

DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING A HIGH-PERFORMING CO-TEACHING TEAM OR SCHOOL

ADDENDUM TO DEVELOPING HIGH-PERFORMING CO-TEACHING TEAMS

DEVELOPING HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS

WHAT IS EFFECTIVE CO-TEACHING

Co-Teaching is an **intensive** form of teaching which requires **time** for the partners to plan the **content** as well as the way that it will be **presented based on the needs of the students**. Often co-teaching is seen as “easier” than teaching a “regular” class because there is an extra adult; however, because both the academic and the social-emotional needs of the students included in the classroom are more intense, moving a co-taught class forward at the same pace as a general education class, requires both focus and tenacity by both educators throughout the class. **The need to accelerate instruction and challenge all students is essential this year. Acceleration requires, not going faster, but deeper and teacher mastery in scaffolding to grade-level standards as well as formative assessment to support ongoing student growth.**

CREATING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS FOR ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL RESULTS

Co-teaching provides positive social-emotional results for both the students and for the teachers even in the first year. However, putting two teachers in the same room improves student achievement and behaviors only when the co-teachers have time to plan, to calibrate grading practices, to address the individual needs of every student in the class, to provide flexible groups to work more closely and intensively with all students. **The impact of trauma and the needs of students who may have spent the year remotely makes a warm, welcoming classroom even more important. Welcoming students, teaching routines and establishing positive peer relationships may take more energy and time this year.**

EIGHT KEY ELEMENTS

There are 8 key elements that take time (at least three years of working together) to develop fully: 1) The Partnership 2) Time/Planning/Grading 3) Grouping Models 4) Co-assessing and calibrating 5 and 6) Using data/giving ongoing, consistent feedback 7) increasing the pedagogical and social-emotional capacity of both teachers with collaboration and professional development 8) Communication with the community and scheduling effectively.

Co-teacher self-assessment of the eight key elements **plus adaptations and modifications to support the increased needs of vulnerable students both socially-emotionally and academically.**

INITIAL TRAINING

In the first year, the specialist or special education teacher must learn the content and the way that their general-education co-teacher teaches. For the general education teacher, that first year requires re-thinking and possibly expanding how to teach the content with someone else. If there is no time, the special educator cannot be more than a “super-para” who assists and improvises support during class time or that of a specialist who can work only with his or her assigned students. The results of this kind of “push in” teaching is exactly equal to the results of pull out. Moving to other, more effective models such as stations, parallel teaching, or duet teaching is not yet possible. (Station Rotation is an even more effective model that is not directly addressed for co-teaching, but can be adapted by the co-teaching team.) Classes are often primarily teacher-directed with assistance from the special educator. The goal for student versus teacher voices should ultimately be a 70/30 split student to teacher. The workshop model with do nows, modeling, and guided and independent practice, and a final summary lends itself well to this kind of balance and pacing. **Scaffolding to grade-level standards, adjusting practice using formative assessment, and teaching the essentials for the year are essential and need planning time for both teachers.**

Added: The Launch Activity to Prepare for Year 1.

CHECKLIST FOR THE FIRST YEAR OF CO-TEACHING

- Roles and Responsibilities
 - Difficult Conversations
 - Equitable and Balanced responsibilities
- Inclusion
 - General education students
 - Special Education students
 - Balancing the needs
 - Scheduling for student needs
 - Not all students with IEPs need co-taught classes
 - Heterogeneous groups is the goal
- Grading and Co-Grading
 - Calibrating for Special Educator
 - Calibrating for general educator
 - The often-invisible progress reports and IEP goals
 - True co-grading as a goal
- Lesson preparation
 - Content
 - Pedagogy
 - Differentiation
 - Executive Function
- Behaviors
 - Social-emotional learning
 - Behavior expectations
 - Academic expectations

- Antecedent Behavior Consequences
 - Anxiety and Defiant Behaviors in the classroom
 - Mindfulness, brain breaks, safe spaces in classroom, school
- Time to Plan in the First Year
 - Before school begins
 - Whole-year goals (Teaching on grade level despite gaps)
 - Unit goals (Providing “just in time” support for the class, small groups, and individuals.)
 - Co-Teachers’ goals for the year: Models, grading, roles, conflicts
 - During the school year
 - Effective use of Common planning time
 - Agenda
 - The Launch (the first month of class)
 - Norms, Routines, Protocols
 - Multiple grouping models
 - Daily planning
 - One teaches-One assists and the “superpara”

DEVELOPMENTAL CONTINUUM OF CO-TEACHING

- a. **In the first year**, the specialist must learn the content and the way that their co-teacher teaches. For the general education teacher, that first year requires re-thinking and possibly expanding how to teach the content with someone else. If there is no time, the special educator cannot be more than a “super-para” who assists and improvises support during class time or that of a specialist who can work only with his or her assigned students. The results of this kind of “push in” teaching is exactly equal to the results of pull out. Moving to other, more effective models such as stations, parallel teaching, or duet teaching is not yet possible. (Station Rotation is an even more effective model that is not directly addressed for co-teaching) Classes are often primarily teacher-directed with assistance from the special educator. The goal for student versus teacher voices should ultimately be a 70/30 split student to teacher. The workshop model with do nows, modeling, and guided and independent practice, and a final summary lends itself well to this kind of balance and pacing. Teacher expectations need to be clear: both teachers are teaching all students and expect quality work.
- b. **The second year** of the partnership should be spent with the general educator and the special educator looking more closely at the IEPs, 504s and the needs of all learners. Teachers need to expand the grouping models of teaching to provide flexible groups based on changing student needs. They also need to collaboratively grade all students to share standards and expectations both for the typical student and for the student with identified needs.
- c. **The third-year**, co-teachers understand one another’s content knowledge, their expectations for performance and behavior. They use all the models including station rotation and pace their class using the workshop balance and pacing. They provide feedback throughout the guided and independent practice using the technique that Teach like a Champion calls “Right is Right,” that is, **pushing the cognitive load** and responsibility on the students so that they are moving toward proficiency or beyond in the concept/objective of the day’s lesson. Group work has explicit high expectations for

collaboration, teamwork, listening, talking, writing, and producing work at students' highest level. These standards for talk and work need to be explicitly described using rubrics and techniques such as the learning pit, growth mindset, persevering through the "struggle." Social-emotional and academic support create a class that Brackett (RULER from Yale) would describe as one in which young people and adults "understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (Permission to Feel.202).

Added: Developmental Rubric for Co-Teaching Based on the Research

CO-TEACHING REQUIRES MORE THAN EXPERIENCE TEACHING

- i. Time to learn content for special educator
- ii. Time to learn about SPED for general educator
- iii. Time to adapt pedagogy for effective 2-person team
 1. Grouping strategies and data use are critically important
 2. The work is more intensive than teaching as a single teacher
 3. The synergy attained by an effective team creates a classroom in which all are challenged, all needs are quickly addressed, and all students succeed.

BEST PRACTICES:

- When a visitor walks into a class, it is not clear who the content and specialist teacher are; it is not clear who the special education students are.
- **Synergy/Intensity:** Teachers are teaching with energy and providing feedback to all students so that it is clear that
 - The level of **expectations** as well as the **challenge** of the class socially and academically is high for each student
 - Students work effectively, collaboratively, and accountably in two's and in **groups**. The highest level of group work includes accountability for the work, accountability for the whole group's work, leadership, balanced speaking and listening in a collaborative manner. The ultimate, though rarely observed goal is that groups should be able to work effectively without adult redirection.
- **Teacher feedback** is always clear and focused on the students' progress toward the target goal (social as well as academic). Scaffolding, graphic organizers, visual representations, exemplars as well as support for executive function interventions are all methods for supporting the unique learning needs of students.
- **Classroom climate:** Relationships between the teachers and the students are positive and the teachers know their students academically, but also social-emotionally. Smiles, laughter, and even fun is an indication that students are **safe** to take risks, make mistakes, and be themselves. "Brain breaks," moments of mindfulness, and deep breathing can help students stay focused for the class.
- **Behaviors** are handled "off stage" so as not to traumatize other learners and the classroom. Sarcasm is not present from students or teachers. Check-ins with specific

students are done at the beginning of class to recognize that some days are difficult for some students and they may need time to get themselves calmed, in focus, and present. Attention seeking behavior is addressed by giving attention to positive behaviors, for example, by saying "I saw your work yesterday, and as soon as I get the attendance done, I want to talk to you about..."

Added: Professional Development Workshops listed below

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Consider apportioning the time among 4 areas:

- 1) new pedagogy or new methods for using differentiation, supportive scaffolding, universal design, data analysis, grouping, etc., and **careful, thoughtful scaffolding for all students to succeed in a challenging environment.**
- 2) time for co-teachers to share their new learnings and successes
- 3) time to plan to adjust the curriculum this year as they address learning deficits and support students to succeed in grade-level work
- 4) Time before school begins and after it ends to assess students' achievement academically and socially-emotionally and to use data, student work, and teacher observation to plan for the next year.

SOME SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF WORKSHOPS THAT CO-TEACHING TEAMS FIND EFFECTIVE

- High expectations and how to demonstrate this every day through scaffolding, feedback, LASW, and conferencing
- Effective feedback to challenge, support, and maintain the highest expectations
- Effective use of groups for academic and social emotional growth
- The Daily Plan: Workshop Model and its Rationale
- Developing positive relationships and seeing changes in students' behavior and attitude
- Differentiated assignments that achieve the target for the day
- Station rotation in an inclusion setting
- Social-emotional skills from developing relationships to dealing with challenging behaviors. Role-playing for teachers as well as in the classroom
- Self-awareness and self-regulation
- Executive function as it works in an elementary,, middle and high school classroom
- Developing effective skills in listening, speaking, collaborating, teamwork, leadership
- Writing more, correcting less using Gallagher's 180 Days and Caitlin Tucker's methods for quick turnaround and effective feedback
- IEPs, modifications, and the special educator's "invisible jobs" such as progress reports and student goals.
- Misconceptions about co-teaching

SCHEDULING CONSIDERATIONS

Scheduling suggestions: Not all students with IEPs need co-teaching in that specific subject. Consider making IEPs specific about co-teaching needs based on the content area. I have seen one fairly consistent group of freshmen in three different content areas which can become problematic because of their behaviors. Also, students with IEPs can often do well in a general education class. What I sometimes see is that the co-taught class has no “typicals, just very needy students, not necessarily all with IEPs. When this happens all day, the classroom becomes the “low” class, it lowers both teachers’ and students’ expectations, and that’s not a positive environment for learning. The classes need to be as heterogeneous as you can manage. In high schools, because of honors or pre-AP classes, the “general” classes often become overloaded with behavioral and academic needs that make simply managing the classroom a major challenge.

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