



Co-Teaching

Introductory Package

2013-2014

Why Co-Planning and Co-Teaching?

Benefits of Co-Planning:

- 1) First, we have to define what co-planning means. If it means re-planning everything, then that would be a misunderstanding. This would be a mis-use of time for both parties. So, co-planning, means coming to a common understanding (shared and consistent) about the outcomes, including what students need to know, understand and do and determining how students will demonstrate those things. Co-planning might be a discussion about the plan that has already been created. It might be one person asking the other questions for clarification and so on. It does not always mean starting from scratch.
- 2) Regardless of whether or not the course is new to a teacher or not, what is new in a co-teaching situation is a) the two teachers working together, and most importantly b) the students. No year is ever the same as the one previous, just like raising one child is nothing like raising the other. So, even the most detailed and well-considered plans have to be adapted (differentiated) year after year. The advantage of co-teaching is you have two brains, two idea-factories, two personalities to do this, which results in richer plans.
- 3) Co-teaching means different opportunities for learning. A unit planned for one teacher will look very different from a unit planned for two. It will have to be adapted to avoid the “teacher acting like an EA while the other one teaches” syndrome, which is not co-teaching.

Benefits of Co-Teaching:

- 1) Co-teaching invites reflection and uses the model of a critical friend to talk about what happened in the moment, so the soundest instructional choices can be made. Two people means the chances of this happening are exponentially greater.
- 2) The effectiveness of learning for students always comes down to instruction; always; more than any other factor (including class size, student demographic, gender ratio). Co-teaching builds stronger, more responsive teaching.
- 3) Two teachers mean greater chances for students to connect with an adult who shares interests, styles, abilities with them. It takes some pressure off trying to be everything to everyone. Teachers can share that role.
- 4) Anyone who has been involved in a successful co-teaching relationship will tell you that the synergy is a case of the whole being far greater than the parts. True story.
- 5) Taking time to plan together and the “extra work” involved in co-teaching pays off in student learning and meeting student needs. We are a service profession and two people serve better than one. More work at the front end means less work during and after

because students will be more successful, more engaged, more connected and will need fewer re-dos, fewer re-teachings, fewer study halls...well, you get the point. Effective instruction means less time in the end, even though it initially seems like more.

- 6) We are all still building and learning – building strong curricular understanding and planning, building effective instruction, building authentic assessment. When you are building, building together means greater success and the chance to share this success with others. Closing our doors again means we go backward, not forward. We need to keep going forward.
- 7) Through pre-assessing, two teachers can identify gaps, work to provide support to understand the missed content and introduce the new outcome, seeing success for that student. Having two teachers in the classroom lowers the pupil-teacher ratio when it is appropriate (true flexible groupings) and has benefits some of the struggling learners, while benefitting the teachers at the same time.
- 8) Having two teachers in the classroom allows the opportunity for students to develop enriched understanding when they achieve the grade level outcomes earlier than others in the class.
- 9) Having two teachers allows teachers to sometimes work with different groups of student at the same time – not only reinforcing the concept taught, but providing a platform for the student to take their fully meeting understanding and apply it to real world situations.
- 10) Co-teaching models exactly what we hope for with students – a community of learners working on getting to the ultimate goal of optimal learning. You can model strategies that are difficult to model on your own.

Tips for Using Co-Planning Time Efficiently

- Establish a **regular time to plan** collaboratively (minimum 30minutes/ week, not including daily touching base) and plan several lessons at a time if possible.
- Select an appropriate **environment without distractions** – No phone calls, students and colleagues popping in...
- **Save rapport-building** for another time – While this is important, planning time should be for planning only.
- Have an **agenda and snacks** – This will keep you on track and honour your “human” need to refuel.
- **Exchange materials before** you meet – that way you are familiar with possibilities.
- Determine **regular roles and responsibilities** – Play to your strengths (one person is great at motivational sets while the other is strong at learning strategy instruction). That way, you don’t have to negotiate who will do every piece of what every time you meet.
- **Divide and conquer** – Depending on the co-teaching models you are using for the week, you do not have to plan everything in detail together. Decide who will teach which pieces and then work on your own to prepare for your individual part.
- Keep a **separate list of concerns about students** to discuss at a different time – talking about students happens all the time, and it should – it is our business. However, if you get caught up talking about students when you need to plan, your session could “go south.”
- Build in **regular times to reflect and share feedback** – Co-Teaching is a relationship and needs to be revisited every so often. What is working? What isn’t?
- **Document your planning and save** – Sometimes, we adapt instruction in the moment and make decisions that work better than what we had planned. Note these changes so you remember them and don’t have to start from scratch.
- **Use the what/how/who approach** – Use a timer for this: **What** are the outcomes of each lesson? (5 minutes to look at the outcomes and rubric) **How** will we teach this so every student learns? (7-15 minutes for each lesson) **Who** may need some extra attention to learn the lesson’s outcome? (5-10 minutes).
- **Use technology and the phone** – You can communicate in multiple ways. Google Docs (for example) is a great way to collaborate from two different locations! Use email to reflect after lessons.

Models for Co-Teaching

Definition of Co-Teaching: Two or more people **sharing responsibility** for the instruction and learning of all students in a single physical space. Assessment is also shared.

Note: Depending on the **needs of students** and the skills and understanding of each teacher, you will likely move between all five models at some point in your co-teaching experiences. The key objective for students is learning in an inclusive environment.

Team Teaching Co-Teaching: Both teachers are actively planning for and working with the class, instructing, reinforcing, assessing. They are “playing off each other” and would be viewed by the students as equally responsible for the learning of all students.

Supportive/ Alternate Co-teaching: One teacher works with a larger group of students while another works with a smaller group, re-teaching, pre-teaching or providing enrichment. The large group is not receiving new instruction, so the smaller group will eventually re-join the larger group. Membership in the smaller group of students should be different with each learning experience.

Parallel Co-teaching: Each teacher takes half the class in order to lower the student-teacher ratio. Groups may be receiving the same content or different content and rotating. This is not the same as “streaming”; the groups are flexible and within a shared space whenever possible.

Complementary Co-Teaching: One person takes the lead for instruction and the other takes responsibility for providing individual supports and feedback for students while they are engaged in the learning experience and/ or providing support for the lead instructor (highlighting key points on the board, modeling, think aloud).

Establishing a Co-Teaching Relationship (The First Month)

- ✓ Spend some time building your relationship. How does each of you prefer to communicate? What do you love to teach? What do you find challenging?
- ✓ Discuss styles ex. How do we feel about one interjection when the other is instructing?
- ✓ Determine which resources each of you has for the course(s) you are sharing.
- ✓ Clarify your goals for your co-teaching relationship. What are each of you hoping for?
- ✓ Determine a process for planning (see separate page in package for suggestions). Make sure it allows you to break lessons into chunks and designate roles.
- ✓ Clarify responsibilities – who has the students in StudentsAchieve? Will you both enter assessments? How will you manage this? Where will you store ongoing formative assessment data so you can both add to it when appropriate? How will you plan? Who will prepare which materials? Who will contact parents with positive and concerns?
- ✓ Plan for a time to reflect at least twice a week. Discuss your partnership and the student progress at these meetings. Plan responsive instruction.
- ✓ Decide how you will share the responsibility for classroom management. Develop shared classroom expectations.
- ✓ Determine a process for resolving conflict between you if and when it arises.
- ✓ Determine a way to seek feedback about the process from students.
- ✓ Be clear about the models for co-teaching. Plan to use each when appropriate for the needs of the students.
- ✓ Ask for support from people in your building who have co-taught in the past (DIFs, DETs, colleagues)
- ✓ Gather resources if needed (LP Miller Resource Center, Stewart Resource Center – STF)
- ✓ Design ways to analyze and describe the learning needs of your students (learning styles and preferences, readiness, etc.)
- ✓ Document your process so you can assist other pairings next year.
- ✓ Communicate the benefits of co-teaching to your students and help them understand why there are two of you in room and what your roles are. Ensure your language communicates shared responsibility (ours, we).
- ✓ Share you celebrations with families. Be sure both names are on all communications.
- ✓ Use “found time” during lessons, in the hallway, after class to chat about what happened during the lesson. Plan responsive instruction and record observations when appropriate.
- ✓ Keep in mind that the goal, even with two of you in the room, is to encourage independence in students. In other words, support students until they no longer need support; then release.
- ✓ Celebrate mistakes – this means you are growing!

Preparing for Co-Teaching Administrator Checklist

- Ensure every person involved in co-teaching in the first semester has a copy of the co-teaching package.
- Follow up with pairings about their preliminary work (end of June – early September) – role division, planning and reflection process, communication styles.
- Support co-teaching pairings with shared planning time whenever possible (timetabled, coverage, collegial days, extra Rtl support time).
- Support co-teachers in their need to be uninterrupted during time together.
- Communicate the reasons, benefits and procedures for co-teaching with the staff and school families. Be firm on your own vision and understanding first.
- Regularly check to see how pairings are doing and identify concerns early, so they can be worked through.
- Remember to ask for support from those people in your building who are already experienced in co-teaching (past DIFs, DETs, teachers).
- Gather needed resources (we have a number at the LP Resource Center and the STF's Stewart Resource Center also has a large number of resources.)
- Determine a way to document successes and challenges so your work with co-teaching improves year after year.
- Communicate any concerns as early as possible and seek support from Superintendents, Coordinators and Consultants (through Katie White).

➤ **Sample Lesson Planner for Co-Teaching**

➤ **Lesson Outcome and Criteria for Success:**

➤ **Essential Questions/ Big Idea:**

Co-Teacher Names:		
What are the specific tasks I will do before the lesson? (Preparation, resources, planning, communication, pre-assessing)		
What are the specific tasks I will do during the lesson? (learning strategies, monitoring, formative assessment, direct instruction, groupings, etc.)		
What are the specific tasks I will do after the lesson? (assessment, SA, feedback and follow up, parental communication, organization)		
Students I will pay particular attention to today:		

➤ **When, where and how we will reflect on this lesson:**

➤ **Next formal planning date:**