

Co-teaching in the Algebra Classroom

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Co-Teaching is an instructional delivery approach in which general and special educators share responsibility for planning, delivery, and evaluation of instructional techniques for a group of students. As with all grade level courses, differentiation and scaffolding is an expectation to meet the needs of ALL students. The whole class is to be considered “our kids.”

Some students in the class have IEPs.

- Progress towards IEP goals is expected and must be monitored.
- Specially Designed Instruction must be implemented with fidelity.
- Both teachers are responsible to understand and deliver the individual student’s SDI.
- Both teachers must communicate with case managers regarding SDI that must be continued or changed.
- Both teachers are responsible for completing required feedback paperwork.
- Teachers should collaborate with one another to ensure learning occurs in a high quality, rigorous, and differentiated environment.

Minimum standards for planning:

- Discuss and agree upon appropriate level of supports / materials for ALL students.
- Minimum 1x/week co-planning, in a group, with all grade level subject area co-teachers. This group should collaborate to share best practices and successful instructional techniques.
- Both teachers are responsible for the development and maintenance of lesson plans.
- Substitutes should be requested for any teacher absent.
- If one teacher is absent, he/she must leave detailed substitute plans, as he/she would for any class. “See (co-teacher)” is not acceptable.

Minimum standards for instruction:

- Minimal direct instruction / whole group / lead and support
- Play to each teacher’s strengths
- Students should not perceive there to be a “lead teacher”
- Use smaller, flexible groups whenever possible
- Care must be taken during planning not to stigmatize any learner

Minimum standards for evaluation:

- Shared grading with collaboration on grading expectations and/or methods
- Shared parent contact
- Consideration of progress monitoring requirements
- Differentiate tasks, assessments as needed for ALL students

A Philosophical Basic

When experienced co-teachers discuss what makes co-teaching succeed or fail, they typically emphasize the importance of a shared belief system or philosophy for the teachers involved. They comment that if co-teachers do not share the same underlying beliefs about what teaching and learning are all about, it is unlikely that they will be comfortable sharing instructional responsibilities. The following chart can help you and your co-teacher discuss your instructional philosophy:

	My Beliefs	My Co-Teacher's Beliefs	To discuss further
In the classroom, what are your three most important beliefs about discipline?			
When you think about teaching, what is your favorite teaching method?			
What arrangements will be made if one of you is absent from class? How is the co-teacher notified? What will be the substitute's role?			
When you think about students in the classroom, what are your three absolutes?			
When you think about teacher's responsibilities, what are your three absolutes?			
When you think about overall classroom climate, what are your three absolutes?			
How should differences/conflicts be resolved with each other?			
What are your beliefs on the use of a calculator?			
How should parent communication be handled?			

Co-teaching Approaches

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

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

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

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

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

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

What's the difference?

Mainstream with Supports	Co-Teaching
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Based on parity – all individuals contributions are valued 2. Regular education teacher takes onus 3. Can happen among team of educators, entire staff, or simply between teacher and paraprofessional 4. Regular education teacher responsible for accommodations of IEP students 5. Collaborative conversations – make public what has traditionally been private – goals, strategies, materials, pacing, questions, concerns, results <p>Para-Professional could...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - manage a group working independently - lead a group in guided reading - monitor student's answers for accuracy - work with a student one on one who need encouragement, focusing - sign agenda books <p>“Collaboration is no longer a choice; it is a necessity. Working together... is essential in order to address the increasingly diverse and sometimes daunting needs of students. If we work together, both when it is easy and when it is difficult, we can meet these needs.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Marilyn Friend</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Two teachers teaching together at the same time in the same classroom 2. Cannot exist without collaboration between both teachers 3. Allows for research-based co-teaching models: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Team teaching b. Parallel teaching c. One teach-One assist d. One teach-One observe e. Station teaching f. Alternative teaching <p>General Education and Special Education teachers-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plan together - share responsibility for all students - share grading and assessment decisions/modifications - work with ALL students/share whole group - share in the supporting of behavioral goals/progress monitoring for IEP
Positive Outcomes	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Para-professionals are not seen as the “aid” in the room. 2. Students receive supports without being in a co-taught classroom. 3. Students emulate cooperative and collaborative skills their teacher's model. 4. Para-professionals involved feel empowered by having the opportunity to collaboratively make decisions. 5. Allow for more feedback to students. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers capitalize on unique, diverse and specialized knowledge, skills, and instructional approaches. 2. Teachers structure class more effectively, use research-proven strategies. 3. Design curriculum to meet greater variety of student needs. 4. Shared grading and communication with families. 5. Allow for more feedback to students.

References

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