve their ability to effectively work with one another in the same classroom to benefit all the students involved.

### **Participants**

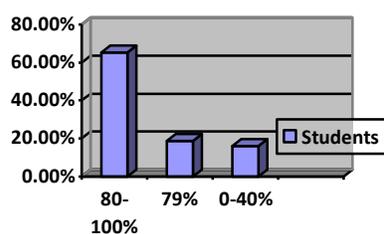
This specific professional development program was designed for Sherman elementary and special education teachers, grades 1-6. Both special education and general education teachers' preparations for the year are different depending on what their specific assignments are. All of the elementary and special education teachers in Sherman have valid New York State teaching certificates. Out of twelve (grades 1-6) teachers in grades 1-6, two do not have permanent certificates. I chose not to include kindergarten teachers in this because students are less likely to be classified at such a young age. The participants for this project either live in the district or within a half hour radius of the school. Only 5% of the teaching staff have fewer than three years experience. All of the faculty that participated are white. The first grade has 20 students, second grade has 19 students, third grade has 21 students, fourth grade has 30 students, fifth grade has 30, and the sixth grade has 42 students. Each grade is divided into two class sections. The age range of the teachers is 25-56 years old. The faculty at Sherman consistently receives up to date professional development in most areas. In the last five years, however, there has been no professional development in the area of cooperative

teaching. Both the general education teachers and the special education teachers would benefit greatly from a specialized and practical professional development on co-teaching. As with many new plans, there will be a group of reluctant professionals.

### Setting

Sherman Central School is located in rural western New York. Sherman has a total of 250 elementary students. Forty-three percent of the elementary students receive free lunch and 14% qualify for reduced lunch. Sherman Elementary is in good standing according to the school accountability report. The student population at Sherman consists primarily of Caucasian students with 4 non-white students. For the 2010-2011 school year Sherman spent on average \$10,603 per non special education student and \$22,958 per special education student. Sherman has a 13.4% classification rate of special education students. Student placement percent of time inside regular classroom is as follows: 80% or more- 65.3%, 40%-79%=18.7%, and less than 40%= 16.0%.

**Percent of time spent in classrooms**



Sherman has a 95% attendance rate. (All percentages taken from the NYS school report card)

### Design

The design of the professional development program is specific to Sherman teachers and the school district. I surveyed the teachers to find out exactly what it was that they thought they would benefit from most during a professional development designed for co-teaching (see appendix). It is very important to involve the staff when developing a program that could potentially be of great benefit to them. I chose the five already established methods/models of co-teaching to focus on and base the program around, specifically: one teach-one assist, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and team teaching. With co-teaching there is a strong possibility that teachers will be critiqued by their peers, on their already established methods. This makes many professionals uncomfortable. The survey included questions based on what types of methods teachers were most comfortable with, how well they felt they differentiate instruction, how strong of a relationship they have with the special education/general education teachers, etc. (see appendix). Based on the data collected and in consultation with the CSE, principal, and superintendent, I determined the specific needs of the teachers in regard to the co-teaching models. It is the intention of this professional development plan that all of the teachers and special education teachers will be trained on all five of the methods during a series of five professional development trainings based on the five co-teaching models. One should also note that during the first professional development session background information on co-teaching will be discussed. Generally with co-teaching as relationships and partnerships are formed between the professionals it becomes easier and the partners are able to graduate into more complex models of co-teaching.

These models range from less involved to more extensively involved. The two teachers will start where they feel comfortable and move their way to a more involved model. With each of the models there is a degree of planning involved. Depending on which model is chosen the degree may increase. In some situations the special education teacher and the general education teacher have worked together for a long enough time where they feel comfortable implementing any of the models. On the other hand there is the case where two teachers have never worked together before and need time to become familiar with one another and their teaching styles. Each of the models has specific guidelines to be followed in order to find success. It is very important that each professional know and understand their role in the classroom.

### **Limitations**

One limitation I expected to come across is the validity of teacher self-reporting. Even though the survey was anonymous, some teachers may not have been completely accurate reflecting their beliefs about co-teaching. Also, it is common that people feel one way about their teaching, but others see their practice in a completely different way. Because classes change from year to year, so do the teachers who work with the students. The same two teachers who are working together this year may not be the following year. Relationships take time to form and because assignments change from year to year, some teachers find it frustrating to build those relationships just to have to start all over the following year. I strongly believe that there is a huge need for professional development in the area of co-teaching. As discussed in the literature review co-teaching is an effective way to address the needs of many students. Since LRE is mandated by law, schools need to find a teaching model that works for these students. Co-teaching is not something to be

mastered overnight nor in a single training session. It takes time to understand your partner and to form the relationship that is needed to become successful at co-teaching.

In the professional development plan for co-teaching one will find the materials, lesson plans, and articles needed to implement such a program into their school. Essential background information is imbedded into the first session. The facilitator must be well versed in the reading material in order to successfully conduct a professional development on the co-teaching models.

# **Professional Development Plan for Cooperative Teaching**

## **Note to Facilitators:**

It is important for the facilitator(s) to be familiar with the literature written on the topic of co-teaching. This will allow for them to lead discussions on why co-teaching has become such an important part of the education process. Also, the more familiar one is with the material the smoother the training sessions will go. Being able to answer questions and give suggestions is key to a successful professional development. A one size fits all approach will not work in the education field and recognizing that and being able to give suggestions will only help to benefit the teachers. Marilyn Friend's, *Co-Teaching: A Simple Solution That Isn't After All*, a research article on the topic of co-teaching has been provided and is a suggested read to any facilitator presenting on this topic.

This professional development is designed to be given in a series of five separate sessions. It is also important to note that the teachers should be given time in between each session to try the method, reflect on it, and read the new article that was given to them. It is important to discuss the key points of each article and any misconceptions the teachers may have about co-teaching. Many teachers are reluctant to try new methods because of misconceptions they may have. Facilitators must also be aware that not every approach to co-teaching is going to work with every classroom or set of teachers. Also, not every approach will work with every lesson; the facilitator must be able to give good examples of when approaches would work best.

Ideally each lesson plan should take between thirty and forty minutes after school. The facilitator should keep in mind that the teachers have worked all day and providing an open discussion type atmosphere is beneficial and keeping the conversation

on topic is key to sticking to the time frame. Letting the teachers discuss the articles is important, but the facilitator you need to keep the topic going in the right direction and add essential information along the way. Also, the facilitator should provide a snack at the beginning of each session. Food can be a great motivator! The following is a list of resources that comes with this professional development plan. Each lesson has pre-readings that can be found in the appendix. The facilitator will be responsible for making appropriate copies. The bulleted overviews of each of the models can be handed out prior to the first session or individually during the appropriate sessions.

**List of Resources:**

**Readings:**

- *Is Co-teaching Effective* by Marilyn Friend & Deanna Hurley
- *Teaching and Learning Initiatives-6 Approaches to Co-Teaching* by SERC
- *Pairing Up* by Liana Heitin
- *Two Cooks in the Kitchen* by Mary Ellen Flannery
- *6 Steps to Successful Co-Teaching*
- *50 Ways to keep your Co-Teacher* by Wendy W. Murawski & Lisa Dieker
- *Common Co-Teaching Issues*
- *Co-Teaching: A Simple Solution That Isn't Simple After All* by Marilyn Friend

**YouTube Videos:** (URLs are provided in the actual lesson plan)

- *One Teach One Assist*
- *Parallel Teaching*
- *Station Teaching*
- *Alternative Teaching*
- *Teaming*

## **Co-Teaching, a comprehensive definition:**

Co-teaching is the instructional arrangement in which a general education teacher and a special education teacher deliver core instruction along with specialized instruction, as needed, to a diverse group of students in a single physical space. Co-teaching partnerships require educators to make joint instructional decisions and share responsibility and accountability for student learning. (Friend, M. 2007)

### **Co-teaching is:**

- Two or more educators or other certified staff
- Teachers share instructional responsibility
- Teachers serve a single group of students
- Taught in a single classroom or workspace
- Taught towards a specific content (objectives)
- Teachers share mutual ownership, pooled resources, and joint accountability
- A variety of participation levels

## Several Benefits of Co-Teaching

There are many benefits to co-teaching when there is a well thought-out and planned co-teaching model in place that is supported by strong, ongoing professional development with backing from administration.

### **Benefits for students:**

- Enrichment opportunities
- Tiered levels of instruction in the classroom
- Variety of instructional strategies taught by two qualified instructors
- Positive peer interactions
- Reduced stereotypes for students with disabilities
- Positive academic and social role models

### **Teacher benefits:**

- Shared responsibility
- Experts to collect and analyze data to inform instruction
- Increased collaboration in lesson development and delivery of instruction
- Common goals
- Greater teacher efficacy toward being successful
- Shared responsibility of student outcomes
- Fewer discipline issues

### **Benefits for the school:**

- Establishment of a school-based culture of collaboration
- Establishment of a supportive system for educators

## Tips for Implementing School Wide Co-Teaching Model

- Start the process before the school year begins
- Hold an informational parent meeting
- Identify common planning time
- Plan team compatibility to ensure effective instruction
- Provide opportunities for ongoing professional development
- Maintain effective teams from year to year
- Teach school faculty members about the benefits of co-teaching
- Develop parental support
- Foster an “our kids” mentality
- Assign special education teachers to content areas in which they have credentials, expertise, or interest

Concerns to address: Friend (2008)

- Recognizing the severity of cognitive, behavioral and academic skill deficits of student(s).
- Dealing with compatibility issues.
- Seeing that both teachers are familiar with students who have IEPs.
- Having guidelines in place for the number of students with disabilities in a co-taught class.
  - Elementary grades in which no more than 25% of the class members are students with disabilities
  - Secondary grades in which no more than 33% of the class members are students with disabilities.

## **Co-Teaching Model #1- Parallel Teaching**

Students are divided equally into two groups and both teachers teach the same material simultaneously. This model is known for having greater student participation outcomes. This method is frequently used in the classroom.

### **Operating Procedures:**

- Students are divided into two equal groups
- Special education and general education teacher teach the same material in same amount of time
- Instructional methods may differ
- No rotating between the two teachers

### **Pros:**

- Homogenous and heterogenous grouping can occur
- Student to teacher ratio is lessened
- Increased student response
- Active roles for instructors

### **Cons:**

- Both teachers must have adequate content knowledge
- Students may be distracted by having two groups in the same room
- Teachers having adequate planning time for an effective classroom environment

## **Model #2-Station Teaching**

With this model teachers divide both the content and students. One teacher teaches a portion of the lesson and the other teacher teaches the other half of the lesson and then repeats. Another station can be set up to allow for peer interactions and independent work.

### **Operating Procedures:**

- Students divided into equal groups
- Each teacher teaches a part of the content
- Stations are prepared ahead of time
- Groups rotate through stations

### **Pros:**

- Multiple opportunities for student –teacher interaction
- Fewer behavior issues
- High student engagement/participation

### **Additional Considerations:**

- Finding appropriate space
- Teaching methods/strategies differ
- Teaching content knowledge is a must to have equally effective stations.
- Managing an effective classroom environment
- Engaging students with material without distraction

## **Model #3-Teaming**

This model is recommended for occasional use in the classroom: mostly because both teachers are delivering the same instruction at the same time. This is a very difficult model to master. Teachers must be on the same page as far as teaching styles, content knowledge and student learning outcomes. This model is considered the most complex way to co-teach.

### **Operating Procedures:**

- Both teachers are fully engaged in the delivery of the instruction
- Both teachers are responsible for classroom management and student behavior.

### **Pros:**

- Allows for a variety of teaching strategies
- Allows for teacher collaboration
- Allows teachers to thrive in an area of expertise
- Allows teachers to introduce new topics/concepts

### **Cons:**

- Both teachers must have strong content knowledge
- Pacing must be maintained
- Finding significant planning time
- Finding adequate planning/collaboration time
- Being able to trust another teacher to learn specific content
- Student needs may not be met as well as they are with other models

## **Model #4-Alternative Teaching**

This model is recommended for limited use. One teacher takes responsibility for a bigger group while the other teacher will work with a smaller group. This allows for background knowledge to be taught, enrichment, tiered instruction, and/or alternative method of teaching content.

### **Operating Procedures:**

- Teachers need to identify the needs of their students and determine groups based on class needs prior to class.
- Both teachers follow the same lesson plan.
- Small group teacher must make modifications based on student needs.

### **Pros:**

- Useful when students needs and ability vary greatly.
- Useful when classroom management is a concern.
- Useful for providing student progress monitor and feedback.
- Useful for re-teaching and providing students with more learning opportunities.

### **Cons:**

- Students with disabilities may always be grouped together.
- Finding adequate planning time.
- One teacher may be more familiar with the content.

## **Model #5-One Teach One Assist**

This model is only to be used occasionally. One teacher takes the responsibility of teaching the lesson while the other teacher circulates through the room providing help to students who need it. While the other teacher is helping it is not meant to be a distraction to the students in the room. Teachers should switch roles lesson to lesson, so that one teacher is not always doing the instructing. This model is most used.

### **Operating Procedures:**

- Assessment data collection can be collected by assisting teacher to check for student understanding.
- Assistance may be given to struggling student(s).
- Assisting teacher may monitor student behavior.
- Instructing teacher organizes learning tasks and class discussion.

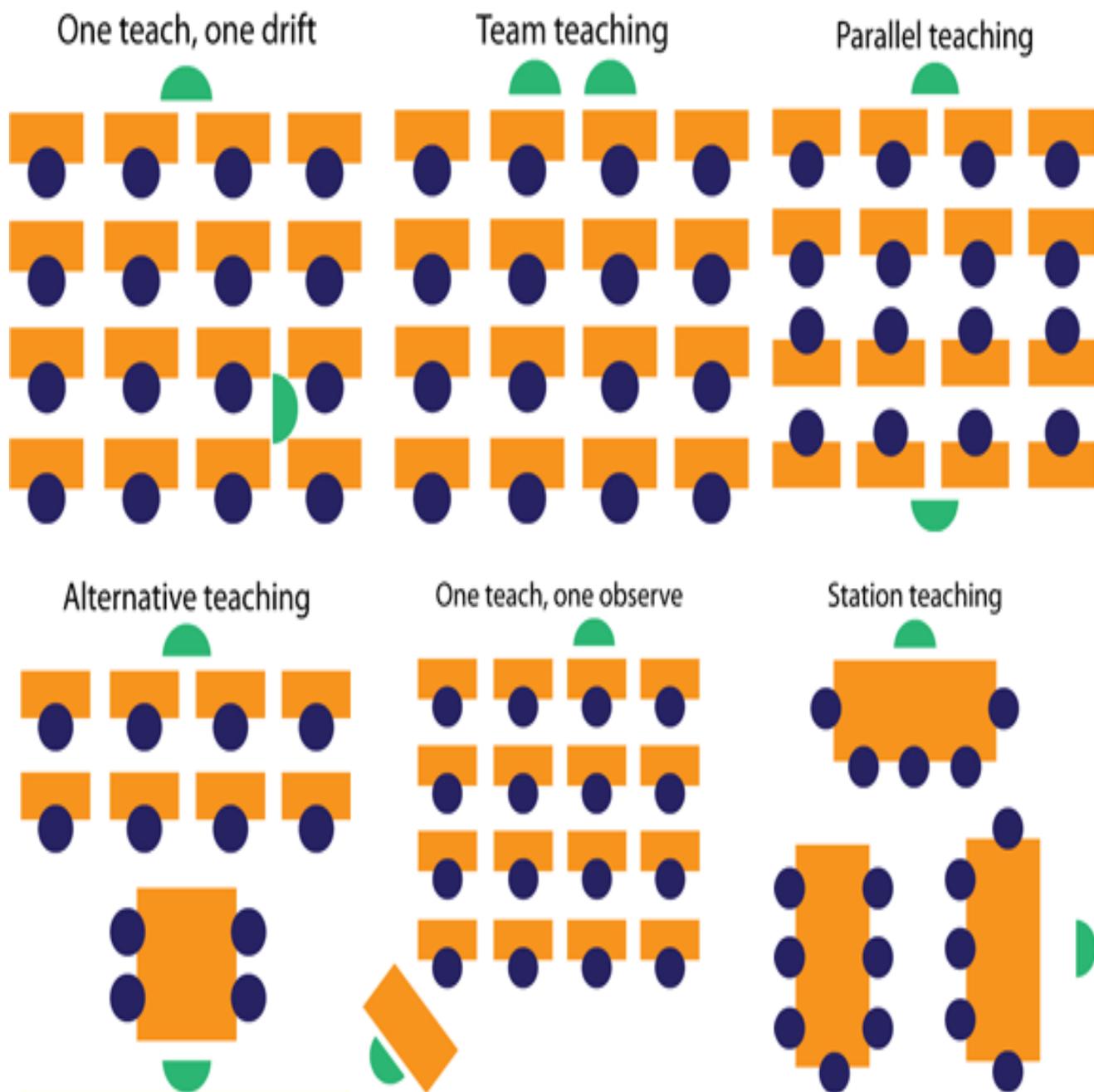
### **Pros:**

- Always a data collector in the room.
- Struggling students always have help.
- Assistance with classroom management.

### **Cons:**

- Assisting teacher may become passive.
- Students may lean toward one teacher over the other.
- Students may become distracted.
- Students may become reliant on the assisting teacher.
- Special educators need to be experts in content area.
- Teachers must alternate roles.





## Co-Teaching Reference Chart

<u>Model</u>	<u>Pros</u>	<u>Considerations</u>	<u>Recommended Use</u>
Parallel Teaching	Flexibility in teaching; increase students' response time	Teachers must provide adequate content knowledge; eliminating distractions	Frequent
Station Teaching	Small groups; fewer behavior issues; high student engagement	Noise levels; stations must function independently; varying teacher methods	Frequent
Teaming	Appropriate for all grade and content areas; teachers thrive in area of expertise	Finding planning time; grouping may change	Occasional
Alternative Teaching	Small group instruction; enrichment, background, intervention opportunities.	May be seen as equivalent to special education class; small group may consist of only special education students	Occasional
One Teach-One Assist	Content teacher provides most of the instruction; individual assistance available	Greatest potential to be overused; one teacher becomes "aide"	Limited

Actions	Questions to ask yourself or others
Assess the current environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What type of collaboration currently exists between general and special education?</li> <li>• Has there been any discussion of inclusion, collaboration, or co-teaching?</li> <li>• How do teachers react when they hear about students with special needs in general education classes? Who acts favorably?</li> </ul>
Move in Slowly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is our joint understanding of co-teaching as a service delivery model?</li> <li>• May I co-teach a lesson with you?</li> <li>• Are there any areas that you feel less strongly about, in which I might be able to assist?</li> </ul>
Involve the administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is the district addressing the LRE mandate an the inclusive movement?</li> <li>• Would our school site be willing to be proactive by including co-teaching?</li> <li>• What discipline areas will we target first?</li> <li>• How will we ensure that support is provided across all content areas, including electives?</li> <li>• Would we be able to count on administrative support, especially with co-planning time and scheduling assistance?</li> </ul>
Get to know your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could we complete a co-teaching checklist to help guide us in discussing our personal and professional preferences?</li> <li>• Are there any pet peeves or issues that I should know prior to our working together?</li> <li>• Do we both have similar levels of expertise about the curriculum and instructing students with disabilities?</li> <li>• What feedback structure can we create to assist in our regular communications?</li> </ul>
Create a workable schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often will co-teaching occur (daily, a few times a week, for a specific unit, etc)?</li> <li>• What schedule would best meet the needs of the class and both teachers?</li> <li>• How can we ensure that this schedule will be maintained consistently so that both co-teachers can trust it?</li> <li>• How will we maintain communication between co-taught sessions?</li> </ul>

From: Evaluating Co-teaching as a means for successful Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in a Rural District by Michael W. Wischnowski, Susan J. Salmon, and **Karen Eaton**.

## **Note to Administrators:**

Since federal and state laws have mandated programs such as NCLB it has made it so that platforms like co-teaching must be taking place in the classroom. The idea of maximizing classroom time and minimizing pull out has been the main goal of many educators and administrators. Unfortunately co-teaching many times has been misapplied and unsupported. This has left a dissatisfied feeling with many educators leaving them resistant to try new approaches. Administrators need to be fully supportive while implementing a co-teaching model in their school.

### **Administrators Should:**

- Have a strong knowledge base and understanding of the definition, purpose, and models of co-teaching.
- Assist in the evaluation of the co-teaching process.
- Provide funding for materials.
- Provide ongoing opportunities and funding for professional development.
- Expect all teachers to be accountable for student outcomes, both behaviorally and academically.
- Actively support and be engaged in facilitating change.
- Match educators appropriately to ensure successful co-teaching teams.
- Find ways to provide teachers with a common planning time.
- Provide targeted professional development.

## Evaluating a Co-Teaching Program

The purpose for evaluating any type of program is to determine its effectiveness.

Whenever you are evaluating a type of education model it is very important to determine whether or not the program is effective. When implementing a co-teaching model the big question is always whether or not the program is positively affecting student outcomes?

Before implementing a co-teaching program, a school or district should determine whether or not it is “ready” to implement co-teaching. This can be accomplished through a needs assessment or a co-teaching team readiness checklist (see Appendices).

School administrators should be clear and consistent regarding criteria for a co-teaching observation and evaluation protocol. G.L. Wilson (2005), has suggested three areas that should be the focus when developing a co-taught class observation and evaluation protocol. The three main areas are (1) meaningful roles for both teachers, (2) use of research-based strategies, and (3) evidence of success. A few points to be considered are:

- Should teachers be observed separately or as a team?
- Should the special education administrator observe the special education teacher individually?
- Should the general education administrator observe the general education teacher individually?
- Should there be different criteria for each teacher?
- Would criteria be above and beyond the traditional classroom?
- What will the criteria be for observing co-taught classes?

The following suggestions may help an administrator with developing a procedure in the area of a co-taught classroom.

- Evidence that each teacher’s role is clearly identified throughout the lesson
- Evidence that the special educator is identified as a teacher with equal instructional responsibility
- Evidence that both teachers are appropriately qualified and certified

Research-based strategies:

- Evidence of co-planning
- Evidence of an effective lesson
- Evidence of research-based effective and systematic instructional strategies, both academic and behavioral
- Evidence of opportunities to learn, including accommodations where needed for students with disabilities.

Evidence of student success:

- Evidence that all students are actively engaged by asking and answering questions
- Evidence of progress monitoring
- Evidence of effective classroom management
- Evidence of state standards being taught

## **Lesson Plan 1: Background Information & One- Teach One- Assist**

**Pre-reading:** To be given out prior to training date, at least three days. Selected pre-reading will help to give teachers background knowledge on subject. Before session #1 professionals will receive a copy of the professional development manual on co-teaching and *Is Co-Teaching Effective?* By Marilyn Friend and Deanna Hurley-Chamberlain.

### **Materials:**

- *Is Co-Teaching Effective* by Marilyn Friend and Deanna Hurley-Chamberlain
- Smart board
- Handout on Six Approaches to Co-Teaching by SERC

### **Objectives:**

- Teachers will have an understanding of the definition of co-teaching.
- Teachers will have background knowledge of co-teaching.
- Teachers will have a brief understanding of all five models covered during the professional development sessions.
- Teachers will have a greater understanding of the specific strategy one-teach one-assist.

### **Procedure: The facilitator will:**

1. have a KWL chart on the board using the topic of co-teaching.
2. ask the teachers to help fill out the chart.
3. lead a discussion as to why co-teaching has become such an important topic in schools. (NCLB, IDEA, Inclusion etc..)
4. briefly go over pre-reading article, key points, definition, strategy, and purpose. Specifically, what co-teaching is/is not.

5. handout Six Approaches to Co-Teaching by SERC and go over the approaches.
6. explain the strategy of one-teach one-assist. One teacher is teaching the content to the students while the other teacher is circulating around the room.
7. explain the importance of having one teacher being able to collect assessment data while a lesson is still being taught.
8. explain that it is important that teachers switch roles, so that one is not seen as an “aide”. The assisting teacher should not distract the students.
9. show youtube video-One-teach One assist.  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmP\\_WBmyDcY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmP_WBmyDcY)
10. discuss what the video shows.
  - Guiding questions: What seemed to work well?
    - What didn't?
    - What would you definitely be able to implement in your classroom?
11. brainstorm ideas for lessons that would work well with this model. (small groups depending on the size of the whole group)
12. debrief-Go over key points of specific model.

**Assignment:**

Over the course of the following week teachers will need to use this model with at least one lesson. Discuss the importance of reflecting on the lesson. When they return they

will need to be able to talk about how they think the lesson went. Also, hand out the pre-reading article for the next professional development (*6 Steps to Successful Co-Teaching*, by Natalie Marston.)

## **Lesson Plan 2: Parallel Teaching**

**Pre-reading:** Teachers received this particular reading at the end of the last session and should have completed. Teachers should have read *6 Steps to Successful Co-teaching* by Natalie Marston.

### **Materials:**

- Copy of *6 Steps to Successful Co-Teaching* by Natalie Marston
- Smartboard
- One copy for each teacher of *Pairing Up* by Liana Heitin.

### **Objectives:**

- Teachers will gain an understanding of the co-teaching model parallel teaching.
- Teachers will understand the pros and cons of parallel teaching.

### **Procedure: The Facilitator will:**

1. briefly go over pre-reading article and answer any questions about what they read.
2. define and explain the parallel teaching strategy.
3. stress the importance of both teachers being strong in the content area.
4. discuss different types of grouping strategies.
5. discuss challenges that this model brings. ex. distractions, space, etc..

6. show youtube video on parallel teaching.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIPWrrUU-pk&feature=related>

7. Discuss what is seen in the video using the same guiding questions seen in lesson one.
8. brainstorm ideas for lessons that would work well with this model.
9. debrief go over key points of lesson

**Assignment:**

Over the course of the following week teachers will need to use this model with at least one lesson. They will need to reflect on the lesson themselves and with the other teacher. When they return they will need to talk about what they found, pros, and cons. The following weeks reading will be given out and will need to be completed by the next meeting date. Following weeks reading = *Pairing Up* by Liana Heitin.

## **Lesson Plan 3: Station Teaching**

**Pre-reading:** The purpose of the pre-reading is to generate conversation between teachers and will lead into our discussion on co-teaching and station teaching. Teachers should have read *Pairing Up* by Liana Heitin.

### **Materials:**

- Copy of *Pairing Up* by Liana Heitin
- Smartboard
- One copy per teacher of *Collaboration Between General and Special Education: Making it Work* by Michael N. Shape and Maureen E. Hawes.

### **Objectives:**

- Teachers will understand the station model for co-teaching.
- Teachers will understand the benefits and challenges associated with station teaching.
- Teachers will understand that parallel teaching and station teaching although seem alike they are very different.

### **Procedures: The facilitator will:**

1. discuss the key points of the pre-reading article. Focus on the grouping strategy.
2. define station teaching.
3. discuss the difference between station teaching and parallel teaching.

4. write on chart paper teachers will make a list of the pros and cons for this model.
5. discuss pros and cons.
6. watch youtube video on station teaching.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfFDrSG41As>
7. discuss what the video shows.
8. brainstorm ideas for lessons this model would work well for.
9. debrief, go over key points of lesson.

**Assignment:**

Teachers will be asked to try this model at least once in the following week and discuss what they found, pros, cons, etc..Teachers will also be given the following weeks reading and asked to have it completed, *Common Co-Teaching Issues*.

## **Lesson Plan 4: Teaming**

**Pre-Reading:** The purpose of the pre-reading is to generate conversation between teachers and will lead into our discussion on the specific model of teaming. The article *Common Co-Teaching Issues* should have been read prior to the start of this session. This is a good place for this article to be placed because by now the teachers will have tried three of the approaches and may really start to have some concerns and questions.

### **Materials:**

- *Common Co-Teaching Issues* (1copy)
- Smartboard
- Chartpaper/ whiteboard

### **Objectives:**

- Teachers will understand the teaming model for co-teaching.
- Teachers will understand the benefits and challenges associated with teaming.
- Teachers will have an idea of what types of lessons would work best with teaming.

### **Procedure: The facilitator will:**

1. discuss key points of pre-reading article
2. write on the board or chart paper list some of the issues and give suggestions for solutions. Brainstorm how to prevent and solve these issues.
3. define teaming strategy.
4. discuss pros and cons of teaming.

5. watch youtube video on teaming.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDHA2NEiyvU>

6. discuss what the video shows.
7. brainstorm ideas for lessons that this model would work well for.
8. debrief, go over key points of lesson.

**Assignment:**

Teachers will be asked to try this model at least once in the following week and discuss what they found, pros, cons, etc.. Teachers will also be given the following weeks pre-reading, *Two Cooks in the Kitchen* by Mary Ellen Flannery, and expected to have that read by the next session.

## **Lesson Plan 5: Alternative Teaching**

**Pre-reading:** The purpose of the pre-reading is to generate conversation between teachers and will lead into our discussion on co-teaching and Alternative teaching. The teachers will have read *Two Cooks in the Kitchen*, by Mary Ellen Flannery.

### **Materials:**

- *Two Cooks in the Kitchen* by Mary Ellen Flannery (1copy)
- Smartboard
- 50 Ways to Keep Your Co-Teacher (1copy for every teacher)

### **Objectives:**

- Teachers will understand the definition of the alternative teaching model.
- Teachers will learn effective grouping strategies.
- Teachers will be able to choose effective times to implement alternative teaching.

### **Procedures: The facilitator will:**

1. discuss pre-reading article key points.
2. define alternative teaching.
3. discuss pros and cons of model.
4. watch You tube video on alternative teaching.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQoh14NZyJo>
5. discuss what was shown on video.
6. brainstorm lessons that could work with alternative teaching.
7. debrief, discuss key points of lesson.

**Assignment:**

Teachers will be asked to carry out a lesson using alternative teaching. Before teachers are dismissed they will each be given a copy of *50 Ways to Keep Your Co-Teacher: Strategies for Before, During, and After Co-Teaching* by Wendy W. Murawski and Lisa Dieker.

\*At the end teachers will be given a questionnaire about what they thought of the professional development workshop. It is to be anonymous and turned in to the office within two days of completing the workshop.

## **Follow Up:**

Just like every other professional development plan it is important to have follow up and support throughout the year to make sure that the teachers have not become complacent with the co-teaching models or frustrated. Teachers can be supported following training in many different ways. Below is a list of tips for supporting teachers after a professional development.

### **Tips for supporting teachers:**

- Provide literature on the subject.
- Provide targeted literature that is specific to issues they may be having.
- Provide feedback after an observation.
- Be a liaison between the teachers and the administrators.
- Provide new strategies throughout the year.
- Hold meetings throughout the year to reassess co-teaching and talk about what has worked well and what has failed.

It is also very important that the teachers are held accountable for following through with using these models. In the Administrators section of this professional development plan there is a sample template for observation. The teachers should be aware of this template and what the criterion is. Administrators should be aware of the different models of co-teaching and the definitions. Administrators should be able to provide adequate and worthwhile feedback after observing a co-taught lesson.

## Discussion

When this project first started and I was researching the history of special education I was not surprised to find an abundant amount of literature on the topic. For the literature review my goal was to start from the beginning of special education and self-contained classrooms all the way up to the movement for least restrictive environment. In order to show the transitions it was important for me to include the landmark court cases which in turn gave rights to special education students. Piecing the pieces of the puzzle together was a little more difficult than I thought it would be. Since the point of the literature review was to show that there is a strong case for co-teaching it was important to make it very clear and to the point that co-teaching is important and very much needed.

When I began to specifically research co-teaching I was very overwhelmed with all of the articles. Since the focus of my professional development plan for co-teaching was for elementary teachers I wanted to find research specific to elementary. As I was researching I began to become frustrated looking for elementary specific material. When I started to read through the articles I learned that most all of the articles on co-teaching were not specific to elementary or high school and that it didn't much matter, because they were focused on the specific models of co-teaching not the classroom level. I began to notice some of the popular names in co-teaching and that helped with my searching. One major issue I had throughout the duration of my researching was finding empirical studies. I met twice with librarians and was able to locate a few after extensive looking. The articles will tell you that there are no long-term studies done that prove the effectiveness of co-teaching.

When I first started this project last semester I was pretty sure I knew what it was going to look like as a finished project. I have since changed my mind a couple times about how to present it as a professional development piece. I knew all along the information about co-teaching and the specific models I want to teach teachers about. The big question was what kind of format to use. After consulting with Dr. Rey, the journal of professional development, and a few of my colleagues I chose to break it into five different sessions lasting about forty minutes. When I started this I wasn't thinking about specific things that would supplement the training like videos and readings. I also never thought about a separate piece for administrators but after I got started it made complete sense to include a section for administrators. The professional development plan would not carry out unless the teachers were held accountable. A way of doing this is to supply the administrators with what they would need to successfully observe and evaluate teachers effectively implementing co-teaching models in their classrooms.

I really feel that even after a great professional development on co-teaching that teachers would be reluctant to carry it through. One reason teachers would be hesitant is the amount of planning time co-teaching takes to work effectively. Most teachers are not allotted enough time during the day to collaborate with another teacher on daily lessons. The more advanced co-teaching models require that both teachers be strong in the specific content that is being taught. For a special education teacher it is a huge task to be strong in all the content areas and then be able to assist a teacher in teaching. Many special education teachers feel overwhelmed with the idea of having to be fluent in all areas. Usually when special education teachers are in the classroom they are using the co-teaching model of one teach one assist. With this model it is not as essential for the

special education teacher to know all the content that is being taught. It is their job to move around the room and help any students that need it. Another reason teachers are so hesitant is the lack of support from administration. In order for a program like this to work administration needs to take an active role in launching and following up the program. Teachers need to be paired with other teachers that have the same goals in mind. Teachers are not provided with literature or materials to make co-teaching work. With proper materials and training teachers will be less hesitant to try co-teaching. I also strongly believe that if teachers could see highly effective examples of co-teaching models then they would have a better understanding of what co-teaching should look like.

I thought that finding materials for the professional development was not a huge problem. I did spend a lot of time looking at the journal of professional development to get an ideal of what direction I wanted to go in with this project. When it came to materials for the actual professional development I had a strategy in mind to keep the teachers thinking all week about what we had done in the previous session. I supplied the teachers with a new reading that they needed to complete before the next session. The point of this was to provide background knowledge and generate an opening discussion at the beginning of the next session. Some of the articles brought to the surface concerns that teachers might have and also some of the issues that teachers have had with co-teaching. With this discussion teachers may be able to eliminate some problems they might face before they even begin co-teaching. After each session the teacher and the co-teacher are expected to implement the model with a lesson and reflect on it. During the next session they need to be able to talk about what they liked, what they didn't like, and if they could see themselves using this method.

If I had to develop this professional development plan for co-teaching again, I would most likely research different forms of professional development first. I feel I would do this because I made the most changes to the professional development plan. Although I catered it specifically toward Sherman Central School I had a lot of things in mind. Sherman is a small school where it is very likely that you might work with the same special education teacher year after year. In that case there would be a greater chance of building a rapport with that teacher and knowing their teaching style. The better you know your co-teacher the better chance you have at succeeding. Many school districts are turning to an inclusion model and want to keep the students in the classroom as much as possible. With that said I wanted to make a program that could be easily adapted to many different school districts that had the same goals in mind for a co-teaching model. I also think that it took me a little longer than I would have hoped in the beginning to develop my literature review. I had a vision of where I wanted to go and the types of literature I wanted to review it just took me a while to figure out the best way to go about it. Even once I realized that I wanted to do a history of special education I kept leaving out key points in history. I also really had to work on sticking to the facts and not dragging the issues out.

Overall I think this professional development plan for co-teaching could be easily adapted and implemented in many school districts where inclusion is a top priority. It is not the intention that all the models of co-teaching be used in every classroom during every lesson. It is the intention that as educators we recognize that there are ways to be more effective in the classroom. The readings selected for the professional development sessions are teacher friendly and personally I think beneficial reads for any teacher.

There are parts of the professional development that could be copied and handed out as a “hand-out” to teachers. This hand out would give them an overview, pros and cons to each model. From the handouts teachers would be able to judge which models would work best in their classroom and/or which ones they would be more willing to try.

I strongly believe that co-teaching is a huge topic in the education world. From my years of teaching and experience I know that co-teaching is not being effectively implemented in most all classrooms. I also feel that teachers are not being provided with effective training or literature on the topic. Many administrators expect to place special education teachers in the classroom and they will just automatically be a effective person in the room. That is not at all the case. It is not the special education teachers’ fault. The fault lies in the gap between training, administrators, and teachers. Also, every year teachers are being given professional development training in many different areas and then nothing ever is heard of it again. To solve this problem, administrators need to give support and follow up materials to teachers on the topic. That is why with this program I have included a section for administrators. They cannot have a hands off approach when it comes to co-teaching. They need to be a key piece in the puzzle as well. They can do this by providing ongoing trainings to teachers and effective observations. Overall I am very happy that I have chosen this topic. Everyday I think about co-teaching and how I wish it were different in my own classroom. I know that many teachers wish that when they had a special education teacher in the room it was a better use of time for everyone, especially the students.

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# Appendix

## Inclusion/Co-teaching Survey

Name (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade/Subject: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (regular education teacher or special education teacher)

# of Years Experience in Education: \_\_\_\_\_

# of Years Experience in Inclusion: \_\_\_\_\_

Please use the following scale to answer the questions below. Use the lines below each question to explain your response. We appreciate the time you are taking to provide us with detailed information regarding your experiences as an inclusion teacher.

1 – Strongly Agree                      3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree                      5 – Disagree  
 Strongly  
 2 – Agree Somewhat                      4 – Disagree Somewhat

1. I have received the training I need to successfully use co-teaching strategies and implement inclusion.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree Somewhat 2	Neither Agree/ Disagree 3	Disagree Somewhat 4	Strongly Disagree 5
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2. I believe students *with* disabilities can receive an appropriate education in an inclusive regular education classroom.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree Somewhat 2	Neither Agree/ Disagree 3	Disagree Somewhat 4	Strongly Disagree 5
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3. I have seen evidence of improved academic outcomes for students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms.

Strongly	Agree	Neither Agree/	Disagree	Strongly
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Agree	Somewhat	Disagree	Somewhat	Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

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4. I have the necessary cooperation and assistance from educational support personnel (paraprofessionals) to implement inclusion successfully.

Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

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5. I find it difficult to modify my instructional strategies and my teaching style to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

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6. I have sufficient resources to implement inclusion effectively.

Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

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7. I believe students *without* disabilities can receive an appropriately challenging education in an inclusive regular education classroom.

Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

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8. I have had input in the development of an inclusive program at my school.

Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
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14. I have tried at least five or six different models of co-teaching.

Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

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15. In the inclusion classroom, my co-teacher and I **consistently** work with all students, including those *with* disabilities and those *without* disabilities.

Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

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16. The students *with* disabilities in my inclusion classroom(s) work separately from their classmates *without* disabilities a **majority** of the time.

Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

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17. In my inclusion classroom(s), students *with* disabilities and students *without* disabilities receive equal access to the same general curriculum.

Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please use the remainder of the space on this page, as well as space on the back, to share any additional thoughts, suggestions, ideas, or recommendations you have for improving our inclusion and/or co-teaching practices. Your input is greatly appreciated and will be a valuable source of information as we continue to work toward enhancing the educational opportunities and outcomes of all our students.



		Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree	
		4	3	2	1
1.	I feel positive about my participation in a collaborative classroom.	4	3	2	1
2.	The children without disabilities in our classroom(s) interacted positively with the children with disabilities.	4	3	2	1
3.	I understand the purpose(s) for including children with disabilities into classes with their non-disabled peers.	4	3	2	1
4.	I have been a more effective teacher in the collaborative classroom as compared to my previous experience as a teacher in a <b>(please circle one)</b> special / general education classroom.	4	3	2	1
5.	I feel that the interactions that resulted from the activities between children with and without disabilities were positive and beneficial to all the children.	4	3	2	1
6.	I feel I received enough information during the training prior to beginning to teach in the collaborative classroom.	4	3	2	1
7.	I feel my co-teacher received enough information during the training prior to beginning to teach in our collaborative classroom.	4	3	2	1
8.	I have been pleased with the training and ongoing support provided in my school.	4	3	2	1
9.	I have met regularly with my co-teacher to plan lessons and address issues related to our classroom.	4	3	2	1
10.	Time spent in planning meetings with my co-teacher has been beneficial.	4	3	2	1
10.	I prefer co-teaching to teaching without a co-teacher.	4	3	2	1

### School Readiness Checklist

	Yes	No
The school administration is supportive and committed to co-teaching, especially regarding co-planning time, scheduling assistance and professional development.		
Teachers have participated in a school wide pre-implementation planning and professional development on co-teaching.		
The administration has purchased resources to support co-teaching.		
Plans have been developed for dissemination of information on co-teaching to teachers who did not attend initial training.		
Plans have been developed for regular dissemination of information on co-teaching to parents and other stakeholders.		
Plans have been developed for evaluating the school's co-teaching program.		
Co-teaching implementation has been incorporated as part of the school improvement plan.		
There is collaboration between general and special education teachers.		
Teachers have been provided with mutual planning time for co-teaching.		

## Co-Teaching Partner Checklist

### Co-teaching partners have:

\_\_\_\_\_ Discussed and understood the definition of co-teaching

\_\_\_\_\_ Discussed and identified preferred co-teaching model.

\_\_\_\_\_ Discussed and shared understanding with regard to students with disabilities and expectations in relation to accommodations, and instructional needs.

\_\_\_\_\_ Shared, discussed, and identified shared roles and responsibilities.

\_\_\_\_\_ Shared the potential strengths and liabilities each teacher brings to co-teaching..

\_\_\_\_\_ Shared and discussed perceptions on the following topics.

- Classroom rules
- Grading
- Disciplinary issues
- Parent contact
- Classroom routines
- Homework
- Physical environment of classroom
- Teacher style or preference
- Other

## <sup>1</sup>A Teacher's Model for Co-Teaching

### 1. THE CORNERSTON: 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.

### 2. 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 (Note: This teacher perception is not recommended practice for long-term program success).

### 3. 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.

### 4. 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.

### 5. EXTERNAL SUPPORTS

External support facilitates successful co-teaching

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

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<sup>B</sup>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.

**Post Professional Development Questionnaire  
Southeast Regional PRISM – Fall 2006 – Spring 2007**

Name:

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–

School Name:

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Grade Level(s) you teach: \_\_\_Elementary \_\_\_Middle School \_\_\_High School \_\_\_Higher Education

Title of Course/Workshop:

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Date(s) of Course/Workshop:

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1. Which of the following best describe the professional development you experienced? (Check all that apply)

- Facilitator(s) modeled instructional strategies
- Facilitator(s) lectured about background of co-teaching
- Facilitator(s) modeled use of alternative strategies
- Facilitator(s) lectured about alternative assessment strategies for co-teaching
- Facilitator(s) engaged participants in discussions related to co-teaching
- Facilitator(s) engaged participants in discussions of classroom management with new strategies
- Participants were engaged in hands-on applications of concepts presented
- Participants were engaged in small-group discussions of issues related to concepts & strategies
- Follow-up professional development

2. Please list the new concepts, instructional strategies, and/or assessment strategies you feel you will *definitely try* with your students as a *direct result* of information you learned or activities in which you were engaged in at this professional development experience:

Concepts:

Instructional Strategies:

3. What problems, if any, do you anticipate when introducing these new concepts, using learning strategies and/or assessment strategies in your classroom?

4. What was the *single most important thing* you learned or experienced in this professional development course/workshop? Why was it important for you as a teacher?

### **Articles used during professional development lesson plans**

#### **Two Cooks in the Kitchen**

**These days, you might be sharing your classroom with another teacher. Can you work effectively together—without spoiling everything?**

**By Mary Ellen Flannery**

**It's a Wednesday morning and history teacher Tracey Wilson listens carefully as her 10th-graders debate the merits of affirmative action. "Nothing should be handed to you! You should work for what you get," a back-row boy says proudly. "The only reason they didn't get into college was because they were Black!" argues another, a Black girl who crosses her arms firmly.**

**"Isn't there a law that colleges have to have a certain percentile?" a blond student interrupts. "No," Wilson answers simply. And then, from the front row, another hand: "Is Jessica talking about quotas?"**

**Ah, good question Mrs. Stefanowicz.**

**There are two teachers in this class at Conard High School in West Hartford, Connecticut. The first, Wilson, is a history teacher of 31 years who designed the course, U.S. History through the African American Experience, to help close the achievement gap in history between White and Black students at her school. The other, Susan Stefanowicz, is a reading teacher who couldn't possibly say no when Wilson approached her at a new teacher orientation and said, "Hey, I think I need you!"**

**Question: What's one teacher plus one teacher?**

**Answer: A lot of help.**

**The "combination plate"—one teacher, typically a grade-level or subject-area specialist, put together with another teacher, usually an English Language Learner (ELL), special-education, or other remediation specialist—is on the menu in more and more schools these days. Called co-teaching, the practice can be beneficial for both teachers and students, if it's cooked up right.**

**Co-teaching was dreamed up decades ago by school systems that wanted to reduce class sizes. But, as government grants for smaller class sizes dried up, that particular strategy has disappeared, notes Alice Henley, assistant director for development at the State Education Resource Center in Connecticut. Now, it's used most often as an inclusive practice to serve students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in regular classrooms.**

**"We know it's not the solution for everything. There are some kids, because of their needs, it's not appropriate for them. But that population gets smaller and smaller all the time," Henley says. These days, the district that isn't doing co-teaching is the exception.**

**Whose room is this?**

**Second-grade partners Lisa Parisi and Christine Southard represent the cutting-edge of inclusive co-teaching. Watch them in action, in their Long Island, New York, classroom, and there are no seams. Is Parisi the "special educator?" Or is it Southard? Parents have been told, but students don't have a clue.**

**They share a single email address—as well as all planning periods. They eat lunch together. They've added each other to their Verizon calling plans. It's not even called "Mrs. Parisi's room"—yep, she's the regular ed teacher. Last year, the kids chose a new, more inclusive name: "The South Paris Collaborative."**

**Theirs is a very successful relationship, evidenced by the improving reading scores of all students in the room—not just students with IEPs. At the beginning of last year, seven or eight students were performing below grade level. By the end, just one remained—and the rest were doing far above expectations on every measure.**

**A winning combination: Connecticut educators Tracey Wilson (left) and Susan Stefanowicz are improving student learning - and their own - through their co-teaching.**

**Photo: Mike Lydick**

**"There isn't any child who doesn't benefit from smaller group instruction—and we have the ability to do that easily," Parisi says. "We also have the ability to do different things at the same time. We use a lot of technology here...like VoiceThread [which allows them to record and publish student voices in Web-based projects]. So Christine can be doing that over here, and I can be doing something else over there."**

**Like the West Hartford duo, Parisi and Southard aren't formally trained co-teachers, which can be helpful, although they have studied co-teaching guru Marilyn Friend's work at the University of North Carolina. (Check out [www.marilynfriend.com](http://www.marilynfriend.com) for more info.)**

**Still, they can point to several reasons for their success—and they're the same ones that Wilson and Stefanowicz cite.**

**First of all, nobody was forced into this.**

**Second, not one of the partners thinks that she's really in charge with a handy sous-chef by her side. "This is our classroom. There are two full-size teacher's desks. Not one full-size desk and a student desk by its side," Parisi points out. And in Connecticut, Wilson says, "I have to appreciate that Sue knows what she's doing—and she has to appreciate that I know what I'm doing."**

**And, they all share equal responsibility for every student in the room.**

**"There are a lot of co-teachers and regular teachers who believe, 'these are my kids and those are your kids,' and that's the way it is. But that's not co-teaching," Southard says.**

## **Teacher as learner**

**Back in West Hartford, after more than three decades in the classroom and a recent award as the state history teacher of the year, Wilson still has a rookie's eagerness to try new things—like having a reading teacher by her side. She knew from the start that it would benefit her students. At the very least, they'd have some help getting through their college-level textbook. What she didn't know, she says, is how much she would learn, too.**

**"I used to write all over the board. I'd cover the board, and I'd expect my students to copy it," Wilson recalls. Now, with Stefanowicz's help, she's become more reflective in her teaching. How exactly should she expect kids to turn information into knowledge? These days, her classroom board often poses a single question, and students learn to listen for the appropriate answers and write them down themselves.**

**"She's not just teaching the kids, she's teaching me," Wilson marvels.**

**Send comments on this story to [mflannery@nea.org](mailto:mflannery@nea.org)**

**Challenges:**

**What happens when it tastes horrible?**

**Not every co-teaching arrangement is fabulous. Sometimes somebody eats all the cake—and leaves nothing but crumbs. Sometimes it's like burnt toast. And you just wish you could start fresh.**

**Last year, teacher-blogger "Ms. Cornelius" (at <http://%20shrewdnessofapes.blogspot.com/>) wrote about her new partner.**

**"Apparently 'co-teacher' means 'I will show up whenever I feel like it, and when I am there, I will...play on my electronic devices...I guess I should be grateful that this person has not thus far brought in a litter of puppies, which, 'pon my honor, is what one other co-teacher once did to one of my colleagues after being absent for half the week.'"**

**Even teachers who love co-teaching, like the ones featured above, have had their share of doozies. The teacher who thinks she knows your subject. Or the one who not-so-secretly believes she's really the boss.**

**Many teachers will quietly wait out the year. (June is coming, right?) But Alice Henley, a co-teaching trainer, recommends asking for help. "The way we approach it is, 'This is a professional relationship.'" As such, there are professional solutions—like real training—that your department head, administrator, or building rep should be able to help you get. (And a 45-minute sales pitch on how great co-teaching is going to be is not real training.)**

**"I've seen teams that I didn't think could work it out manage to pull it together successfully, and I think it speaks to their professionalism—and their commitment to children," Henley says.**

**2.**

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## **6 Steps to Successful Co-Teaching**

### **Helping Special and Regular Education Teachers Work Together**

**By Natalie Marston, elementary special educator, Charles County, Maryland**

**Found In: teaching strategies**

#### **Article Sections**

**Establish Rapport**

**Teaching Styles**

**Strengths & Weaknesses**

**IEPs & Goals**

**Unified Team**

**Take Risks and Grow**

**Are you wondering how you can co-teach effectively and make it a successful year for both teachers and students?**

**As co-teachers - a regular and a special education teacher - you will plan lessons and teach a subject together to a class of special and regular education students. Your**

**co-teaching will support academic diversity in the regular classroom and provide all students with access to the county and state curriculum.**

**Co-teaching can be a wonderful experience when planning and communication are in place beginning day one. Here are six steps I've found very helpful when preparing for a co-teaching experience.**

**1. Establish rapport.**

**The first step that you (the regular classroom teacher and the special education teacher) need to take is 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? Are you married? Children? Hobbies? Where did you grow up?**

**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, never to open a textbook? While your co-teacher needs to 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 of your styles to create a cohesive classroom. You need to find a balance that makes everyone comfortable.**

**When you plan lessons together, you can use your two styles to complement one another and thus enhance the lessons and the delivery of instruction. You create a cohesive classroom with consistent expectations when both of you 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 and 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 more frequently within the classroom as well as allowing for individualized instruction.**

### **4. Discuss Individualized Education Plans and regular education goals.**

**To create Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), the special educator needs to involve the regular 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 of you 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 regular education teacher can then work together in meeting the student's goals and ensuring adequate progress.**

**In the same way, the regular education teacher should discuss with the special education teacher his or her goals for the regular students, as the regular 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 and homework policies, 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 with them. 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 bombs, 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.**

**Enjoy!**

**Co-teaching is an experience that is as good as you allow it to be. You have the opportunity to work with another educator daily. Make the most of it. Enjoy!**

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### 3. A Maryland initiative seeks to scale up co-teaching as a way to support students of all needs.

By Liana Heitin



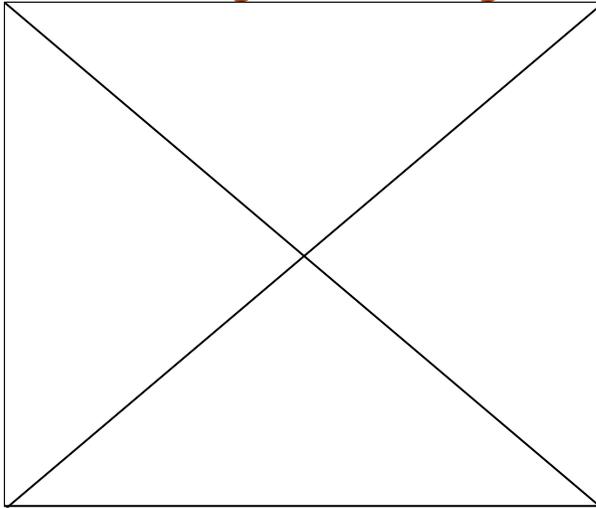
When it comes to good co-teaching, fluidity is the name of the game.

In Katierose Dobrzykowski and Sara Dunaway’s co-taught 3rd grade classroom, there are few awkward pauses, jerky transitions, or blank stares from students. Instead, there’s constant motion, split-second decision-making, and an assembly of self-assured, active bodies. The teachers lead their students in a swift and graceful dance.

The teaching team at Norwood Elementary, in Baltimore, Md., begins an end-of-year division lesson with a homemade movie clip: A group of teachers are standing in the school supply closet, attempting to split a stash of pencils. How many pencils should each teacher get? Is it fair if one teacher gets five and another gets 40? The kids are enraptured, smiling at seeing their teachers on camera, shaking their heads “no” at the silly suggestion.

With a click of the remote, the projector is off and the kids turn their attention to the live action in front of them. Dunaway, the general education teacher, asks for a definition of “divide.” Dobrzykowski, the special education teacher, writes the word on the board and steers some students toward the word wall, where the definition is posted. All students’ eyes are tracking their teachers. Even the one boy sitting under a desk at the front of the room—because, as Dobrzykowski later explains, that’s where she is most comfortable working—is engaged and involved in the lesson.

## 'Co-Teaching Is a Marriage'



Baltimore County teachers Sara Dunaway and Dawn Peake talk about how co-teaching benefits their relationships with their students—and each other.

The teachers then glide into whole-group guided practice, during which they discretely place colored tiles on students' desks. Both to an observer and to students, it's unclear—and seemingly unimportant—what the colored tiles mean. But the teachers are assessing and signifying who needs to be re-taught prior skills, who should continue practicing the day's lesson with guidance, and who is ready for individual work. Students will break out into groups for the next activity—stations—based on the color they received.

The payoff of Dobrzykowski and Dunaway's partnership becomes truly apparent during stations. They do not take a typical approach, in which equal groups rotate through a defined set of activities on the buzzer. In their classroom, students move to the next station, to practice a higher skill set, only when they're ready.

Dobrzykowski sits at a table with those who received green tiles. Today green indicates the kids who are still struggling with prior skills, so she reviews the foundations of division with this group. When students show mastery—which takes just a few minutes for some kids and the majority of the period for others—they move over to Dunaway's station to practice the day's division lesson. After practice with Dunaway, students slide into desks at an individual practice station. Upon completing the individual work, students find their differentiated assessment, a clipboard, and a spot on the rug to take their post-lesson test. Once all of

Dobrzykowski's students have graduated from re-teach, students who have finished their assessments circle back to her for an extension lesson.



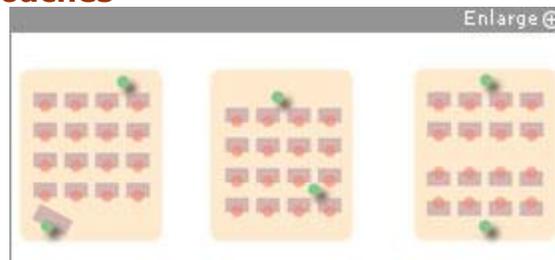
Students travel between the five stations with whatever manipulatives they prefer to use: whiteboards, graphic organizers, or blocks, for example. Each station has a bucket of props and writing tools as well, so materials are always on hand. There isn't a moment of idle time.

Every so often during the 45-minutes of stations, the two teachers exchange quick, serious whispers. As Dobrzykowski says later, "it wasn't going how we thought it would go"—an admission that would surprise most observers. But having worked together for three years now, says Dunaway, "we can do more on the fly."

At the end of the lesson, the class regroups to review what they have learned. Dobrzykowski leads the inquiry while Dunaway monitors behavior and punctuates the wrap-up with questions of her own. The students are on task until the minute they head out the door for lunch.

## Principal Support

### Co-teaching Approaches



*Co-teaching: Concepts, Practices, and Logistics*, Marilyn Friend, Ph.D., August, 2006

Co-teaching is a method of instruction in which a general educator and special educator teach together in one classroom. The idea is that the general educator

serves as the content and curriculum expert, while the special educator is the learning-process expert, ensuring the content is accessible to students with and without disabilities.

Within a school, most educators agree, co-teaching works best when initiated from the top. According to Marilyn Friend, president of the **Council for Exceptional Children** and author of several books on co-teaching, “administrators absolutely make or break co-teaching at a school site across all school levels. They set the standards of practice; ... they set the culture in terms of receptivity.”

Principals also control perhaps the most important factor in a co-teaching scenario: scheduling. Co-teachers need common planning time, ideally during school hours, though some administrators offer stipends for teachers who plan together outside the school day. Patrice Goldys, the principal at Norwood, says she creates a co-teaching schedule at the beginning of the year with input from the participating teachers. Throughout the year, the schedule takes “a whole lot of tweaking,” she says, but the teachers are willing to adapt “because they know it’s better for the kids.”

In addition, administrators determine how students are divided into classes. There’s some temptation to put the majority of a grade’s low-performing students and troublemakers into a co-taught class, but that can create a perfect storm that impairs both teaching and learning. Friend recommends that co-taught classes be made up of no more than one-third students receiving special education services—a higher ratio than in most classes, since generally about 10 percent of all students fall into that category. And the rest of the class should “represent a heterogeneous mix,” she says, “rather than all struggling students.”

Having district-level support makes co-teaching easier as well. The central office can shift staffing allocations, train teachers and administrators, and fund technology to help co-teaching run smoothly.

### **Maryland’s ‘Nested Boxes’**



Co-teachers Sara Dunaway, top, and Katierose Dobrzykowski administer differentiated learning stations during a math lesson on division.

—Nicole Frugé

In Maryland, a push for co-teaching is coming from even further up the ladder. In 2008, the Maryland State Department of Education launched an initiative to support its lowest-performing schools, as required by the federal No Child Left Behind law, and targeted special education as an area for improvement. Pointing to success in several Maryland districts, including Howard County Public Schools—where state officials say students with disabilities made significant academic progress in co-taught classes—the department upped its efforts to take co-teaching statewide. The state developed a framework for co-teaching, providing a common language and guidelines for all districts to use. The framework spelled out the roles and responsibilities for staff members at the district, school, and classroom levels.

Principals at 25 Maryland schools across seven districts agreed to participate in a co-teaching pilot program, funded in part by a federal State Improvement Grant. They each chose one special educator and one general educator to teach in a content area

for at least a year, attend state and local-sponsored professional development and, ultimately, train their school-site colleagues about co-teaching. Under the same grant, administered by the federal Office of Special Education Programs, MSDE plans to expand its professional development website to house free co-teaching resources, including podcasts, video clips, and webinars.

Bob Glasscock, executive director of the Breakthrough Center, a state agency focused on school turnarounds that is helping coordinate the co-teaching initiative, explains that co-teaching arrangements are often “episodic” or inconsistent. But by integrating support from state, district, and school leaders, the state coordinators are hoping Maryland’s initiative will be more sustainable. “What we didn’t find in the literature and professional development was connecting all three levels,” he says. “That’s what’s different about this.”

Paul Dunford, MSDE’s director of cross-divisional initiatives, adds, “Think of it as nested boxes. In that center box is the classroom teacher.” The outside boxes each provide a layer of support, he explains.

MSDE officials are quick to point out, however, that the co-teaching initiative is not about compliance. The framework is not a list of requirements but rather suggested best practices, and professional development sessions are presented as an opportunity for district leaders to learn from one another. “What we’re seeing now is schools replicating different ideas from different principals,” says Dunford. “We didn’t say, ‘This is how to do it.’” The buy-in comes easier when the state is there to be supportive rather than punitive, state officials explain.

### **An Equal Partnership**

That said, representatives from the state do go into classrooms to check in on how things are going. The observers want to see, for instance, that teachers are using a variety of co-teaching approaches. The Maryland framework is based on Friend’s extensive research, which lays out six different co-teaching models. Friend says teachers need to be using at least three of the six models over time, and “one should be a high-intensity strategy,” such as station teaching, as the Norwood team often uses, or parallel teaching, in which the teachers split the class into two equal groups. A co-taught class should look notably different than a class with only one instructor. “Because two times the same old thing is really the same old thing,” Friend says.

The Breakthrough Center's Glasscock says that a common pitfall noticed during observations is that too many teams resort to "one teach, one assist"—or what he refers to as the "shark" method, in which one teacher leads instruction and the other hovers, providing quiet individual assistance.

While this method is appropriate every once in a while, Friend agrees it's used too often. "The goal is to get both people teaching—that's how you increase the intensity." One teach, one assist can also cause tension between instructors. In many cases, the special education teacher is dubbed the assistant, either because the general educator does not want to give up reign of the classroom or because the special educator is disinclined to step up.

Dobrzykowski and Dunaway at Norwood say they work hard to maintain an equal partnership, or what they refer to as their "marriage with children." From the beginning of the year, they present themselves as a team. Both of their names are on the classroom door and on report cards. They give a joint presentation at back-to-school night and conduct parent-teacher conferences together. "I made it really a point to say 'we,' not 'I,'" says Dunaway. "It's 'us, ours, our kids.' I didn't want her to feel like you're an aide or just some extra person I didn't want in here."

In addition to using their common planning time, the two teachers speak on the phone every night. They discuss student progress and go over the next day's lesson, or "visualize the fight," says Dunaway, "like in boxing." The planning has gotten easier over the years, but it's still time-consuming, they explain. Like in any marriage, "you have to trust each other," says Dunaway, "and both people have to put forth the work."

### **Data Challenges**

Friend notes that there has been "little research that clearly establishes the efficacy of co-teaching." For one, co-teaching involves so many variables that it's one of the toughest instructional practices to collect reliable data on. In order for a study to have validity, says Friend, "there would have to be comparable classrooms with and without co-teaching with comparable students, comparable teachers, and comparable activities,"—a logistical impossibility in most large samples. The study would also have to show evidence that co-teaching was implemented with fidelity in each classroom, says Friend.

As of now, the Maryland initiative has been unable to definitively tie co-teaching to test scores or other student data. “Teaching partners are not staying the same, principals are not staying the same, and obviously the kids are changing,” says Fran Sorin, chair of MSDE’s co-teaching initiative. “So we don’t have a constant.” Further, while some Maryland principals and co-teachers have begun to train their school-site colleagues, others have not, making it hard to measure schools against each other.



With students at lunch, special educator Katierose Dobrzykowski, left, and general educator Sara Dunaway take a few minutes to debrief in the hallway after a co-taught math lesson.

—Nicole Frugé

Yet Friend stresses gathering data at the school and district level is both feasible and critical. Doing so “not only gives momentum internally but also demonstrates to others outside the effect that co-teaching can have,” she explains. Schools and districts around the country are showing positive results for students with and without disabilities in co-taught classes, she says, but for the most part those data are never published.

At Norwood, after the first year of co-teaching in 2007, 95 percent of 3rd graders tested on or above grade level—up about 7 percent from the year before and 23 percent from 2005, according to Goldys, Norwood’s principal. That class was the first one at Norwood to have more than 90 percent of students achieve proficiency in math.

However, over the next couple of years, the proportion of students who were proficient in math went back down. Last year, it hovered around 81 percent. Goldys attributes the decline to inconsistent funding for co-teaching and changes in enrollment, including increases in student mobility. She says she remains committed to expanding co-teaching to all grades.

Friend encourages schools to measure effectiveness with factors other than just standardized test scores, such as formative test data, discipline records, absences, and parent and student satisfaction surveys. Schools should also try to track “the intangibles, [such as] students as members of classroom and school communities, peer acceptance, [and] decreases in behavior problems,” says Friend.



The Norwood team says their co-taught students are unquestionably more engaged, less likely to act out, and, as shown by their daily assessment records, more likely to master an objective during a co-taught than solo-taught lesson.

This fall, Dobrzykowski and Dunaway will face the challenge of inconsistency as well. Dobrzykowski will move down to kindergarten, and Dunaway, inspired by her co-teaching experience to work toward a special education certification, will loop to the 4th grade as the special educator. Yet their partnership will not come to an end entirely. Both will continue to lead staff development on co-teaching at their school—just the type of on-the-ground effort the Maryland department is counting on to sustain the co-teaching initiative. And while there’s no guarantee they’ll be able to recreate their classroom fluidity within new “marriages,” both are committed to continuing co-teaching.

Very simply, “I get more out of it,” says Dunaway. “The kids get more out of it.”

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### **Common Co-Teaching Issues**

**Based on extended observations and interviews with more than 70 general education/special education teacher teams, we have identified several issues that co-teachers must address if they are to be successful.**

**Whose students are these?**

**Address this issue before co-teaching begins: Who is responsible for the students in the classroom? The general education teacher is responsible for all of the students in the class, but how do these responsibilities change when the special education teacher is in the room? Who is responsible for the students with special needs? Under what conditions do these responsibilities change?**

**Who gives grades? How do we grade?**

**Perhaps the issue that warrants the most discussion prior to co-teaching is grading. Special education teachers are accustomed to grading based on the effort, motivation, and abilities of the students. General education teachers are accustomed to grading based on a uniform set of expectations that is only slightly adjusted to reflect issues of effort, motivation, and student abilities. Making joint decisions about how grades will be handled for in-class assignments, tests, and homework will reduce the frictions frequently associated with grading special education students in general education classrooms. Working together, teachers can develop guidelines for grading to use with both students and parents.**

**Whose classroom management rules do we use?**

**Most general and special education teachers know the types of academic and social behaviors they find acceptable and unacceptable. Over the years, they have established consequences for inappropriate behaviors. Rarely is there disagreement between teachers about the more extreme behaviors. The subtle classroom management difficulties that are part of the ongoing routines of running a classroom, however, can cause concerns for teachers. Often, the special education teacher is unsure about when he or she should step in and assist with classroom management. Teachers should discuss their classroom management styles and the roles they expect of each other in maintaining a smoothly running classroom.**

**What space do I get?**

**When special education teachers spend part of their day instructing in general education classrooms, it is extremely useful to have a designated area for them to keep their materials. A desk and chair that are used only by special education teachers provide them with a "base" from which to work and contribute to their position of authority.**

**What do we tell the students?**

**An issue repeatedly brought up by teachers is how much information should be given to students. Should students be informed that they will have two teachers? Should students know that one of the teachers is a special education teacher and that she will be assisting some children more than others? The students should be informed that they have two teachers and that both teachers have the same authority. We think it is a good idea to introduce the special education teacher as a "learning abilities" specialist who will be working with all of the students from time to time. It is our experience that students willingly accept the idea of having two teachers and like it very much. In interviews we have conducted, many students who have participated in co-teaching classrooms tell us that having two teachers is better because everyone gets more help.**

### **What do we tell the parents?**

**Teachers are often unsure of how much they should tell parents about their new teaching arrangement. One of the concerns that teachers have is how parents might react to having a special education teacher in the classroom for part of the day. It is our experience that these programs are most successful when parents are brought in early and are part of the planning process. Thus, parents are part of the process from the beginning and are able to influence the development of the program. Parents of average- to high-achieving children may express concerns that their children's education may be hampered because students with special needs are placed in the classroom. Teachers report that these students fare as well or better, academically and socially, when students with special needs are in the general education classroom; and all students benefit from the support provided by the special education teacher (Arguelles, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1996).**

### **How can we get time to co-plan?**

**The most pervasive concern of both general and special education teachers in co-teaching situations is obtaining sufficient time during the school day to plan and discuss instruction and student progress. This is of particular concern for special education teachers who are working with more than one general education teacher. Teachers report that planning often comes on their own time. Even when a designated period is established for co-planning, teachers report that this time gets taken away to be used for meetings and other school management activities. Teachers need a minimum of 45 minutes of uninterrupted planning time each week if they are likely to have a successful co-teaching experience. One suggestion made by several of the teacher teams with whom we have worked is to designate a day or a half-day every 6-8 weeks when teachers can meet extensively to plan and discuss the progress of students, as well as changes in their instructional practices.**

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