

Effective Co-Teaching Models in Inclusive Classrooms

Collaborating to Provide High-Quality Instruction and Support for All Learners

Purpose & Overview

This guide supports general education and special education teachers in implementing effective co-teaching practices within inclusive classrooms. Co-teaching allows educators to combine their expertise to provide instruction that meets the needs of diverse learners, including students with disabilities.

The purpose of this guide is to help teaching partners understand co-teaching models, define clear roles, and collaborate effectively to improve student engagement, access to instruction, and academic outcomes.

Instructional Outcomes

By applying the strategies in this guide, teachers will be able to:

- Understand and implement different co-teaching models
 - Define roles and responsibilities within the classroom
 - Plan collaboratively to meet diverse student needs
 - Provide differentiated instruction within inclusive settings
 - Support students with disabilities alongside their peers
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What is Co-Teaching?

Co-teaching occurs when a general education teacher and a special education teacher share responsibility for planning, instruction, and student support in the same classroom.

Effective co-teaching is not simply one teacher assisting while the other leads—it involves intentional collaboration and shared ownership of instruction.

Common Co-Teaching Models

<i>Model</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Classroom Example</i>
One Teach, One Support	One teacher leads instruction while the other provides support	One teacher teaches the lesson while the other circulates and assists students
Station Teaching	Students rotate between stations led by teachers	One station focuses on skill practice while another provides reteaching
Parallel Teaching	Class is divided into two groups for instruction	Both teachers teach the same content to smaller groups
Team Teaching	Both teachers share instruction equally	Teachers take turns explaining concepts and modeling strategies
Alternative Teaching	One teacher works with a small group	Small group receives targeted intervention or enrichment

Real Classroom Examples

Example 1: Station Teaching

During a math lesson, one teacher leads a small group working on problem-solving strategies while the other teacher provides guided practice on basic skills. Students rotate between stations.

Example 2: Parallel Teaching

The class is divided into two groups to reduce distractions and increase participation. Each teacher presents the same lesson, allowing for more individualized support.

Example 3: Alternative Teaching

One teacher pulls a small group of students who need additional support with reading comprehension while the other teacher continues the lesson with the larger group.

Example 4: Team Teaching

Both teachers actively lead instruction by modeling a discussion, asking questions, and guiding students through the lesson together.

Defining Teacher Roles and Responsibilities

Clear roles are essential for effective co-teaching. Teachers should:

- Share responsibility for lesson planning
 - Define who leads different parts of instruction
 - Support all students, not just specific groups
 - Communicate regularly about student progress
 - Adjust roles based on lesson needs
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Co-Planning Strategies

Effective co-teaching begins with strong planning.

Teachers can:

- Schedule regular planning time
 - Identify lesson objectives and student needs
 - Determine which co-teaching model to use
 - Plan differentiation and accommodations
 - Review student data to guide instruction
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Differentiation in Co-Teaching

Co-teaching allows for increased differentiation.

Teachers can:

- Provide small-group instruction
 - Adjust pacing and complexity of tasks
 - Offer multiple ways for students to engage with content
 - Provide additional support or enrichment as needed
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Sample Co-Teaching Planning Tool

<i>Lesson Component</i>	<i>Teacher 1 Role</i>	<i>Teacher 2 Role</i>
Introduction	Introduces lesson and objectives	Monitors student engagement
Instruction	Models skill or concept	Provides support and clarification
Guided Practice	Works with small group	Supports remaining students
Independent Work	Circulates and checks understanding	Provides targeted support

Student Check-In

Students can reflect on their learning experience in a co-taught classroom:

- What helped me understand the lesson today?
 - Did I receive support when I needed it?
 - What strategy helped me complete my work?
 - What do I still need help with?
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Student Reflection Example

<i>Reflection Question</i>	<i>Student Response</i>
<i>What helped me today?</i>	Working in a small group with the teacher
<i>Did I get help when I needed it?</i>	Yes, both teachers helped me understand
<i>What was challenging?</i>	Understanding the word problem
<i>What helped me solve it?</i>	The teacher broke it into steps

Teacher Implementation Reflection

Teachers may consider:

- ☐ Are both teachers actively engaged in instruction?
- ☐ Are roles clearly defined and shared?
- ☐ Is planning collaborative and consistent?
- ☐ Are students receiving differentiated support?
- ☐ Is co-teaching improving student engagement and outcomes?

Common Challenges and Solutions

<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Solution</i>
<i>One teacher leads while the other assists only</i>	Rotate roles and share instruction
<i>Limited planning time</i>	Schedule consistent collaboration time
<i>Unclear expectations</i>	Define roles before each lesson

Unequal participation

Use structured co-teaching models

Connection to IEP Goals and Inclusive Practices

Co-teaching supports:

- access to grade-level instruction
- implementation of accommodations
- differentiation for diverse learners
- inclusion of students with disabilities

This model allows students to receive both specialized support and general education instruction simultaneously.

Closing Reflection

Effective co-teaching creates a collaborative learning environment where all students receive the support they need to succeed. When teachers plan together, share responsibility, and implement structured models, they can provide high-quality, inclusive instruction that meets the needs of every learner.