

Louisiana's CO-TEACHING RESOURCE GUIDE



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Louisiana Department of
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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Co-Teaching Resource Guide

OVERVIEW

COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

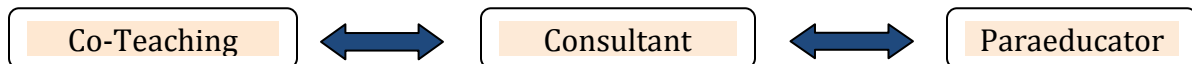
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that all students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum and that their instructional programs be delivered in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). In addition, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requires that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum and be included in state-wide and district-wide assessments and accountability systems.

Inclusive Practices

Inclusive practices are academic and behavioral supports and strategies provided to students with disabilities in general education settings. The overall goal of implementing inclusive practices is to improve outcomes for students with disabilities through the implementation of appropriate academic and behavioral supports. Inclusive schools are those that educate students with disabilities in age-appropriate general education classes with the provision of specialized instruction and appropriate supports and accommodations as required by their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Specialized instruction and supports are provided in the context of general education classes and activities. Students with disabilities are valued as full members of the student body and provided opportunities to participate in all aspects of school life.

Collaborative Models

For inclusive practices to be effective, both general education and special education staff must work together to create powerful learning environments for all students. There are three basic models that outline how supports and accommodations may be provided to students with disabilities in general education settings. All require general and special educators to collaborate to ensure that positive student outcomes are evidenced.



Co-Teaching Support Model

The co-teaching support model consists of a special education teacher partnering with a general education teacher to meet the instructional goals of students with and without disabilities in a general education setting. Two teachers work together to meet the needs of not only students with disabilities assigned to the general education class but also students without disabilities assigned to the class.

- Both teachers share responsibility for planning, delivering instruction, assessing, and managing classroom discipline and student behavior.
- Both teachers share responsibility for providing supports and accommodations to meet the needs of all students in the class.

Consultant Support Model

The consultant support model consists of a special education teacher providing direction and feedback to a general education teacher(s) regarding students with disabilities in general education settings. The special education teacher provides on-going support to the general education teacher(s) to ensure instructional support needs of students with disabilities are addressed in the general education class.

- The special education teacher adapts lessons and identifies accommodations and instructional strategies appropriate to specific students.
- The special education teacher articulates the needs of students with disabilities and serves as the liaison between the general education teacher(s) and other special education teachers regarding student progress (if the students also receive special education instruction in a special education class).

Paraeducator Support Model

The paraeducator support model consists of a paraeducator supporting students with disabilities in general education settings under the direction of a general education teacher. Rarely, unless the para is a child specific para, will the para be assigned to a co-taught class. If there is a second adult already in the classroom, a para is probably not needed. Even though the para is working directly under the guidance of a general education teacher, s/he and the special education teacher of record must maintain on-going communication in order to ensure the supports outlined on students' IEPs are implemented in the general education class.

- The paraeducator facilitates the successful inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings by assisting the general education teachers in implementing appropriate supports and accommodations.

LRE Continuum

The IDEA requires the IEP team to consider a continuum of least restrictive environments when identifying the setting in which the instructional program for students with disabilities will be provided. The instructional program setting for specific students may range from inclusion in general education classes all day to instruction provided all day in special education classrooms. However, emphasis must be on providing the appropriate program in the least restrictive environment. **Therefore, IEP teams must consider placement in general education settings as the first placement.**

Research

A growing body of research indicates the most positive student outcomes are evidenced by the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. Data demonstrate that students in inclusive classrooms show academic and behavioral gains far greater than students in segregated special education classrooms. While the decision of IEPs teams for some students may continue to include instruction in special education settings, for many students inclusion in general education settings, *with supports and accommodations*, is the optimal setting for better outcomes. In addition, research indicates the most effective way to support students with

disabilities in general education settings is by using a *co-teaching support model*. This is not to say that the consultant or paraeducator support models are not effective, just that the co-teaching model yields better and more positive outcomes. **Therefore, the focus of this guide is on the co-teaching model.**

Introduction

The Louisiana State Improvement Grant (LaSIG), in collaboration with the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), brought together a [team of strategists](#) to develop the Louisiana Co-Teaching Resource Guide as an expansion to the efforts of the Louisiana [Validated Practices Initiative](#), facilitated by Dr. Marilyn Friend. Members of the strategist group included teachers, curriculum coordinators, university faculty, special education directors, inclusion coordinators, families, and speech and language therapists. The large body of work completed by the strategist group then was given to an outside consultant to review and compile into the final version of this guide.

This document is intended for use by school and district level personnel as a *guide* for effective **co-teaching** and inclusive practices. The document is arranged in three sections: Planning, Implementation, and Results, with pertinent forms and resources included in each section. The materials included in each respective section may be modified to fit district and school needs.

People First Language

A critical point must be made in terms of the language used when discussing co-teaching. First, an emphasis must be placed on people first language. (Click [People First Language](#) to find examples.) Students with disabilities should be seen as people first. People first language respectfully puts the person before the disability. For example, instead of saying *the disabled person*, say, *the person with a disability*; instead of saying, *she's autistic*, say, *she has autism (or has a diagnosis of autism)*.

Co-teaching Definition

For the purpose of consistency, a single definition of co-teaching will be used as a basis for this document. Co-teaching, as defined by Friend & Cook (2010), is “A service delivery option for providing special education or related services to students with disabilities or other special needs students while they remain in their general education classes. Co-teaching occurs when two or more professionals jointly deliver substantive instruction to a diverse, blended group of students in a single physical space.”

Throughout this document, the two professionals working together in a co-teaching setting will be referred to as “teachers.” This is done in part because both teachers (one special education and one general education) should have knowledge in content and strategies. Both teachers are responsible for ALL students; they are co-teachers. It is important not to categorize or compartmentalize roles, as both teachers are professionals providing instruction to a diverse group of students. It is important for both teachers to make efforts to increase knowledge in *both* content and instructional strategies, since they will work with all of the students in the class. In other words, the special education teacher will not work just with students with disabilities, nor will the general education teacher work only with students without disabilities.

Co-teaching Responsibilities

Co-teaching will be successful only to the extent that general educators and special educators work in collaboration. Each of the areas below must be discussed and the two teachers must reach some agreement on how each responsibility will be addressed in a co-taught arrangement.

- **Instruction** – Instruction is the primary focus of all teachers. In a co-taught arrangement, both teachers must be responsible for planning, delivering and assessing instruction.
- **Accommodations and Modifications** – Diverse learners will be successful only when appropriate accommodations and/or modifications are used. In a co-taught arrangement, both teachers must identify and design accommodations and/or modifications for all students.
- **Management of Behavior** – Managing behavior is critical to successful instruction. In a co-taught arrangement, both teachers must be able to manage behavior and intervene with appropriate interventions as needed.
- **Assessment** – Assessment is critical to fine-tuning instructional strategies. In a co-taught arrangement, both teachers must be familiar with various assessment procedures and formats so that an accurate picture of students' progress is available.
- **Data Collection and Recordkeeping** – Data must be collected on an on-going basis. In a co-taught arrangement, both teachers must work together to design data collection procedures and to determine how data will be collected and analyzed.
- **Participation in Conferences** – Since both teachers share instructional responsibility for students in a co-taught arrangement, both must be involved in meetings and conferences related to students' instructional programs.
- **Communication** – Communication is key to a successful learning environment. In a co-taught arrangement, both teachers must make a commitment to openly and regularly share information and to discuss all issues related to the instructional programs for students in their class.
- **Advocacy** – Student advocacy is a critical component of effective educational programs. In a co-taught arrangement, both teachers must become advocates for all students.

So, why co-teach? Here is a short list of benefits expected when two professionals share their knowledge and skills in a single classroom.

Student Benefits:

- Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Higher expectations established and met due to access to the general curriculum and exposure to a range of instructional alternatives
- Enhanced positive social outcomes and improved self esteem
- Increased engagement and involvement in 'the learning process'
- Access to models of adults working cooperatively and even models of adults dealing with disagreements
- More realistic classroom communities for all students

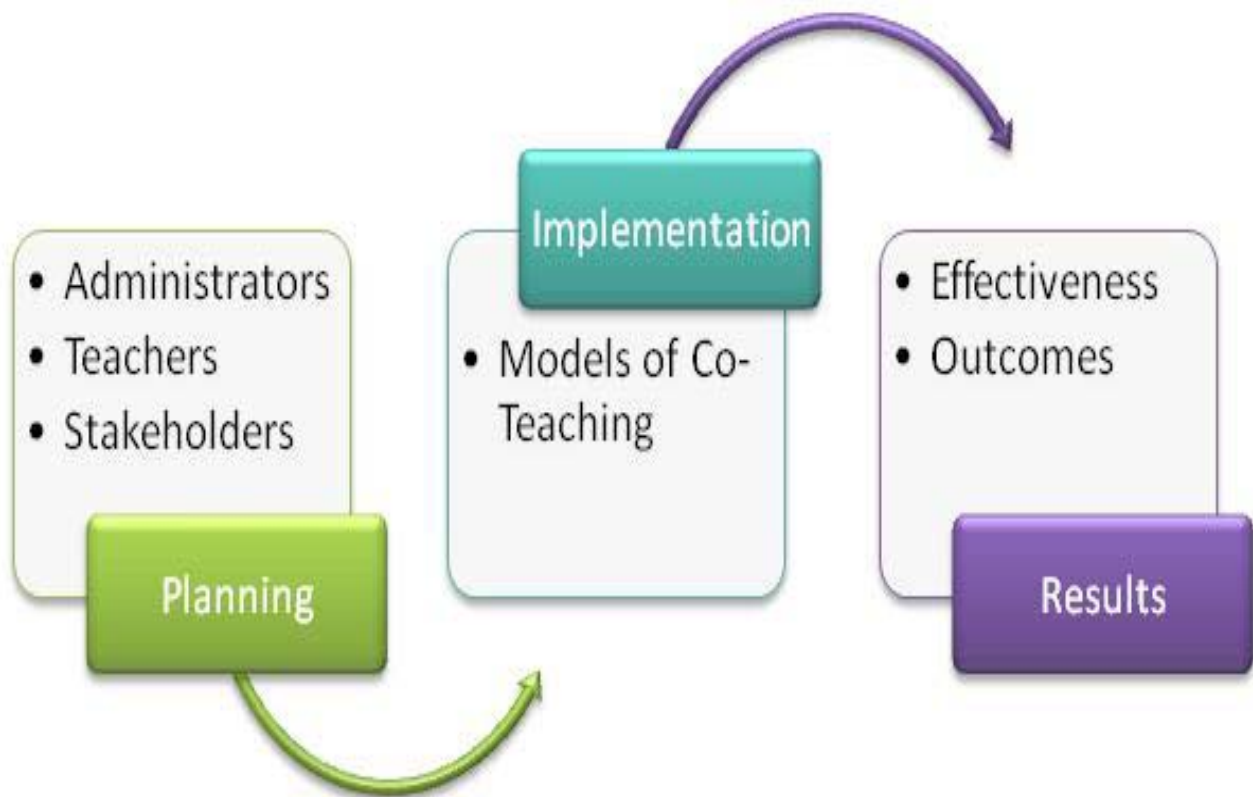
Teacher Benefits:

- Increased teacher satisfaction
- Enhanced opportunities for professional growth
- Reduced feelings of isolation
- Mutual appreciation of general education and special education roles
- More opportunities for creativity
- More time for explicit teaching
- Shared responsibilities for classroom workload
- Reduced behavior problems

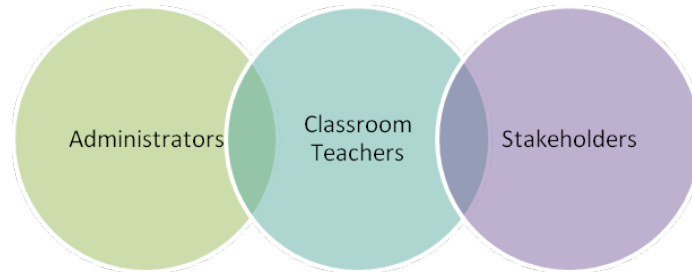
For additional information on what co-teaching is and is not, review [Co-teaching: What it is and What it is Not](#) to find a list of critical co-teaching components.

*The resources included in this document come from a variety of sources and reflect diverse strategies, implementation, and techniques. They are only a starting point and can be modified to fit your needs. These resources should be used as a guide for your own work.

THE PROCESS



Planning



Effective planning is essential if co-teaching is to be a feasible service delivery option in today's inclusive classrooms. As Friend and Cook (2010) noted, "This collaborative structure requires a willingness to change teaching styles and preferences, to work closely with another adult, to share responsibility, and to rely on another individual to perform tasks previously done alone" (p. 123). Building a collaborative relationship can be challenging and requires administrative support, clarification of roles and responsibilities, and ongoing planning.

Embracing the philosophy of 'inclusion' means the focus on labels of students must not be the determining factor in the provision of services and the settings in which the services are provided. Special education teachers no longer can identify themselves as teachers of just a specific category of students. Rather, they must identify themselves as teachers of students with IEPs and be willing to provide whatever support is needed to meet the varied needs of these students. Likewise, students should not be identified as self-contained or resource, but as students needing specialized instruction and supports for specific skills/subject areas for specific amounts of time in either a special education setting or a general education setting. This requires school staff to shift paradigms when determining how best to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Shifting paradigms means going from... to...

FROM...	TO...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special education student... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student with an IEP or student with specific needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource or self-contained classroom teacher... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher of students with IEPs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstreamed student... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included student.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher of only general education students... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher of all students.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just identifying needed supports... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating your own supports.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just implementing supports... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing <i>and</i> collecting effectiveness data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for more supports before implementing... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizing existing supports creatively and responsibly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting on 'outsiders' to implement... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing and implementing what works at your school.

Determining Student Support Needs

Once these paradigm shifts have been made, it is then possible to determine the type and level of supports students with disabilities need in order to be successful in general education settings. In order for students to benefit from the co-teaching support model, it is essential that appropriate and adequate supports be matched to specific student needs in specific subject areas. A process should be utilized that identifies the critical skills students need in order to be successful in general education settings and the level of support they will need to achieve/master those skills.

Determining ‘Student Support Needs’ begins with asking, and answering, these questions:

- ***What supports will students need?*** The first step is to identify the support needs of individual students. This is done by reviewing the IEP and MDE (multidisciplinary evaluation), by conducting additional assessment, by observing the student in different learning environments and multiple settings, and by interviewing various individuals who know the student, e.g., special education teachers, general education teachers, support staff, and parents. Use the [***Inclusive Educational Practices: Individual Student Support Needs Worksheet # 1***](#) form to assist in documenting individual student support needs by subject area.
- ***When (Where) will they need them?*** The support needs of all students should be charted by subject and grade level. This will provide an overview of the supports students need in specific content areas consistent with IEPs. It will provide a general picture of all students needing supports in a specific grade level and of the classes/subjects where the

supports are needed. This information will determine how many students need support in a particular grade, subject, time period, etc., and, therefore, allows for appropriate grouping of students in these classes/periods. Use the [*Inclusive Educational Practices: Summary of Supports Needed by Grade Level and Class/Subject Worksheet # 2*](#) to assist in charting all students in a particular grade based on support needs.

- ***Who will provide supports?*** The type of staff needed to provide the supports to students must be identified, e.g., co-teacher, paraeducator, consultant teacher. Answering this question will facilitate the assignment of staff to meet the needs of students. Unless a school has enough staff to assign a co-teacher to each general education classroom, a process to identify how and where to assign limited support staff must be utilized. Use the [*School Summary Models of Support Worksheet # 3*](#) to indicate the number of students in each grade level and the support model they will need.
- ***How can we effectively meet the needs of all students?*** Matching supports to individual students is critical. This step allows for the final assignment of staff and the development of a master schedule indicating which classes will be co-taught. With the information identified in the three forms listed above (Inclusive Educational Practices: Individual Student Support Needs Worksheet # 1, Inclusive Educational Practices: Summary of Supports Needed by Grade Level and Class/Subject Worksheet # 2, and the School Summary Models of Support Worksheet #3), staff can be assigned in a logical manner based on student support needs data.

The support a student needs in order to be successful in general education settings **must be the first thing determined** before assigning co-teachers to classes. Considering the instructional support needs of a student will guide the scheduling process for both students and teachers. A thorough review of educational data must be conducted in order to determine support needs. Specifically, the following should be reviewed:

- Multidisciplinary evaluations and IEP information
- Report card grades
- LEAP test scores and other test data (e.g., DIBELS)
- Reports from classroom teachers
- Input from any instructional team member and the parent
- Behavior records

In addition to reviewing educational data, it is important to know exactly what is expected of a student in a general education classroom in order to be successful. An inventory of appropriate general education classroom instructional and behavioral expectations must be conducted. In conducting the inventory, consider the following:

- What are the grade level academic skills a student will be expected to master?
- What are the appropriate grade level classroom routines in which a student must engage (e.g., entering/exiting room, working independently, gathering/putting away materials,

responding to questions, asking for assistance, working in small groups/with a buddy, etc.)?

- How is the student expected to behave in the classroom (i.e., what are the classroom behavior expectations)?
- What kinds of assessments will the student have to take?

[The *Student Support Needs Worksheet-General Education Class Expectations* form](#) may be used to help identify the academic, behavior and general class routines expected of students in specific general education classes.

Once it is clear what is expected of students in each general education setting, it then is possible to identify the level of support students will need in order to be successful in meeting the overall classroom expectations. For ease in subsequent scheduling, place the students into one of three support need levels.

Level 1 Support Needs

Students needing Level 1 supports are students who...

- are able to function fairly successfully in the general education classroom and need minimal support.
- are easily included, functioning close to grade level, and behavior is more or less in line with class expectations.
- may need some accommodations in specific subjects (or at specific times), but accommodations can be provided by the general education teacher. The special education teacher may need to consult with the general education teacher regarding accommodations for specific lessons.
- are included in general education for all (or most) of the school day.
- historically, used to be referred to as 'mainstreamed' students.
- probably will be successful in general education settings without the benefit of a co-teacher.

Level 2 Support Needs

Students needing Level 2 supports are students who...

- need accommodations (and possibly modifications) in general education for the greater part of class periods.
- need support from a paraeducator (or possibly a co-teacher) in order to function successfully in the general education classroom.
- *may* benefit from some 'pull out' specialized instruction delivered by a special education teacher in a special education classroom for specific subjects. (However, with appropriate supports, these students should be able to remain in general education settings and not have to be 'pulled out' to a special education setting.)
- with appropriate supports in place, can be successful in general education; without supports, they may experience success haphazardly, if at all.

Level 3 Support Needs

Students needing Level 3 supports are students who...

- need maximum support and accommodations to be successful in general education classes.
- need significant accommodations and modifications in general education for the majority of, if not all, subjects.
- need the support of a special education teacher co-teaching with the general education teacher for specific subjects.
- may need specialized instruction provided by a special education teacher in a special education classroom for some subjects.

Some things to remember about levels of support include:

- Some students may need level 1 supports for one subject/class, but need level 3 supports for other subjects/classes.
- Avoid grouping large numbers of students needing level 3 supports in the same general education class at the same time (unless this arrangement best meets the needs of the students).
- Support needs of students may change from semester to semester or even based on the skills being taught. For example, a student may begin the school year with level 3 support needs in math, but mid-year a reexamination indicates the student now only needs level 2 or 1 supports.

Planning must occur at several levels throughout the school for co-teaching to be an effective service delivery option. In subsequent sections of the resource guide, planning is addressed within the context of responsibilities for administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders.

Planning for Administrators

Strong administrative support is critical and administrators play a pivotal role in making co-teaching a reality in their schools. Administrators must have adequate knowledge of collaborative approaches for educating children with disabilities (Cook and Friend, 2010, pp. 330-331). Advancing inclusive practices in a school is not just a matter of what the administrator thinks about inclusive practices, but how s/he actually implements those thoughts. The principal not only must believe that ‘all students can learn,’ but must demonstrate this belief in everyday actions.

The school site administrator should consider establishing an Inclusive Practices Leadership Team that will address the overall implementation of more effective inclusive practices school-wide. A separate team need not be established, as long as an existing team (e.g., School Governance Team, Student Assistance Team, School Improvement Team, etc.) takes on the

function of overseeing implementation. This team may want to identify both long-term and short-term goals for more effective implementation. The *Validated Practices Initiative Resource Guide*, developed by the Louisiana Department of Education, provides information regarding the components of effective school improvement. This document may be used as a planning tool to assist schools in ensuring that all components of effective schools are addressed.

Teacher Selection

A good way to get started is for the school site administrator to identify pairs of teachers who are willing to work together in a co-taught classroom. One way to do this is to ask for volunteers. Also, it may be beneficial to conduct a survey to determine (a) teacher strengths and (b) what currently is occurring at the school relative to inclusive practices. This information will help determine future topics for professional development. While it may be necessary to begin with only those teachers who volunteer, at some point every teacher must be able and willing to co-teach. In the beginning, administrators may want to schedule unwilling or less confident teachers to non-co-taught classes and then gradually assign them to co-taught classes. Eventually, every school needs special education teachers who are willing and competent to teach either in a special education class or in a co-taught general education class. Certification must be considered when hiring and assigning teachers and paraeducators. Administrators should review the [Highly Qualified POP QUIZ!](#) for information regarding Louisiana teacher and paraeducator certification requirements.

Scheduling

Scheduling is critical to effective implementation of inclusive practices.

- First, utilize the process outlined above regarding identification of student support needs to determine when, where and what kinds of supports students need. Determine if students have Level 1, 2 or 3 support needs based on what their current levels of performance are and what the general education classroom expectations are. Identify the specific subjects/classes in which students will need supports and the specific supports they will need.
- Second, identify co-teaching pairs, noting areas of certification and strengths of each teacher. Review the overall schedule of subjects/classes, noting the times of each subject/class.
- Finally, assign students to specific classes based on their support need levels (and the services outlined in the IEP) and then assign co-teaching pairs to those classes that require two teachers in order to meet the support needs of students with disabilities in those classes.

Caseload

Consider the following for student composition of co-taught classrooms:

1. A caseload for a teacher of record (i.e., classroom teacher) should reflect natural proportions. Students with IEPs should not make up more than 10% - 33% of the class group and the percentage should be based on the level of support needed;
2. The co-taught class should be approximately the same size (i.e., same number of total students) as classes taught with one teacher;
3. Students with disabilities should not be grouped into one single co-taught classroom within a school;

4. Students with disabilities should not be distributed evenly across all teachers/sections; and
5. Students should not be grouped based on exceptionality or services received.

When determining caseload, the overarching principle must be providing students with whatever supports are needed in general education settings, so they can be successful. Staff should be assigned so that the support needs of students with disabilities can be appropriately met in whatever class they attend.

Common Planning Time

Common planning time is imperative for effective co-teaching. Consider the following when structuring the master schedule to ensure common planning time: (a) Common time (ask co-teachers to identify times); (b) Time provided before or after school; (c) Tiered time (layer time with recess and lunch); (d) Staff development days; (e) Common duty schedules; (f) Faculty meetings; and (g) Bank time/minutes for early release. The checklists, [Finding Time for Collaboration](#) and [Finding Time to Co-Plan](#), will assist administrators in identifying creative ways to provide joint planning time for co-teachers.

Consider the need for joint planning time when designing the master schedule.

Planning for Classroom Teachers

Team Building

Collaboration is key to achieving positive outcomes for both students and teachers. Dieker (2001) found teachers were more comfortable in their co-teaching roles when they were given time to "identify their roles, share curriculum expectations, and discuss individual students' needs and their philosophies related to meeting the needs of all students" prior to entering a co-teaching relationship.

The following resources will assist classroom teachers in determining their level of readiness for co-teaching and will help to clarify roles and responsibilities. [Am I Ready to Co-Teach?](#) | [Preparing to Co-Teach](#) | [Co-Teaching Partnership Checklist](#) | [Determining Roles and Responsibilities](#)

Parity

Parity occurs when co-teachers perceive their unique contributions and presence on teams as equally valued (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008). Examples of parity are: (a) Both teachers' names on board and door; (b) Two teacher desks present; (c) Both teachers' names on report cards; (d) Both teachers providing meaningful contributions for instruction; (e) Both teachers interacting with all students; (f) Both teachers recognized equally by the students; and (g) Both teachers demonstrating the belief "All students are OUR students." The [Parity, Parity, Parity](#) checklist will assist co-teachers in identifying if the partnership is passed on parity.

Curriculum

Co-teaching enhances access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities (Friend, 2008). Louisiana has one curriculum based on state standards and benchmarks called the [Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum](#) (LCC). The curriculum is aligned with state content standards, as defined by [grade-level expectations](#) (GLEs), and organized into coherent, time-bound units with sample activities and classroom assessments to guide teaching and learning.

Lesson Planning

Lesson planning is a dynamic and on-going process. Co-teachers should plan lessons based on GLEs from the LCC. They should work together on a daily basis to give feedback on successes and challenges from one class period to another. When teachers plan, they should consider which co-teaching model to use for each lesson (see Implementation section) and plan strategies accordingly. When planning for delivery of instruction, teachers should jointly decide: (a) student groupings; (b) delivery models; and (c) assessments. Both teachers must take active instructional roles. Lesson plans should indicate which co-teaching approach will be used and identify the specific tasks in which each adult will be engaging.

These additional resources will assist co-teachers in planning effective lessons that differentiate for the diverse group of learners in a co-taught classroom: | [Accessible Instructional Materials \(AIM\)](#) | [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) | [Access Guide Product Options](#)

Communication

Communication between co-teachers is key. As teachers plan for the school year, they should establish norms of communication. On-going communication meetings should be scheduled so that upcoming instruction can be planned and solutions strategized for problem areas. Teachers need to identify their major strengths and the specific skills/talents they bring to the co-teaching partnership. To be effective, co-teachers need to discuss and agree upon basic interpersonal and pedagogical skills. Teachers must agree on basic classroom organization and management, so that instructional routines are established and delivered seamlessly.

Progress Monitoring and Grading

Grading is a local decision and reference should be made to local district policy and procedures. A student has the right to be provided instruction at whatever level s/he is functioning and the right to expect that s/he will make progress. However, regardless of functioning level, all students must have access to grade level concepts. Teachers must separate the skills to be mastered from the activities used to teach those skills. Then teachers must design activities that will allow every student to address the GLEs, but still have access to varied instructional materials and activities matched to their actual functioning levels. This will assist in closing the gap between functioning level and grade level expectations. Accurate assessment data are needed in order to make sound instructional decisions and to provide accurate grades. Teachers have to make two decisions regarding grading: (a) what to grade, and (b) how to grade it. Some suggestions regarding grading of student work include:

- Consider not grading all work (i.e., work completed while a student is still learning the skills, or at least consider not letting these grades factor into a report card grade).
- Grade work that will provide a *clear* picture of the skills a student has mastered, not just the activities completed.
- Establish classroom environments that promote individual performance, not ones that focus only on class/student competition.
- Use rubrics that clearly delineate the most important aspects of what is to be learned.
- Provide multiple means of assessments to meet the diverse learning needs of all students in a class. Refer to *Product Options* in the [Access Guide](#) for examples of alternative assessments formats.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

IEPs must reflect the supports and services a student with disabilities needs in order to achieve specific goals and/or objectives. In general, IEP goals are written to address areas of need based on current functioning levels and support needs of a student. Consider the following when developing IEPs for students who will be included in general education settings:

- A goal should be written to address deficit skills regardless of classroom setting. These goals can be addressed by both the general and special education teachers in the co-taught classroom.
- If a student receives instruction only from a general education teacher or a paraeducator (i.e., not in a co-taught classroom), an IEP goal for the general education subject *does not* need to be written. However when deficit skills impact performance across content areas, e.g., functioning below grade level, failing grades and/or not passing the state assessment, the IEP Team should consider goals to address those deficit skills.
- If the student receives services from a special education teacher in a co-taught classroom, that amount of time should be listed on the Program/Services page of the IEP in the column that says, “Regular Class.”
 - Minutes listed in this column indicate that a student is receiving specialized instruction in a general education setting by a special education teacher in conjunction with a general education teacher.
 - No minutes are put in this column if the support is provided by a paraeducator and not a special education teacher.
 - No minutes are put in this column if the special education student is receiving instruction in a general education class from a general education teacher and it is not a co-taught class (i.e., there is no special education teacher in the class).

Classroom Management

Classroom management plans should be aligned with the school's discipline policy. However, to ensure parity, both teachers should jointly introduce and enforce rules, procedures, and expectations for the classroom.

A student with disabilities whose behavior adversely impacts the overall educational environment of the student or of other students must have a behavior intervention plan implemented. A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) must be conducted, first to determine how often and when the problematic behavior occurs, under what circumstances it occurs, and what function or purpose the behavior serves. Once FBA data are collected and analyzed, a corresponding, individual Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) must be developed. Both teachers in a co-taught classroom will be responsible for implementing a BIP and collecting data to determine if the BIP is effective.

Daily Duties

While some tasks are not defined until after the start of the school year, tasks such as taking attendance/roll, putting up bulletin boards, updating a newsletter and/or website should be divided appropriately between teachers, or even alternated between the two teachers. For ease and consistency in communicating with parents, it may be appropriate for one teacher to be assigned a specific group of students for whom s/he is responsible for all communication with the parents.

Substitutes

If one teacher is absent, a substitute teacher should be used to continue the co-teaching process. In the case when both are not at school, it is required that substitutes for both teachers be assigned. A substitute folder with the class procedures and daily lessons will ease the transition for the substitute teachers and students. Remind the substitute(s) of professional confidentiality with regard to students with disabilities. Refer to school policies for assignment of substitute teachers.

Physical Learning Environment

The physical learning environment should facilitate, rather than hinder, instruction. In the co-taught classroom, classroom arrangement is critical to ensure a smooth and efficient delivery of the instructional content. Some things to remember about the physical environment are:

- The room should be arranged to accommodate the co-teaching approach/grouping used most often. This will eliminate wasted time while students are moving in and out of groups/rotations.
- Clearly delineated areas/purposes should be identified in the room.
- Classroom walls/bulletin board displays should have an instructional focus.
- Displays should change to support instructional themes/activities.
- Students with disabilities should be integrated into seating arrangements.
- Clear classroom routines (e.g., where to hang coats, where certain materials are placed, what to do when work is finished early, etc.) should be established.
- Both teachers' names should be on printed material and on the outside of the classroom door.

Planning for Other Stakeholders

Other stakeholders, such as Related Services personnel, families, and paraeducators, are integral partners in co-teaching. Everyone involved in the education of a particular student or group of students must be involved in on-going communication to ensure a comprehensive and cohesive educational approach.

Related Services Professionals

Related Services professionals may not be considered for traditional co-teaching roles, but it is important for them to pursue more collaborative opportunities with teachers to develop, implement, and monitor goals relevant to the general education curriculum. It is recommended that Related Services professionals work with students in the general education classroom. However, they may not act as teachers of record responsible for delivering instruction. Their role would be to address their specific discipline objectives in the context of the general education curriculum.

According to IDEA (2004), IEPs enable students to be involved and make progress in the general education curriculum. Related Services professionals have expertise that supports student access to the general education curriculum. For example, speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are communication and language experts. The role of SLPs is changing and expanding to place more emphasis on language and literacy (reading and writing). Speech/language services are evolving to reduce pull-out and increase integration of speech/language services into the overall general education curriculum. Speech and Language Success for All ([SALSA](#)) provides valuable information to assist SLPs in providing inclusive services to students. Occupational therapists (OTs) have expertise with fine motor skills and sensory organization. Therefore, the SLP and the OT may work collaboratively with teachers to foster student success as it relates to IEP goals in the classroom setting. While Related Services professionals (e.g., Speech Pathologists, OTs, PTs, etc.) may not co-teach in the technical sense, an adaptive physical education (APE) teacher may, because APE is a direct service. APE is a direct service and the APE teacher may co-teach with the general physical education (PE) teacher to keep student goals closely aligned and to support the physical education curriculum. On-going collaboration among Related Services professionals and classroom teachers provides a seamless delivery of support. The following resources provide additional information regarding Related Services professionals working effectively in collaborative arrangements: [Co-teaching: An Evolving Role for Speech-Language Pathologists](#) | [Instructional Decision-Making Cycle](#).

Families

Family engagement supports and promotes co-teaching. When implementing co-teaching in a school, families of students in co-taught classes should be made aware of the unique benefits. It is important to inform families about co-teaching by: (a) Sending letters outlining the benefits of the co-taught classroom; (b) Providing fact sheets (hard copy or online); (c) Posting information on websites; (d) Sharing information in school newsletters; (e) Providing handouts on frequently asked questions; and (f) Making personal contacts through telephone calls, face-to-face meetings, or even school-wide parent meetings. When providing information to families, use a

variety of formats, be sensitive to language diversity in the community, and avoid an overuse of educational jargon.

It is important that families of students with disabilities be assured their child will continue to receive specialized education services as indicated on the IEP, even though he/she is a member of a general education class. Remind families that the IEP team can be reconvened when there are new concerns. Administrators and teachers should be cognizant of the [concerns](#) families might have about co-teaching and should explain, in as much detail as possible, all aspects of the co-teaching approaches used with their children. Families should be reassured the practice of co-teaching is a Best Practice and is research-based. As an administrator or teacher, take this as an opportunity to point out the benefits to a co-taught classroom.

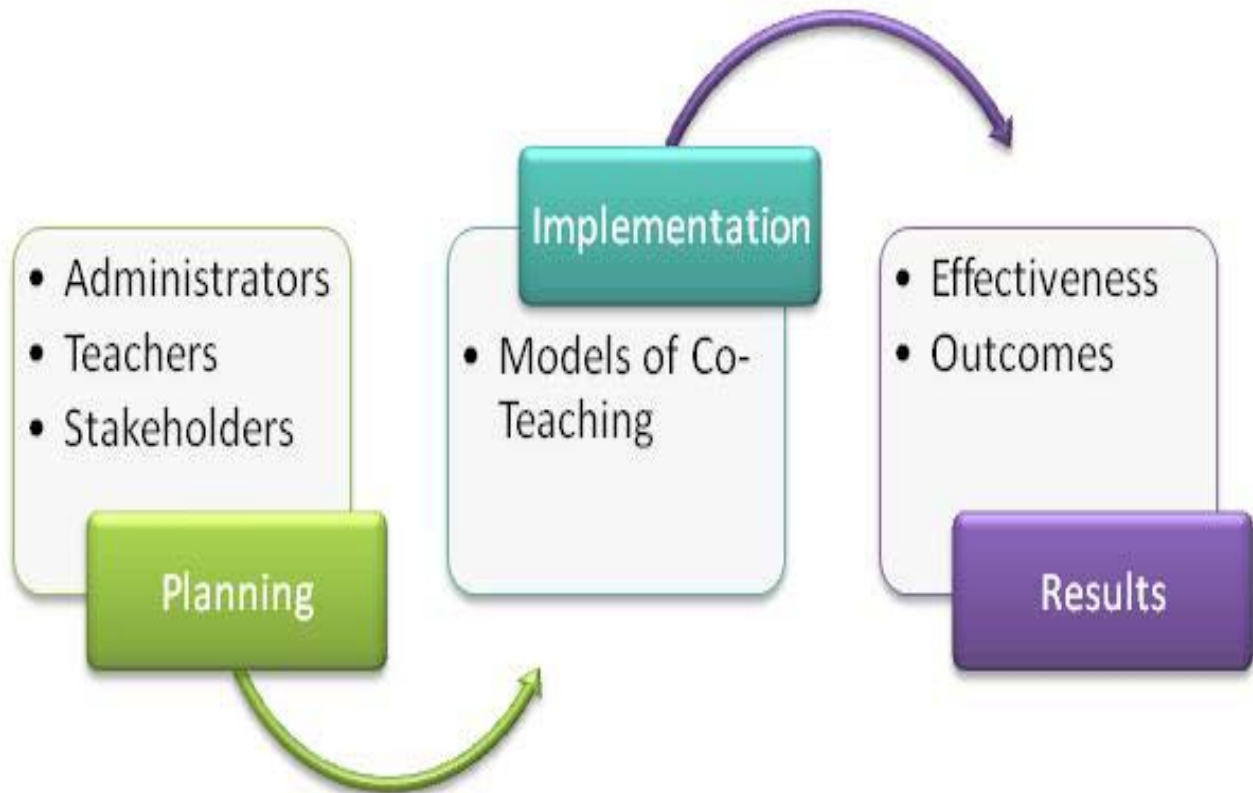
Paraeducators

Paraeducators provide critical support to inclusive classes. In the general education setting, paraeducators may work with a small group of students, review concepts that have been taught, and assist with monitoring. However, they should not be responsible for large group instruction, neither plan nor deliver initial instruction, interpret assessment results, make instructional decisions, nor assume primary or sole responsibility for a group of students over an extended period of time (French, 2003 in Friend, 2008).

For students with disabilities, a certified special educator and not a paraeducator must deliver the minutes on the IEP. However, paraeducators can be assets in the general education setting. Paraeducators may engage in a variety of activities that support student acquisition and mastery of important skills and concepts. Some activities include the following:

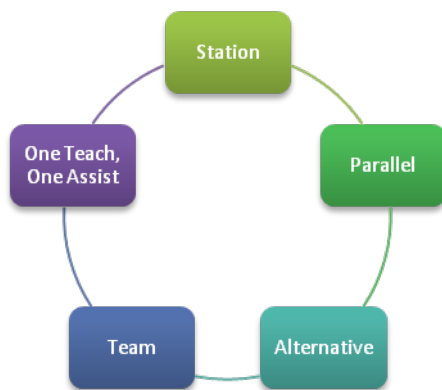
- Copying or supplying notes for students unable to do so themselves
- Cueing/refocusing/redirecting students
- Working with small groups of students on activities for which the teacher already has taught the skills
- Creating worksheets, manipulatives, etc. (under the direction of the teacher)
- Asking/answering questions in order to provide clarification for students or even to share an opposite perspective of a concept
- Reviewing tests with small groups of students
- Delivering individual accommodations, e.g., reading materials aloud, transferring answers, etc.

Paraeducators assigned to general education classes provide supports to all students in the class, both special and general. A paraeducator who is assigned to support only one student (i.e., child-specific paraeducator), must focus his/her attention on that one student, unless otherwise directed by the teacher.



Implementation

Effective implementation of co-teaching determines the outcomes for all. Success of implementation is dependent upon consistency with and fidelity to the approaches of co-teaching. It is important to note that the selection of specific co-teaching approaches should be based first on student support needs and then on school/classroom needs and resources available. The selection of approaches can vary as needs change. This section will outline the core principles that define co-teaching approaches.



Co-Teaching Approaches

Station Teaching essentially involves establishing learning centers in the classroom.

- Teachers divide the instructional material to be taught during a particular lesson into three or four ‘chunks’ of material. Each teacher teaches a group of students, with the other group(s) working independently. Material to be addressed in each group must not be sequential and dependent on information taught in one of the other groups. For example, if group 1 is working on the vocabulary for a story with teacher A, and group 2 is reading the story with teacher B, and group 3 is writing something about the story independently, then at least two groups will be required to complete a task for which they are not prepared (i.e., not having addressed the vocabulary part of the lesson first). The best lessons for Station Teaching are those that can be ‘chunked’ into major sections of the lessons and not built upon each other.
- Students rotate through the stations (i.e., centers) in groups and at times determined by the teachers. The amount of time of each rotation will depend on what is being taught and the levels/skills of the students. Generally, 15 to 40 minute stations work well, but there may be exceptions depending on the actual lesson objectives and the specific students.

Station Teaching Advantages	Station Teaching Disadvantages
Each teacher responsible for delivering part of the lesson.	May require extensive planning, with all activities and materials prepared and organized in advance.
Students are taught in small groups with more one-on-one attention.	May be noisy depending on the type of activity.
Teachers can cover more material in a shorter period of time.	Pacing is critical so that students move from center to center smoothly and complete what is required of them in the allotted time.
Improved classroom management because	Independent work stations may require

teachers can monitor behavior in the small groups and separate students who work best away from each other.	monitoring.
If there is a question about the content knowledge level of one teacher, station is a good approach to begin with. The less knowledgeable teacher may not be the one to introduce new information. Instead, s/he may address review or practice skills with the student until s/he has gained content competency.	

Suggestions for Station Teaching

- There should be written instructions at each independent station. This will help eliminate the need for students working in an independent group to interrupt either of the teachers during a rotation.
- Groupings of students should be pre-established prior to the lesson and based on the objectives of the lesson and the specific learning needs of the students in each group. Student groupings will change depending on what is being taught. Avoid having only special education students in the same group all of the time.
- Students should be taught routines for moving quickly and quietly to each station. A variation may be that the students stay seated and the teachers rotate to each group.
- A timer should be used to signal the end of the rotations.
- Pacing of the lesson is critical. All groups have to finish within the allotted time to ensure that all students complete/address the required amount of work in each station.

Parallel Teaching involves dividing the class in two and each teacher delivering the same lesson to his/her group simultaneously.

- Both groups address the same GLEs and lesson objective(s), but each teacher may vary the instructional strategies in order to differentiate for the different learners in his/her group.
- Lesson length will vary depending on what is being taught and the learning styles of the students in the class. Parallel groups may be scheduled from 15 to 60 minute, depending on what is taught and the levels/skills of the students.
- In essence, parallel teaching is large group instruction, but with a smaller group of students. Each teacher is able to better supervise his/her group and provide more opportunity for students to respond to instruction.
- Parallel groupings of students should be pre-established prior to the lesson and based on the objectives of the lesson and the specific learning needs of the students in each group.

Student groupings will change depending on what is being taught. Avoid having only special education students in the same group all of the time.

- Pacing of the lesson is critical. Both teachers have to finish at the same time **and** ensure that the required amount of work was completed in each group.

Parallel Advantages	Parallel Disadvantages
Two smaller groups allow for increased supervision and monitoring of both behavior and understanding of concepts being taught.	Noise may be an issue if the activities in which the students are engaged involve loud talking or music.
Allows each teacher to use instructional strategies tailored to the unique needs of the students in his/her group and to give immediate academic feedback.	If the student groupings remain the same every time parallel is used, then one group may be labeled as the 'slow' or 'advanced' group.
Allows increased opportunity for student responses which will aid in monitoring understanding.	

Suggestions for Parallel Teaching

- Groupings of students should be pre-established prior to the lesson and based on the objectives of the lesson and the specific learning needs of the students in each group. Student groupings will change depending on what is being taught. Avoid having only special education students in the same group all of the time.
- Students should be taught routines for moving quickly and quietly to their assigned group.
- A timer should be used to signal the end of the lesson.

Alternative Teaching occurs when one teacher assumes responsibility for the larger group, while the other teacher works with a smaller group.

- One teacher begins the lesson with the majority of the class, while the other teacher pulls 1 to 6 students to address a specific area. Time students spend in the smaller group should be limited to 5 to 15 minutes. When these students are pulled, they are missing the main lesson the other teacher is delivering to the rest of the class.
- Alternative teaching may be used to re-teach specific skills that have not been mastered, or even to provide added rigor to students who have mastered the material ahead of schedule.

Alternative Teaching Advantages	Alternative Teaching Disadvantages
Allows additional teaching for specific skills with little interference to the main lesson.	Noise may be an issue if the classroom is small.
	If the same students are always pulled, then they may be labeled as the 'slow' or 'advanced' group.

Suggestions for Alternative Teaching

- This approach should be used only for short periods of time. Alternative teaching is not intended to encourage a special education teacher to work with a small group of special education students in the back of the room for a *long period of time*, while the general education teacher is teaching the rest of the class.
- The special education teacher should not always be the teacher to pull the small group.

Team Teaching occurs when both teachers deliver 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.”
- Teachers plan and deliver instruction together, engaging in conversation, not lecture, in front of the students.
- One teacher may take the role of primary speaker, while the second teacher adds information, asks clarifying questions, charts concepts on graphic organizers, etc.
- Many co-teachers consider this approach the most complex, but satisfying, way to co-teach, but it is the approach that is most dependent on teachers’ styles and how they interact with one another.
- Team teaching should be used only if that approach complements the objectives of the lesson and the learning needs of students.

Team Teaching Advantages	Team Teaching Disadvantages
Both teachers play an active role in planning, delivering instruction, and managing student behavior.	This approach requires a lot of planning.
Both teachers are viewed as equally in charge by the students.	May take time to effectively implement because it works best when teachers are comfortable with each other and each other’s teaching style.
Allows teachers to model for students many character education traits, like supporting each	Team teaching is still large group instruction.

other, disagreeing amicably, sharing and respecting opposite opinions.	
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Suggestions for Team Teaching

- It is not just turn taking; more like a conversation, so it gets better and easier with practice.
- Key to effective team teaching is really knowing your teaching partner and respecting him/her.
- Capitalize on the unique skills and talents of each teacher, celebrating those skills and talents.

One Teach, One Assist occurs when one teacher has primary responsibility for teaching, while the other teacher circulates throughout the room providing assistance to students.

- The teacher providing assistance must do so in an unobtrusive manner, so that his/her support does not interfere with the primary instruction delivered by the other teacher.
- The teacher providing assistance is able to deliver individual student accommodations and ensure that all students are on task.
- This approach is best used when the other adult in the room is a paraeducator and not a teacher.

One Teach, One Assist Advantages	One Teach, One Assist Disadvantages
Individual students receive additional support during a lesson.	One teacher may be viewed by students as a paraeducator and not as a teacher.
	The second teacher’s skills are often underutilized when they are just ‘assisting.’

Suggestions for One Teach, One Assist

- This approach should not be the primary co-teaching approach used and, if used, only on a limited basis.
- This model may best be utilized when a paraeducator is the second adult in the room.

Implementation of the Co-teaching Approaches

While all of the co-teaching approaches listed above are valid and valuable, the effectiveness of each is determined by matching the right approach to a specific lesson and group of students. For example, team teaching can be extremely effective for some lessons, but for other lessons (like when the teachers need to introduce a new, but very complex, math skill), it is very limiting, because it is a large group approach. Parallel teaching, on the other hand, may not be as

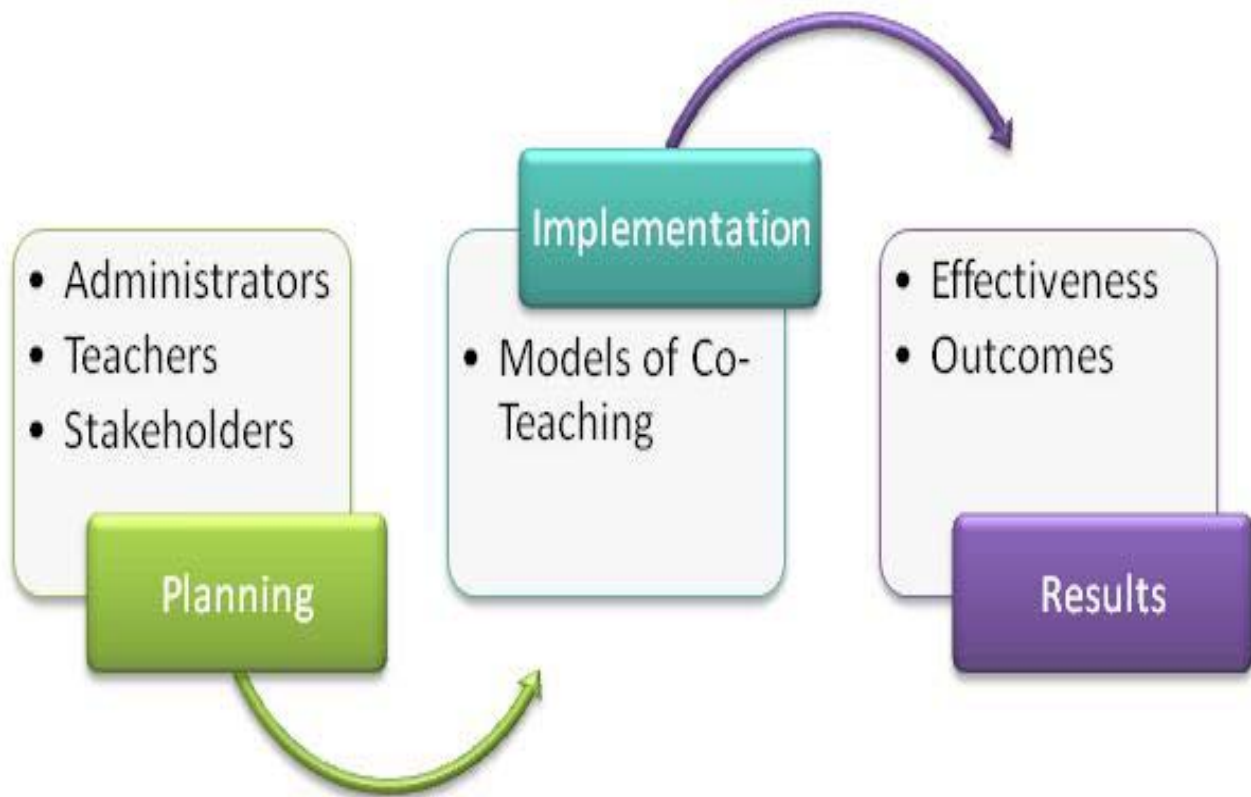
effective as team teaching if the lesson involves a discussion of current political events. It may be more beneficial to have all of the students involved in the discussion, in order to present a broader perspective of ideas. The co-teaching approach used to deliver instruction must be appropriate to the specific lesson content and the levels/skills of the students. Selection of the appropriate co-teaching approach is contingent on (a) the skills to be taught, (b) the learning needs and skill levels of students, and (3) comfort and skill level of the two teachers in delivering an approach.

Many lessons will not be delivered by using only one approach. For example, teachers may introduce a lesson using the team teaching approach and then use parallel or station to actually teach the skills. At the end of the lesson, they again may utilize team teaching to summarize and complete lesson closure. The co-teaching approach does not drive the lesson, rather the lesson objectives and needs of the students dictate the co-teaching approach to use.

Next Steps

It is important that schools systematically design and implement more inclusive practices school-wide. In most instances, however, effective inclusive practices are not implemented without a conscious effort. It takes strong leadership to guide the process and a staff willing to establish a structured, but flexible, framework in which inclusive practices can be seamlessly integrated into the school's culture. The following identifies the steps a school may take in order to ensure effective implementation:

✓ Establish an Inclusive Practices Leadership Team that will address the overall implementation process.
✓ Survey staff to determine level of awareness and level of participation interest.
✓ Identify areas of professional development needs and schedule workshops for staff in those areas.
✓ Identify current school resources and supports that are available to support both implementation of the process and supports available to meet the needs of specific students.
✓ Use the 'Student First Support Need' process to identify the support needs specific students have for specific classes.
✓ Use the 'Student First Support Need' results to assign students with disabilities to specific general education classes and to assign staff (i.e., co-teachers, paraeducators) to those classes where students need a co-teacher/paraeducator.
✓ Provide information to parents about how inclusive practices will be implemented in the school.
✓ Update student IEPs, if needed, to reflect inclusion in general education classes.
✓ Design a system for monitoring implementation of inclusive practices, identifying the type of data to be collected.
✓ Review and revise (as needed) the schoolwide plan for implementing more effective inclusive practices



Results

The purpose of this section is to provide information on the effectiveness of co-teaching practices on student outcomes. This section will assist in ensuring that co-teaching models and practices are implemented with fidelity to affect positive outcomes.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness of co-teaching can be assessed in a variety of ways in each area: Planning, Implementation, and Results.

Factors that influence the effectiveness of co-teaching include:

- Shared understanding of the concept, vision, and mission of co-teaching with all professionals involved, e.g., administrators, teachers, paraeducators, Related Services professionals, etc.
- Purposeful scheduling, e.g., students with disabilities should be scheduled first and in accordance with their support needs.

- Pairing co-teachers together that are professionally compatible, e.g., positive chemistry.
- Shared planning time for co-teachers.
- On-going job-embedded professional development.

Effectiveness of Co-Teaching Team

Professional compatibility or “chemistry” is critical to the success of a co-teaching team. Co-teaching teams are often referred to as professional marriages because of the multitude of shared responsibilities. Co-teaching pairs must be able to work well together. Sometimes, co-teaching pairs ‘click’ right from the beginning of the partnership. For other pairs, it takes hard work and a longer period of time for a mutually respectful and supportive relationship to develop.

Effectiveness of Planning

Effective planning between co-teachers is essential to meeting the academic and behavioral needs of all students. To ensure effective planning, teachers must collaboratively design lessons which address general goals and accommodations for all students in the class. The amount of planning time required varies, based on several factors: (a) How well teachers know their students and the content, (b) How long the teachers have been teaching together, (c) Diverse needs of the students, and (d) Co-teaching approaches selected. Co-teachers may use the [Co-Teaching Planning Checklist](#) to assist them in planning more effective co-taught lessons.

An effective planning meeting means that each teacher is prepared for the meeting. Each teacher must...

- Bring needed data to the meeting. Specific data related to students’ skill and performance levels should be readily available.
- Have copies of instructional materials (e.g., text, workbooks, activity sheets) at the planning meeting.
- Be familiar with GLEs and LCC scope and sequence for the lesson week. It is important that both teachers are familiar with the curriculum and the specific GLEs to be addressed in the lesson being designed.
- Bring creative ideas to the meeting and be open to different perspectives.
- Get right to work. Time is often an issue, since most co-teaching pairs do not have unlimited meeting time available. It is important that teachers do not engage in sidebar discussions, but instead get right to work.

Effectiveness of Implementation

The major reasons why teachers should engage in co-teaching are (a) co-teaching facilitates maximum amount of explicit teaching time by both teachers, (b) smaller groups of students receive explicit instruction, thereby, (c) increasing student engagement in the ‘learning process.’ Co-teaching is a practice that can maximize teaching resources and promote inclusive practices. The implementation of co-teaching approaches must be done with fidelity. Once teachers fully

understand each co-teaching approach and are comfortable in using each, it then is possible to manipulate the approaches to better meet the needs of a specific group of students. These resources provide various observation checklists that will assist in determining the effectiveness of inclusive settings: [Inclusion Walk-Through Observation](#) (adapted from Livingston Parish) | [Co-Teaching Observation Checklist](#) | [Collaborative Teaching Arrangements Observation Checklist](#).

Overall Effectiveness

The effectiveness of co-teaching can be assessed by looking at the teaming, planning, and implementation components or by assessing the entire process relative to student outcomes. Throughout this guide a variety of checklists have been provided that will help co-teaching pairs establish good practices and monitor implementation of those practices. Just as it is impossible to provide an appropriate and effective instructional program for students without conducting progress monitoring and ‘tweaking’ the instructional program and/or delivery strategies, it is impossible to have an effective co-teaching experience without monitoring implementation and making changes to improve effectiveness. Refer to these resources for additional information regarding assessment of the overall process: [Self-Evaluation Checklist for Teachers](#) | [Self-Evaluation Checklist for Principals](#) | [Rubric for Co-Teaching in Inclusive Settings](#).

Reflective Tools

[Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching](#) document includes teacher reflection as an integral aspect of teacher growth. The same holds true for co-teaching. To master the practice of co-teaching, teams must reflect on co-teaching practices so that adjustments can be made as needed. Use [Developing a Reflective Framework](#) and [Reflecting to the Future](#) to help guide the reflection process.

Outcomes

All teaching practices are implemented with one question in mind: “What outcomes can be expected from implementation of this teaching practice?”

There are numerous ways to assess outcomes, including collecting and reviewing both quantitative and qualitative data in a wide range of areas, including: (a) Student achievement; (b) School performance, including subgroup performance; (c) Least restrictive environment data; (d) Instructional practices; (e) Positive change in stakeholder perspective; and (f) Improvement in student behavior. Some of these data may be collected through surveys and other informal formats/instruments. Most of the data, however, must be collected using student performance outcome indicators. While it may be desirable to know that two teachers are comfortable with each other and respect each other’s delivery style, if positive student outcomes are not evidenced, then co-teaching is not effective.

Resources

[Benefits and Barriers of Co-Teaching Approaches](#) Marilyn Friend, Inc. 2008
[Co-Teaching Connection](#)
[Access Center](#)

Collaborative Teaching: [Sample Lesson Plans](#) (created by Ascension Parish)

[Paraeducator Lesson Plan](#) (created by Ascension Parish)

[50 Ways to Keep Your Co-Teacher](#) is an article that will assist co-teaching pairs with strategies to use before, during, and after co-teaching. It outlines fifty creative ways to implement co-teaching.

[Data Profile](#) (created by Ascension Parish)

[The IRIS Center](#) Council for Exceptional Children ([CEC Standards for Professional Practice](#))

[IDEA](#) – Individuals with Disabilities Act

[INTASC](#) – Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium

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