

***Co-Teaching is tough,
Teachers are tougher***

Co-Teaching Teacher Essential



Co-Teaching

What it is, What it isn't, and
How to work with it.

"It really is like a marriage. You are partners, in the classroom, in taking care of kids, in teaching. It's pretty remarkable, actually." -10 yr. veteran teacher, NYC

What it IS

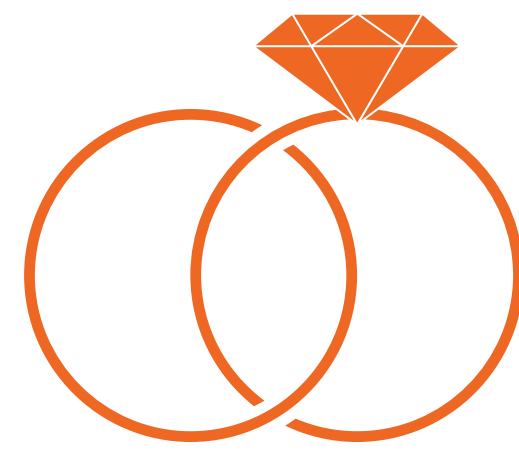
- Two professionals who teach as equals in the classroom.
- An inclusive model of education used to provide support for students of all abilities.
- Two teachers who **SHARE** planning, assessment creation, grading and instruction.
- An opportunity for smaller student-to-teacher ratio.
- Requires time provided by administration for co-planning.

Perception
VS
Reality

What is NOT

- It is not one 'real' teacher and one 'assistant'.
- It is not a 'general ed' class with 'special' kids in it.
- It is not 'dumbed-down' or lowered standards curriculum.
- It is not less work or time than teaching alone.
- It is not impossible.
- It is not easy.

Co-Teaching is Like a Marriage



Clear Expectations

Co-Teachers and administration, need to have pre-observation meetings that set clear expectations of what the relationship will look like and how it will function.



Time

Co-Teachers need to be given, and commit to, time everyday to talk, co-plan, troubleshoot and create assignments together



Space

Co-Teachers must share a classroom, supplies and material. Additionally, they need designated space to work together.



Responsibility

Co-Teachers must either share or agree how to divide all responsibilities of teaching, grading, inspiring, and disciplining all children in your class.



Co-Teaching is Proven!

Inclusion models show consistent gains for students with special needs.

This includes benefits for gifted students

Co-Teaching Models

One Teach, One Observe

One teacher teaches, the other passively makes observations.

Best for:

- Observing each other's teaching techniques or styles
- Recording individual student behavior for RTI, IEP, or parent meetings
- Recording students' response rates
- Observing effectiveness of a certain activity

Parallel Teaching

Both teachers teach the same lesson to two different groups of students simultaneously.

Best for:

- Breaking up very large classes
- Teaching the same lesson using modified materials, so students don't see the difference
- Teaching different perspectives to then come back together for a debate, discussion or share out

Team Teaching

Both teachers teach the same lesson to the whole class together, taking turns delivering instruction, writing on the board or modeling.

Best for:

- Breaking up responsibilities in a complicated lesson
- Using different delivery methods of direct instruction simultaneously

Co-Teaching Models

One Teach, One Assist

One teacher teaches the lesson while the other assists the teacher or a certain student (s).

Best for:

- Making individual modifications
- When a lot of materials need to be managed simultaneously
- When one teacher needs to be walking around or monitoring
- When another task needs to be happening while direct instruction is given

Station Teaching

Each teacher works with particular stations at the same time.

Best for:

- Deeper learning stations
- Close monitoring of student behavior and learning
- When teachers want personal interaction with each student

Alternative Teaching

One teacher teaches the lesson, while the other does individual pull out or push in.

Best for:

- Individual students who need: One-on-one attention, academic remediation, behavioral support, or direct intervention
- Lessons that are extremely differentiated and student(s) need individual supports.



Co-Teaching

"Getting to Know You" Questionnaire



To Use: The first step to sharing a classroom is to get to know each other as individual teachers. Collaborative instruction should complete the following questionnaire based on their individual planning, teaching, and discipline style prior to discussing and deciding on their shared styles.

Planning Style

1. When Do you Plan your lessons?
2. When do you finalize your lesson plan before teaching?
3. How do you plan your lessons? (Through-process)
4. What final format does your lesson plan take? (Hand-written, typed, scripted, PowerPoint with notes)
5. What method of saving and sharing documents do you use?
6. How far in advance do you plan?
7. When do you typically make copies of handouts?

Teaching Style

1. How do you greet your class?
2. How much casual chatter do you engage in with your students before, during, and after the class?
3. Which types of instructional activities do you use most often?
4. How frequently do you assign and grade homework?
5. What is your typical ratio of direct instruction to group-work?

Discipline Style

1. What is your policy for lateness?
2. What is your policy for excused and unexcused absences?
3. What is your policy for bathroom usage?
4. What are your everyday classroom guidelines or procedures?

5. How do you address a student who is not following the classroom guidelines or policies? (tone of voice, publically, privately, etc.)

6. What considerations do you make before reprimanding a student?

7. In general, what level of noise do you tolerate during class?

Grading Style

1. How do you mathematically calculate grades or measure progress? (categories, percentages, weights, etc.)

2. How do you evaluate and grade homework, class work, assessments, participation, etc.? (checkmark, numerical / letter grade, comments, etc.)

3. When do you grade? (everyday, every weekend, as needed, etc.)

4. What systems do you use to record and calculate grades? (Paper grade book, Skedula, GradeBook Pro, Engrade, etc.)

Organizational Style

1. How and when do you collect and organize student work?
2. How and when do you pass back student work?
3. What does your desk look like?
4. What does your classroom look like?
5. What do you usually display on the walls of your classroom?
6. Where do you keep your teaching materials and supplies?



Co-Teaching

"Checking In" Questionnaire



To Use: After you have been working together for a few weeks, take some time to check-in with one another. It is important to evaluate your working relationship so that small issues don't grow into big problems. This questionnaire should be used multiple times throughout the school year. Over the course of the partnership, ideally, your total score will increase, although, it might decrease if you experience a stressful period.

1. I am contributing sound teaching practices.

- Never (0 points)
- Occasionally (1 point)
- Regularly (2 points)
- Most of the time (3 points)
- Always (4 points)

2. If I feel my teaching partner is contributing sound teaching practices

- Never (0 points)
- Occasionally (1 point)
- Regularly (2 points)
- Most of the time (3 points)
- Always (4 points)

3. I frequently acknowledge and reinforce my partner.

- Never (0 points)
- Occasionally (1 point)
- Regularly (2 points)
- Most of the time (3 points)
- Always (4 points)

4. I feel like my partner respects and listens to me.

- Never (0 points)
- Occasionally (1 point)
- Regularly (2 points)
- Most of the time (3 points)
- Always (4 points)

5. I feel like an equal in the classroom and during planning sessions.

- Never (0 points)
- Occasionally (1 point)
- Regularly (2 points)
- Most of the time (3 points)
- Always (4 points)

6. I treat my partner as an equal in the classroom and during planning sessions.

- Never (0 points)
- Occasionally (1 point)
- Regularly (2 points)
- Most of the time (3 points)
- Always (4 points)

7. My time is used productively in the classroom.

- Never (0 points)
- Occasionally (1 point)
- Regularly (2 points)
- Most of the time (3 points)
- Always (4 points)

8. My time is used productively during planning.

- Never (0 points)
- Occasionally (1 point)
- Regularly (2 points)
- Most of the time (3 points)
- Always (4 points)

9. I communicate frequently and effectively.

- Never (0 points)
- Occasionally (1 point)
- Regularly (2 points)
- Most of the time (3 points)
- Always (4 points)

10. I am satisfied with how my partner communicates with

- me. Never (0 points)
- Occasionally (1 point)
- Regularly (2 points)
- Most of the time (3 points)
- Always (4 points)

Add up the point value of each of your answers to obtain your total.

Total _____ /40

What does your score mean?

0-15 points: Need to address certain issues immediately with your teaching partner

16-35 points: On track to a good working relationship

36-40 points: Effective collaborative relationship

Activity One: Share your scores with your teaching partner

1. How do your scores compare? Are they similar or drastically different?
2. Are your scores for your own contributions in line with how your partner perceives them? Are you scoring yourself too harshly / generously?
3. Vice versa...are your scores for your partner's contributions in line with how they perceive themselves?

Activity Two: Action steps

1. Look at the questions that you answered with "Never" or "Occasionally".
2. Write down one change you will make to improve. (in box below)
3. Write down one change you will ask your teaching partner to make. (in box below)
4. Take turns and share your "change statements".
 - One person speaks at a time.
 - The other person just listens.
5. Discuss the logistics of making these changes and decide when you will begin. The sooner the better.
6. Remember, don't take these suggestions too personally. This is your job and your main focus should be on how you can do your job better, more efficiently, and more enjoyably.
7. Shake on it, go get some coffee and get started!

Change statements & Goals



Co-Teaching Strategy 1

Co-Organization



Teaching side-by-side with another professional in front of a classroom for hours a day, day in and day out, is **HARD**. Co-organization is key. It saves time, energy, and most importantly frustration, to keep your team-teaching relationship strong.

1 Short-Term Organization: Create and share a cloud storage system for your lesson plans, assessments, and documents just for your class. As teachers, we create and/or edit about 5M documents a week. It's hard enough to do that solo, let alone have to share it with another professional.

Two Popular Options:

- **Dropbox:** Allows for shared documents; Does NOT allow for simultaneous editing.
- **GoogleDocs:** Go to Google Drive in your Gmail Account: Is not as visually friendly, but DOES allow for simultaneous editing.

Implementation Tips:

- Choose 1 method and set it up right away
- Agree on what to label folders and make it clear
- Make sure you “share” all folders with every member of your team
- Consider sharing with Para Instructors and students as well

2 Long-Term Organization: Create and share a Google Calendar with your co-teacher, just for your shared classes. This is an easy way to stay on the same page and keep a few days ahead of lesson planning.

Implementation Tips:

- Choose a time of week to review and edit your calendar together.
- Include other tasks that you split, besides lesson planning, such as- Grading assignments, data entry, phone calls home, decorating the classroom, displaying student work
- Include major dates for each semester, such as Parent-Teacher Conferences, when grades are due, when you are giving assessments, assemblies and field trips.



Co-Teaching Strategy 2

Supply Coordination



Co-Teaching requires an obscene amount of coordination, even for simple details, like supplies. Since there are TWO teachers who, at any given moment, are reaching for pencils, sharing a stapler, or grabbing for the projector remote, it is KEY to have designated spaces for supplies, so both of you know where everything is, at all times.

Here are some tried-and-true methods of keeping supplies stationary, keeping you & your teaching partner sane:

Jewelry Pocket Hangers



Velcro



Shoe Organizers



Labeled Storage Boxes or Stations



Drawer Organizer

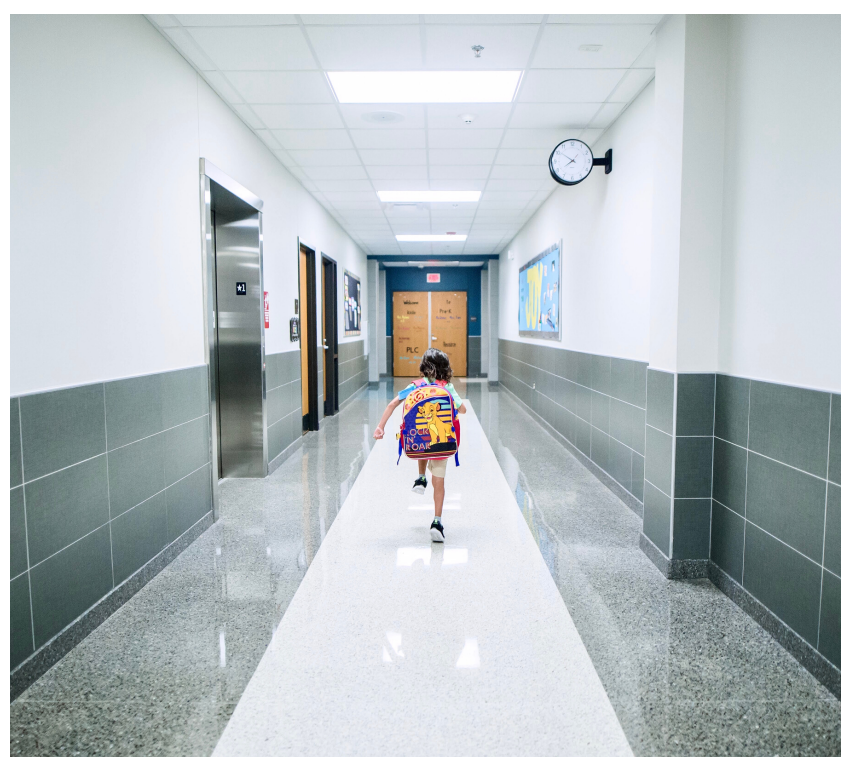


Implementation Tips

- Choose one method and try it out; Don't be afraid to switch it up and try another if it doesn't work!
- Agree to make a conscious effort to use them regularly.
- Designate a time at the beginning or end of each day to put all things back where they belong- it will help to keep consistent!



Co-Teaching Strategy 3 Traffic Communication



Have you ever told a student they could go to the bathroom when your co-teacher already let someone else out? Especially in a very large, or call with older, more independent students, sometimes it is really hard to keep track of the traffic!

Here are the two methods that work:

1. In/Out Signs:

Velcro or hang In/Out sign and have fun students flip to "Out" when they leave the classroom, and to "In" when they return.

Access the Strategy | Use in your Classroom Today

[Printable In/Out Sign](#)

2. Erasable Sign-Out Whiteboard or Chalkboard:

Have students write their names when they leave, and erase it when they get back!

At a glance BOTH teachers and students, know who, or if someone, is out of the class and do not have to waste time or energy checking in with everyone.



Co-Teaching Strategy 4

Two Voices



Two heads ARE better than one! Co-teaching can be fun when you have two voices to model discussion, questions students may have, or to do role-play.

1. Model Student Questions and Answers

Co-teachers can anticipate and plan to model questions the students might have about an assignment or directions and then answer them. This not only clarifies understanding, but also helps those students who are afraid to ask questions.

Teacher #1- Gives Directions...

Teacher #2- "Ms.Smith, what do you mean when you say explain the character's perspective?"

Teacher #1- "That's a really good question Ms.Plant, when I said you must explain the character's perspective, I meant you must explain how they were feeling and what they were thinking during this part of the plot.

2. Model Discussion Practices

Teachers can use team teaching to show the class how they expect discussions to go, or model specific group work practices.

Teacher #1- Since I am the discussion leader, I start by asking a question. "Do you think the experiment went well?"

Teacher #2- (Models listening to the question, keeping eyes on speaker). Raises talking stick, showing she wants to speak.

Teacher #1- Yes, Ms.Plant, you can speak.

Teacher #2- I think our experiment went well because we followed all of the directions, but I think our hypothesis was wrong. *(Passes talking stick along)*

3. Role-Play Characters, Historical Figures for acting or read aloud

Teachers can act as characters or figures of history to model acting, perspective, or expression in reading out loud. Use accents when appropriate - this will really get your students to listen!

Teacher #1- (Reads Lady Macbeth's parts with disgust)- "We fail? But screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we'll not fail"

Teacher #2- (Reads Macbeth's parts with terror)- "Me though I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep"



Inspirational Ideas



To keep your co-teaching relationship fun and fresh, while keeping students on their toes

1. Secret Code Words

While co-teaching, it's absolutely necessary to communicate - but not always in front of the children. Try **creating both code word(s) and non-verbal cue(s)** with each other in the classroom so you can communicate and not make it obvious to the kids.

For example:

A. Most times one teacher **has a certain student they don't deal as well with as the other teacher**- Instead of pointing that out to everyone, use the phrase, "I need you to get the gradebook," to signal the other teacher that s/he needs to address a certain child. This makes everyone's life easier, without letting the kids know.

B. If one of you **has to leave class in an emergency**, try grabbing your keys and shaking them, so the other knows you are quickly stepping out, without having to make a whole-class announcement.

C. Create **an important bonding experience for you and your co-teacher**. For example, the word "Sombrero" was used by a pair of co-teachers whenever they recognized that they should calm down in a staff meeting or other potentially tense situations. Things can get pretty hairy working in a school, so to help bring the other off the ledge, they would say "Put on your sombrero" as a code for "Stop talking and relax- it's not worth it." It became an inside joke & helped change the mood, lightening things up...something we could all use once in awhile.

Code Words are best when:

- Someone is having a bad day.
- There is an emergency situation and it's better if the kids don't know.
- Talking about a certain child or behavior that would be inappropriate for the other kids to know.
- There are emotions getting involved that need to be curbed.
- When you just need to make your job a little more enjoyable

2. Dress Up Alike

This will most likely eventually happen anyway, but it is **fun to coordinate outfits or play dress up** for holidays, or special occasions. Dress the same, or dress up as certain characters, or for a cause such as Earth Day or when the students have a test!



- It shows your students you are on the same team
- Your students will think it is funny and appreciate it
- Again, it brings a much-needed light heartedness to the job

3. Switch Roles

This is also very fun to do after spending much time in the classroom. **Switch** roles, swap "**good cop, bad cop**" roles or **imitate the other** for the day. (After spending so much time together, you will know each other's personalities and idiosyncrasies enough to do this quite well.)



- Choose to announce it to your students, or see if they catch on.
- Practice with your co-teacher ahead of time
- Use it to prove a point in a lesson

4. Crucial Surprises

You will spend SO much time with your co-teacher it **shouldn't take that much effort to know how they take their coffee**, what their favorite bagel is or their favorite afternoon snack. Surprise your co-teacher with a personalized treat when they are least expecting it. A thoughtful little gesture like this goes a long way!



- A **coffee** on a random Tuesday morning.
- Their **favorite snack** after a rough afternoon meeting.
- Their **favorite type of pen or marker** (because they are constantly lost)
- **New supplies** for your shared classroom (replace the broken stapler)
- **Make the copies early** one day, so they don't have to do it during their prep

5. Play Games!

Playing a game or making a friendly competition during class without the students knowing is a fun way to keep track of date or make records. For example, if you have to keep track of how many times Ben gets out of his seat each day - take educated guesses and buy the winner a treat, or trade off less desirable jobs.



- Place a **friendly competition** on how many students will participate in a given activity
- Make educated guesses about a **specific child's behavior that you need to track**
- Create a game to see **how many students** you can get to **answer correctly** or get the highest grades