INCLUSION IN TEXAS

Guidelines for Co-Teaching in Texas

A collaborative project of the Texas Education Agency and the Inclusion in Texas Network

TEA | Texas SPED Support
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How to Use this Document

The purpose of this document is to provide non-regulatory guidance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) regarding setting up and implementing effective co-teaching models for delivery of specially designed instruction to students who are eligible for special education services. The document is organized with the intent that LEAs can use it in part or in its entirety, and so you may find that some information is included in more than one section.

The organization of this document, as detailed in the Table of Contents, is as follows:

Introduction: Establishes a common vocabulary, defines co-teaching, and describes the six co-teaching approaches.

Guidelines for Administrators: Considerations for Beginning a District-Wide Co-Teach Program: Provides information for district-level administrators on setting up and implementing a co-teach program.

Guidelines for Campus Administrators: Considerations for Beginning a CampusCo-Teach Program: Provides information for campus-level administrators on setting up and implementing a co-teach program.

Guidelines for Teachers: Considerations for Implementing Co-Teaching in Your Classroom: Provides information for general and special education teachers on planning and implementing an effective co-teaching program.

This division of content was designed to make this document user friendly. Keep in mind, though, that reading information about all professionals' roles and responsibilities for co-teaching leads to the deepest understanding of co-teaching's potential.

Introduction

You and your colleagues are striving to meet state and federal accountability mandates to improve the achievement of students with disabilities. To reach this goal, schools are exploring various inclusive service delivery models that effectively address the needs of diverse learners. **Co-teaching is one option that allows general and special educators to reach today's goal for students with disabilities.** Co-teaching is intensive specially designed instruction embedded within full access to grade-level, rigorous general curriculum leading to a reduced achievement gap. The purpose of this document is to help districts and schools establish a common understanding of co-teaching fundamentals, from conceptualization to implementation and evaluation, and to explain essential components of effective co-teaching programs.

Special Education must have a continuum of services to support placement of students with disabilities. Keep in mind that all schools must have inclusive services as part of this service continuum. Co-teaching is just one of the many service delivery options within the continuum. A school is not required to use co-teaching as one of their options. If you choose to use co-teaching the information that follows will provide you with strategies to implement co-teaching with fidelity.

A Common Vocabulary for Inclusive Schools

A starting point for learning about co-teaching is a brief check on vocabulary. The terms and concepts described in this section are distinct, not synonymous. It is important for your school to use a common vocabulary when you discuss co-teaching. Schools who do not use a common vocabulary may experience confusion when discussing terms and concepts of co-teaching.

Co-Teaching

Co-teaching is a service option within inclusive models, in which two or more certified professionals share the responsibility of planning, delivery of instruction, and progress monitoring for all students assigned to their classroom. In some instances, other licensed professionals such as occupational therapists or speech language pathologists may be one of the co-teachers. As a team, these professionals share the same physical classroom space, collaboratively make instructional decisions, and share the responsibility of student accountability (Friend 2019). Co-teachers share a common belief that each partner has a unique expertise and perspective that enriches the learning experience; together they provide opportunities for students to learn from two or more people who may have different ways of thinking or teaching. They work together to achieve common, agreed-upon goals. Paraprofessionals are not included in the definition of co-teaching because their roles are to provide instructional support. The paraprofessional is not accountable for student achievement and their certification is not equivalent to that of a certified or licensed professional.

Co-Teaching is NOT

- Teachers splitting subjects, serving as the lead on those they are responsible for (for example, I teach reading and social studies, you teach math and science).

- Teachers dividing a lesson, with each leading part (for example, I will lead the warm-up you teach the mini-lesson).

- One person teaching while the other makes materials, grades student work, or writes individualized education programs (IEPs).

- One person teaching a lesson while the others sit, stand, and watch without function or specific teaching responsibility.

- One person's ideas determining what or how something should be taught as the other person's ideas are ignored.

- One person acting as a tutor or hovering over one or two students.

Purpose of Co-Teaching

Today's classrooms have students with a diverse range of abilities and needs who bring unique challenges to teaching in a standards-based learning environment. **Co-teaching brings together two or more certified professionals who can use their expertise to design rigorous learning experiences tailored to meet the unique needs of all students.** For example, general educators may have specific expertise in the areas of curriculum and instruction, classroom management, knowledge of typical students, and instructional pacing. Special educators may have unique expertise in the areas of understanding and creating specially designed instruction, monitoring progress, understanding learning processes, and teaching for mastery.

Just as students have different learning preferences, teachers have different teaching styles. Co-teaching provides students with opportunities to learn in environments that model collaboration, demonstrate respect for different perspectives, and utilize a process for building on each other's strengths to meet a common goal. In effective co-teaching, teachers model and support these skills to create collaborative learning environments that are results-driven and standards-based.

Terms Related To But Distinct From Co-Teaching

Think about the vocabulary used on your campus or in your district during discussions about inclusive schooling. As you read the information that follows, analyze how accurately the words are used and whether changes might be needed to clarify communication.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

Co-teaching is simply a structure through which services can be provided, just like a resource room or a self-contained classroom. What matters is what occurs within that structure. Over the past several years, it has become increasingly clear that the most essential purpose of co-teaching is to provide to students with disabilities, in the general education setting, the specially designed instruction they must receive (Friend 2016; Rodgers and Weiss 2019). In federal special education law, special education is defined as specially designed instruction. The regulations for that law further clarify that SDI is adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology or delivery of instruction (i) to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability; and (ii) to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children. (Section 300.39(b)(3) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations [CFR])

That is, students with disabilities must be taught using specialized techniques and approaches that are tailored to their unique learning needs and that address their IEP goals (e.g., Riccomini, Morano, and Hughes 2017). That instruction should be carefully planned, delivered with fidelity, and evaluated to determine effectiveness (e.g., Sayeski, Bateman and Yell 2019). For co-teaching partners, this means that co-teaching should be grounded in the general curriculum but also provide students with disabilities additional "specially designed instruction" based on the individualized needs outlined in the IEP. The special educator generally has the primary responsibility for planning and monitoring SDI, but both teachers participate in its delivery.

The topic of specially designed instruction has many dimensions. It is so significant that a separate guide has been developed to help those teaching students in kindergarten through high school understand it: *Specially Designed Instruction—A Resource for Teachers*.

Curriculum Access

At least, brief mention should be made about the importance of curriculum access (e.g., Murawski and Scott 2017). Specifically, access to the general curriculum is a legal requirement that emphasizes the importance of aligning instructional expectations with enrolled grade level content standards mandated for all students. When students with disabilities have meaningful access to the general curriculum, they are much more likely to succeed academically (Cole et al. 2019).

For young children, the content standards are The Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines. For students who are enrolled in Pre-K, content standards

are the [Pre-K Guidelines](#) or the locally adopted Pre-K curriculum; for students enrolled in grades K-12, content standards are the [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)](#). In some instances, students with disabilities require modifications and/or accommodations to demonstrate proficiency or to develop foundational skills aligned with the grade-level standards. Access to and progress in the general curriculum means more than just being present in a general education setting; it literally means accessing and progressing in the same curriculum other students access, regardless of disability.

Inclusion

As many authors have noted (e.g., Villa and Thousand 2016), inclusion refers to a belief system that welcomes all learners in the general education classroom. **It is based on collaboration among all the professionals, as well as parents, and it strongly favors the general education setting as the placement where students with disabilities can truly meet their potential.** In inclusive schools, every effort is made to create supports for students that enable them to thrive; students are not sent to separate settings because they do not fit traditional programs and services (for example, "He is reading too far below grade level so he needs to be in a special class.").

You should not think, though, that inclusive schooling implies that all students should be in a general education classroom at all times, no matter their needs. A few students are educated in a separate setting for safety reasons. Some students need breaks from the sometimes socially stressful environment that is a general education classroom. And some students with disabilities need instruction that is so intensive that it cannot effectively be delivered in a general education classroom. Ultimately, when educators use the misguided phrase "full inclusion," they often are simply referring to the location where a student sits instead of grasping the beliefs that define inclusion.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal design for learning (UDL) provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone--not a single, one-size-fits-all solution, but rather flexible approaches that can b e customized and adjusted for individual needs.

UDL is a set of principles for developing curriculum that reduces barriers and provides flexibility in how content is presented, how students choose to express what they know and how to best engage students. It gives all learners equal opportunity to learn (CAST 2010; National Center on Universal Design for Learning 2010).

Co-Teaching Implementation: Six Approaches

After understanding the key terms sometimes associated with co-teaching, the next step is making sure that you know what co-teaching should look like. This varies from classroom to classroom. As co-teachers consider student needs and abilities and the instructional objectives for a particular lesson, they select the best way to structure both teaching and learning. Friend (2019) identifies six arrangements that are commonly found in co-teach settings. The first three—station teaching, parallel teaching, and alternative teaching—are the ones that should be used most frequently because they emphasize both teachers having clear instructional roles and students learning in small groups that can be arranged in many ways. The other three approaches—one teaching-one observing, teaming, and one teaching-one assisting—have value, in some situations, but they typically are implemented far less frequently than the other approaches.

Approach 1

Station Teaching

Station Teaching generally is considered the most flexible co-teaching approach. In the most basic form, teachers begin by dividing the content into three segments that can be taught in any sequence (more or less to suit the co-teaching situation) and grouping students so that one-third of the students begin with each part of the content. Two groups are teacher-led and the third group works independently. During the lesson, the students rotate through the "stations" until they complete all three sections of the content. This approach is beneficial because it allows teachers to create small group activities that are responsive to individual needs. Further, it can be adapted in many ways. Teachers may increase or decrease the number of groups, they may sometimes group students based on skills or interests, or at other times group heterogeneously.

*Recommended Use: Frequently.

Approach 2 — Parallel Teaching

Parallel Teaching provides opportunities for teachers to maximize participation and learning and minimize behavior problems. To use this approach, teachers divide the class in half and lead the same instruction with both groups. The groups do not rotate. However, variations include teaching to the same standard but in different ways (for example, direct instruction or problem-based learning) or with different materials (for example, more or less challenging vocabulary). Student grouping should be flexible and based on students' needs in relation to the standards being addressed. Students benefit from working in smaller groups and receiving instruction from only one of the teachers.

*Recommended Use: Frequently.

Alternative Teaching

Alternative Teaching allows teachers to target the unique needs of a specific group of students. They use student data to identify students who may need remediation on pre-skills, additional practice on current content, or the same instruction using a different method (for example, more manipulatives). During instruction, one teacher manages the large group while the other teacher works with the identified group. Either teacher may work with the small group, and the purpose for the groups can vary widely, including remediation, enrichment, introduction of a specific learning strategy, or even to catch-up students who have been absent.

*Recommended Use: Frequently.

Approach 4 — Teaming

In **Teaming**, teachers share the responsibility of leading instruction. Both teachers are in front of the classroom. While their roles may shift throughout the lesson, the key characteristic is that "both teachers are fully engaged in the delivery of the core academic instruction" (Friend 2019). This approach is appropriate when teachers are trying to clarify confusing concepts (for example, one teacher wears vertical strips for longitude and one teacher wears horizontal strips for latitude). Or, when the instruction is best carried out with two roles (for example, one teacher giving directions as the other teacher models how to follow the directions). This approach, though, loses the advantages of small groups and so should be used sparingly.

*Recommended Use: Occasionally.

One Teaching, One Observing

One Teaching, One Observing occurs when one teacher provides instruction to all the students while the other teacher gathers data. The data may pertain to a single student's IEP goals, behavior of several students in the class, or patterns among all students (for example, how long they read during independent reading time). Data could relate to students' behaviors, but it could also document academic or social skills. Either teacher may gather the data, and it can be used to inform instruction and document student progress. This co-teaching approach allows the teachers to have valuable data to analyze in determining the impact of specially designed instruction, future lessons, and the effectiveness of their teaching strategies.

*Recommended Use: Frequently for data collection, but for short time periods.

Approach 6 — **One Teaching, One Assisting**

One Teaching, One Assisting places one teacher in the lead role while the other functions as a support in the classroom. The teacher in the supportive role monitors student work, addresses behavior issues, manages materials, and assists with student questions. Teachers must use caution when using this approach to avoid a learning environment in which the general educator provides all instruction and the special educator serves as an assistant. While there may be instances in which this approach meets an immediate student need, frequent use can negatively affect the collaborative benefits that co-teaching provides and encourage students to become dependent on teacher support instead of developing independent learning strategies. Of all the co-teaching approaches, one teaching, one assisting should be the least frequently implemented.

*Recommended Use: Seldom (or less).

When co-teachers are in a new partnership, they tend to start with approaches that involve limited coordination between team members (i.e., parallel, stations). As co-teaching skills and relationships strengthen, teachers gradually incorporate more approaches and variations of them based on students' needs and instructional content requirements. This illustrates that co-teaching is developmental, requiring time, coordination, and trust Friend (2019).

Guidelines for Administrators: Considerations for Beginning a District-Wide Co-Teach Program

Many districts have elected to implement co-teaching district-wide to maintain a consistent program across campuses. This is helpful when a student moves from one campus attendance zone to another or when a student changes campuses based on promotion. Some districts include co-teaching in their district improvement plans. When beginning or refining a district-wide co-teach program, several key components must be considered.

The Target Population

While co-teaching is one option for providing in-class support as required in IEPs of students receiving special education services, research shows it is beneficial for many other groups of students. Before beginning a district-wide co-teach program, leaders should consider whether their co-teaching program will be exclusively focused on meeting the needs of students who receive special education services or if it will also be targeting other at-risk populations and/or struggling learners, such as those who are English learners (Els) (e.g., Dove and Honigsfeld 2018), migrant, or students with Section 504 plans. The program could be designed to include the general population, students with behavioral challenges, students with severe intellectual disabilities who qualify for a state alternate assessment, and/or students who are identified as gifted and talented. Co-teaching is appropriate for many different populations, not just for students with disabilities (for example, a learning disability).

Initial Program Development

Professional development about co-teaching is essential for participating teachers and all stakeholders prior to program implementation. Professional development should include co-teaching non-negotiables and information specific to how your district has decided to implement co-teaching, such as adjustments to teacher evaluations incorporating co-teaching. As with any new endeavor, full and robust implementation of a district-wide co-teaching program may take three to five years or even longer.

Professional Development for Campus Administrators

Campus administrators must have a strong understanding of the co-teaching model because they are responsible for overseeing day-to-day implementation, addressing program challenges, and evaluating co-teach partners. Important concepts campus administrators need to know and understand include:

- addressing program challenges,
- evaluating co-teaching partners,
- identifying teachers who understand co-teaching models,
- creating a campus schedule that supports co-teaching, and
- determining the effectiveness of classroom implementation.

Professional development for administrators should include information on conducting walk-throughs and formal appraisals in a co-teaching model. For example, issues that need to be addressed include:

- what evaluations look like with two professionals in the classroom, especially if the two professionals have two different appraisers, and
- what options are available for evaluation in a co-teach environment (for example, is it acceptable for two different appraisers to observe two teachers and one co-taught lesson).

Campus administrators need to have an understanding of what high-quality co-teaching looks like (not a single approach but the structures and practices that should be in place) so they can assess the effectiveness of the program's classroom implementation. One specific part of the understanding relates to specially designed instruction. That is, campus leaders must deeply understand the balance of SDI in co-teaching and discuss SDI with teachers and recognize when it is (and is not) being provided. Finally, districts must have a remediation plan for co-teaching. If the authentic co-teaching appraisal determines that one or both professionals are struggling with their roles and responsibilities or other implementation issues, what supports and/or professional development will be available to them?

Effective administrator training should be sustained and consistent to ensure accountability not only in successfully leading a campus to implementation of a quality co-teaching program, but also in refining leaders' skills so that they are equipped to maintain the program. To ensure consistency and structure, professional development on co-teaching as a service option must be included in new administrator orientation, leadership academies, or administrative retreats.

Professional Development for Teachers and Other Staff

Effective professional development for teachers who will be implementing co-teaching is critical for creating and sustaining a quality program. Professional development topics should begin with an awareness that co-teaching is a district expectation and that all teachers will likely participate at some point, even if not immediately and even if not every year. Additional topics should include information on relationship-building for those in a co-teaching partnership and plans for addressing teacher needs, such as including a forum for sharing concerns and successes. Districts might consider including a mentoring program for new co-teachers.

Teachers' professional development also should include training on the six basic co-teaching approaches and the process for adapting and blending the various approaches to fit student needs and staffing configurations.

One other fundamental topic for professional development is specially designed instruction. Both the general educators and special educators need to understand this as the purpose for their classroom partnerships, and they should have an opportunity to discuss how to reach simultaneously the goals of offering a rigorous curriculum while providing SDI. You can learn more about the characteristics of SDI and suggestions for its implementation in *Specially Designed Instruction: A Resource for Teachers*.

In an exemplary co-teaching program, co-teachers attend training together so they can share the learning and participate in team building. The goal is for partners to hear the same information, develop a shared vocabulary, discuss their own thoughts and preferences for working together, negotiate how to deliver their shared general and specially designed instruction, and agree on classroom procedures.

It is imperative that other relevant district staff (Curriculum Director, Special Education Supervisors/Coordinators, Related Services Personnel, Supervisors, etc.) also receive an orientation to co-teaching and its components, especially if they will be involved in supervising staff participating in co-teaching. They are also likely to need follow-up discussions to discuss practices they see and deepen their skill in recognizing exemplary and questionable co-teaching.

Finally, a system for this professional development should be in place to ensure consistency. It may be a scheduled set of face-to-face events, it could be embedded into other campus and district professional development plans, and/or it could have a strong technological component. If paraprofessionals are present when teachers are co-teaching, they should also be trained so that they understand their roles in such classrooms.

Co-Teaching and Curriculum Development

Curriculum development within the district should include co-teaching and should follow a universal design for learning model to provide differentiated instruction and access to tools and accommodations for all learners, regardless of the presence or absence of a disability. Curriculum design should include supplementary aids and services available to assist students with different learning needs in accessing this curriculum. It should also be designed with the understanding that time for specially designed instruction is likely to be needed; pacing guidelines should take this into account. For all of this to come together, curriculum discussions should always include special education representatives.

Integration of Co-Teaching into District Documents

To be successfully implemented, co-teaching must be integrated into district documents such as district and campus improvement plans; teacher evaluation tools, such as walk-through and formal observation forms; and substitute teacher information for co-teach classrooms. Co-teaching should also be incorporated into the district's website and be part of information that is shared with all parents and interested community members. District leaders should also consider whether any existing policies need to be adjusted or re-interpreted to take into account   co-teaching partnerships.

Remediation for Struggling Teachers

In a districtwide co-teaching model, thought should be given to teachers who are struggling. First, if a teacher is struggling with instruction, classroom management, or other general responsibilities, it generally is not a good idea to assign that individual to co-teach. This is true whether the struggling teacher is the special educator or the general educator. The thinking is that co-teaching is not intended to be a strategy for educator support and remediation, and creating that expectation can be awkward for the partner. If a teacher is struggling, appropriate support and supervision should be carried out by an administrator. Co-teachers' efforts should be on intensifying instruction and improving student outcomes.

For teachers who struggle with a classroom partnership, the district needs to consider how to provide support and remediation if formal observation shows the teacher is not successfully implementing co-teaching.

- Is this occurring because one teacher or the other does not want to use the approaches?
- Will these teachers be given additional professional development?

- If so, what type of professional development will be required and who will provide it?
- Will an instructional coach model all the options available in a co-teach partnership and assist the teachers in planning?
- What exactly is the remediation plan?
- How will accountability be built into this plan?

Evaluation of Co-Teaching

For districts electing to adopt co-teaching district-wide, evaluation must be addressed at several different layers. First, decisions should be made about walk-throughs and formal teacher observations when co-teaching is expected. Those topics were addressed earlier in this section of this manual. Second, the district must determine how co-teaching will be integrated into the evaluation of current campus administrators. If school leaders are not accountable for effective implementation of co-teaching, it is unlikely to be successful. The topic of co-teaching should be integrated into the interview process for administrations. Additionally, principals must understand that co-teaching involves more than sending teachers to a one-time training and expecting them to develop a co-taught class without the necessary resources and supports. Overall, administrators must be held accountable for the fidelity of co-teaching on their campuses, including how successful they have been in establishing, monitoring, and evaluating it.

The most important aspect of co-teaching evaluation concerns students. Evaluation of student outcomes as demonstrated through traditional data and student-based evidence of progress enables administrators to determine the success of a co-teaching program. In addition to traditional grades, IEP progress reports, and state assessment results, student-based evidence of progress includes data such as:

- instructional settings (looking at whether students are in less restrictive settings than before co-teaching was implemented);
- results of formative assessments, such as benchmark tests;
- parent responses to co-teaching;
- student perceptions of co-teaching; and
- community responses to co-teaching.

Figure 1 summarizes these and other options for a district evaluation of a co-teaching program. Additional information for districts developing co-teaching programs can be found in Figure 2 (District Considerations for Co-Teaching) and Figure 3 (Phases for the Implementation of Co-Teaching).

Figure 1: Evaluation Methods for a Co-Teaching Program

Students
- Formative and summative assessments of achievement
- Behavior data
- Attendance
- Perceptions through surveys and interviews

Professional and Other Staff Members
- Classroom observations
- Data comparing student performance in co-taught and non-co-taught sections
- Perceptions through surveys, interviews, or focus groups

Parents and Community Members
- Perceptions through interviews or focus groups.

Figure 2: District Considerations for Co-Teaching

Co-teaching is most successful when it is implemented with fidelity, integrated into school and district long-term plans, and supported through professional development and accountability strategies. Here are questions regarding co-teaching to consider at the district level.

1	How have expectations for co-teaching been articulated at the district level? • What formal policies and procedures exist related to co-teaching? • What policies and procedures should be approved to foster sustainability for co-teaching?
2	To what extent have district-level personnel received professional development about co-teaching? (Note: This question pertains to general education as well as special education leaders.)
3	What supports has the district offered to create a viable infrastructure for co-teaching (e.g., assistance in scheduling, clarification of service delivery options)?
4	How has co-teaching been integrated into options related to strategic and school improvement planning?
5	How are resources allocated to support co-teaching (e.g., funding for professional development, periodic common planning time for co-teachers, data collection and aggregation, and so on)?
6	How is co-teaching presented in district materials and media (e.g., district website, student handbooks, parent communication)?
7	How is co-teaching part of the interview and hiring practices of the district?
8	How are site administrators accountable for co-teaching implementation integrity?
9	How is co-teaching incorporated into teacher evaluation protocols and procedures?
10	How is co-teaching incorporated into principal and other site administrator evaluation protocols and procedures?
11	How is essential information about co-teaching disseminated to site administrators, teachers, and others?
12	What data are reported to the district in order to determine the impact of co-teaching on key student outcomes?

Source: Friend, M. 2017. Co-teaching: Leadership perspectives [unpublished workshop materials]. Washington, DC: Marilyn Friend, Inc.

Figure 3: Phases for District Implementation of Co-Teaching

Preparation for Co-Teaching

PHASE 1
- Identify target population (consider a multiple-year timeline for implementation across student groups, grade levels, and/or subjects/courses)
- Consider populations which may benefit from co-teaching (for example, students with disabilities, English learners, Gifted and Talented)

PHASE 2
- Recruit schools and teachers for early implementation
- Provide supports for schools, teachers, and administrators
- Develop and disseminate a consistent message about co-teaching, including its purpose, the multiple-year plan for its implementation, and its place among all district initiatives and priorities

PHASE 3
- Provide professional development for district and site administrators
- Provide professional development for teachers and other staff

Implementation of Co-Teaching

PHASE 4
- Continue supports for teachers and administrators
- Check fidelity of implementation
- Continue needed professional development for the next-group of teachers preparing to co-teach and others who should understand co-teaching, even if not implementing

PHASE 5
- Provide assistance for struggling co-teaching partners and administrators
- Gradually expand co-teaching within schools and across the district, basing decisions on data about co-teaching implementation and student data

PHASE 6
- Evaluate co-teaching program effectiveness using student achievement outcomes and plan revisions
- Gather additional evaluation data, including other measures related to students and perceptions of stakeholders

Guidelines for Administrators: Considerations for Beginning a Campus Co-Teach Program

While many of the considerations for beginning a campus co-teaching program are the same as the considerations for a district-wide program, in this section, issues specific to a campus are highlighted. Therefore, the campus considerations include, and extend, elements related to district-wide program development, implementation, and evaluation. In addition, the guidelines for co-teachers that follow this section are based on campus decisions.

Personnel Pairings

School leaders should give careful thought to the teachers they pair for co-teaching (Hedin and Conderman 2019). In the early phases of a program, campus administrators often begin with volunteers. This helps to build momentum and a positive view of co-teaching. However, site leaders should be clear from the beginning that eventually any teacher might be assigned to co-teach, that it is a developing expectation to best meet student needs. Most importantly, for co-teaching to be successful, staff members must be willing to plan and work together regularly to meet the needs of their students; therefore, it is essential that careful consideration be given to which teachers partner.

It is also essential to consider the individual skills of the personnel who are initially assigned to co-teaching. Teachers working in this environment should have the necessary instructional skills because students who need co-teaching are often those with the most diverse needs. That is general educators should be firmly grounded in the general curriculum and its pacing; special educators should have a strong understanding of specially designed instruction. Especially in new co-teaching programs, teachers with limited experience may not be the best match unless ongoing coaching is available.

Personnel selected for co-teaching should attend professional development together. Joint training of co-teaching partners should include professional relationship building with imbedded negotiation skills and core concepts related to vocabulary and co-teaching approaches. To facilitate efficient professional development, pre-planning packets with discussion points can be prepared to supplement the formal training. Campuses may also choose to provide training on building a collaborative campus culture. When one or both teachers are new to co-teaching, both should attend training together in order to have a shared understanding of co-teaching and build their collaborative relationship.

Other important aspects of co-teaching training are how to resolve disagreements in the co-teaching setting and what steps to take when agreement cannot be reached. Campus-specific procedures regarding conflict management, follow-up resources, and personnel must be available to co-teaching partners. Campus staff should also consider at what point continuous or serious disagreements are a supervisory issue and how unresolved conflicts will be handled.

It is important to understand that while each co-teacher has a unique contribution, there also is overlap. The goal is to blend the strengths, draw on the overlap, learn from each other, and as a result, raise student achievement.

Figure 4: Pairing of Co-Teaching Personnel Using Strengths

General Educator

- Curriculum expertise
- Group and classroom management
- Knowledge of typical student characteristics
- Pacing

Special Educator

- Learning process expertise
- Individual and specialized needs of students
- Paperwork and required legal procedures
- Teaching to mastery
- Knowledge of specially designed instruction
- Understand accommodations and modifications

Friend, M. (2019). Co-Teaching: Principles, practices and pragmatics (3rd edition). Washington, DC: Marilyn Friend, Inc.

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Principals and other site administrators have an important responsibility to be sure that co-teachers begin the year in a positive way and grow their practice so that student success increases.

They can do this by.

- Observing co-taught classes several times during the first couple months of school, using an agreed upon observation form to note whether both teachers are teaching, and what teaching strengths and weakness are displayed.
- Meeting with all co-teachers early in the school year to discuss exemplary practice and to encourage continued growth.
- Meeting with co-teachers monthly to discuss progress of their co-teaching partnership and the student outcomes.
- Meeting with specific sets of partners if it seems a problem exists in the instruction, behavior/classroom management, or partnership.

If a conflict arises and persists, one or more of these strategies may be helpful.

- Speak to each teacher individually and then together to identify issue(s), air them, and problem-solve to identify compromises or solutions.
- Determine if the problem is due to a lack of training, skill set, or an interpersonal issue, between the two teachers. If it is a training or skills issue, then help the teachers find the correct training needed. If it is an interpersonal problem, then use problem-solving conversations.
- Ask a school professional who does not supervise the teachers (e.g., counselor, psychologist, instructional coach) to have the problem-solving conversations with the teachers who disagree.
- Observe the co-teaching to identify how the conflict may be affecting student learning. Frame the conversation around that topic.

These strategies are NOT recommended.

- Relying on the perspective of just one teacher regarding the conflict;
- Deciding to halt the co-teaching; this is a problem because students must receive their services, and they must occur in the least restrictive environment;
- Deciding to move the students and special educator to a different general education class; this may send a message that if there is disagreement, co-teaching will be abandoned. Sending this unfavorable message may, over time, encourage reluctant teachers to resist co-teaching.

Considerations for Scheduling

Three major scheduling considerations strongly determine whether co-teaching is feasible and sustainable:

1. campus master schedule,
2. teacher planning time, and
3. student schedules.

1 Campus Master Schedule

For successful co-teaching implementation, the campus master scheduler needs to take into account several items. Co-teaching classes must be on equal footing as other courses in development of the master schedule, with thoughtful placement of co-teaching classes within the master schedule to meet both students' and teachers' needs.

The campus master schedule should consider scheduling of teachers and not just classes. If co-teachers move from one room to another to work in multiple classrooms, proximity of the co-teaching classrooms must allow timely navigation, especially if the co-teacher has materials to transport from one classroom to another. Also, the level of support needed for each individual student, including varied amounts of time and flexibility of changing needs during the year, must be considered when preparing the schedule. If students receiving support have IEPs that require specific contact time, the times noted on the IEP must be honored.

At different grade levels, teacher teams are organized differently. For example, at elementary school, teams are often organized by grade level; at the secondary level, it is often by content area. One simple and effective co-teaching model assigns the special education co-teacher to a team the same way general educators are assigned to teams. This method of team assignment assists in scheduling planning time and coordinating teachers' work. It also permits flexibility for the special education co-teacher who will, most likely, be collaborating with more than one general educator. Another consideration for team assignments is the content area strengths of each co-teacher.

Scheduling admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) meetings and substitute teachers is an additional issue for campus master schedulers to consider. Neither general nor special education co-teachers should be pulled from their co-teaching settings in order to attend ARD meetings or to act as substitute teachers in other classrooms. This is especially true when a student's IEP requires inclusive services and these services are delivered through a co-teaching model; failure to provide the IEP-required inclusive services could result in a student's IEP not being implemented as written, which is a non-compliance issue. For co-teaching to be truly successful, co-teachers must have time actually to be in the classroom and work with students.

② Teacher Planning Time

Scheduling common planning time for co-teaching partners presents another challenge when developing the master schedule. It is imperative that co-teachers have an opportunity to plan together regularly, either face-to-face or in another collaborative approach.

Face-to-face planning time can be difficult because it is not always possible for co-teachers to have the same conference period, particularly when a special education co-teacher is working with more than one general educator. If possible, scheduling the special educator's conference period on a rotating basis allows planning time with multiple teachers who have different conference periods. Regardless of the strategies used, collaborative planning time needs to be arranged on a regular basis. This could be weekly, but it also might be arranged through coverage every three or four weeks. Some specific strategies that campuses might consider in order to accomplish are as follows:

- planning time for co-teachers during advisory periods--class sizes may be larger than normal and co-teachers could meet on a rotating basis;
- meeting while counselors or librarians are in classrooms delivering lessons;
- collaborating during an instructional movie, in which multiple classrooms are combined;
- planning time during programs that are being presented by parent organizations or other assemblies;
- bringing in substitutes for a day during the semester to allow for common planning time;
- housing a notebook in a secure location in the classroom with student specific information for regular communication and updating purposes (i.e., documenting student progress on IEP goals, instructional strategies, accommodations used, etc.);
- organizing planning time before the school year begins.

It is also possible to add additional planning time by using electronic planning means, such as:

- emailing lesson plans;
- exchanging personal contact information and texting or calling each other;
- communicating via other formal technology means such as (but note that this is just a sample of many apps and websites available for electronic communication):
  - Teacher Plan Book
  - Google docs or Google Hangouts and
  - Skype

On-the-Spot Co-Teaching Strategies

When common planning time cannot be arranged, or when circumstances prevent teachers from using common planning time, classroom instruction can still be both rigorous and responsive to students' disability-related needs by using the strategies listed below. These on-the-spot strategies, which are useful even when teachers plan together, should not be routinely used in place of common planning time. They do not substitute for intentional instruction that addresses IEP goals and learners' characteristics. Further, a question that co-

teachers must address is how they will incorporate specially designed instruction even when on-the-spot strategies are used.

Some examples of these on-the-spot strategies are:

- visual and non-verbal cues between teachers for assistance with a process;
- transition cues between teachers to indicate it is time to move to the next step or switch roles (for example, one teacher tells the students, "Work on this for 30 seconds.");
- questioning each other about content in order to foster student higher-order thinking;
- dialoguing between teachers to model question/answer or thought process as well as clarifying objectives; or
- varying teacher roles.
  - While one teacher is instructing, the other teacher can:
    - model notetaking skills;
    - list/bullet items;
    - solve problems;
    - write instructions;
    - observe students to identify which students need additional assistance and/ or need extension activities;
    - repeat directions;
    - check for understanding; and/or
    - ask clarifying questions.
  - One teacher can pull a small group for 5-10 minutes for:
    - providing re-teach/explanation to clarify instruction/understanding; and/or
    - providing extension activities to students who have mastered the skill/ objective.

An effective co-teaching program requires collaborative lesson planning. If co-teachers do not share weekly planning time and need to collaborate in a more "non-traditional" manner, then the campus must consider how to make lesson plans accessible to the special education co-teacher. If lesson plans are due on the Friday before the next instructional week, this does not give the special educator, who is co-teaching, adequate time to collaborate with the general educator in reviewing the lesson plan, assisting in developing accommodations, etc. Adjusting lesson plan due dates and utilizing software that enables teachers to post lesson plans where they can be accessed by both teachers and the administrator are two suggestions to accommodate the planning dilemma. The school administrator must take the lead on when the lesson plans are due and where they will be located so both teachers can access the lesson plans.

3 Student Schedules

The final scheduling consideration on campuses adopting a co-teaching model is student schedules. The number of students with special needs (with or without identified disabilities) should be limited in co-teaching classrooms. That is, the co-taught classroom should not be double the size (or double the concentration of students with more intensive needs) of the traditional single teacher classroom simply because there are two teachers. The class groups should be approximately the same size as traditional classrooms with a comparable ratio of higher need students. It is also recommended, if possible, to reserve a few (3-5) slots for students who transfer in during the school year and need to join the co-teach setting, based on their IEPs.

One possible way to create a reasonable balance of students in classroom composition is to utilize software systems that can be programmed to set up two concurrent sections— one for general education students and one for students with higher needs who require more individualized attention and more intensive support. Each section is "capped" at an appropriate number so that the student ratios remain manageable and at recommended levels. Once students who need more support are organized by need into separate sections, the two sections are merged into one classroom roster to create one cohesive co-teach classroom with the correct size and student composition.

Another consideration for campuses is determining which students will be assigned to a co-taught class and what process will be used to make those decisions. **Not every student with a disability requires a co-taught classroom; placement should be based on students' individual strengths and needs.** For students with IEPs requiring a full class period of inclusive support daily, co-teaching may be the most appropriate service option to use. In determining appropriate settings, campus staff should take into account additional supports available in traditional classrooms, content areas which would benefit most from a co-teach environment, and the needs of both general education and special education students.

Figure 6, Figure 7, and Figure 8 are examples of tools to assist with class scheduling for students with disabilities. They are intended to help administrators plan for staffing needs to provide co-teaching support and ensure that students receiving special education services are identified for scheduling prior to general master scheduling.

To use these documents, simply place the number of special education students within each column who will be receiving the identified support by content area.

Figure 5: Steps for Scheduling Co-Teaching Classrooms

1
Using the students' IEPs, identify required special education support services by student and content area (that is, general education with no special education support, inclusion support such as itinerant and/or co-teaching support, resource, self-contained, etc.). Sample Co-Teach Class Planners are provided in Figure 6 (PreK), Figure 7 (Elementary), and Figure 8 (High School) as a tool for this.

2
Review current staff for various class arrangements to determine who is available to support students in general education settings.

3
Decide a ratio for general education students to students with disabilities, based on the students' needs. This ratio may vary from classroom to classroom based on student composition and teacher scheduling in the classroom. It is also likely to vary depending on the grade levels of the students (usually fewer students in elementary classrooms because they spend the entire day primarily with a single teacher, slightly higher in middle school and high school because students change classes and are more mature). There is no state-required ratio; this is a locally determined decision.

4
Build the master schedule for general education and special education teacher assignments, ensuring that student needs drive the master schedule. This is especially important at the secondary level because your ratio may determine a need for special education support in multiple sections of the same course.

5
Schedule students with disabilities into classrooms prior to scheduling of non-disabled peers.

6
Proceed with traditional student scheduling process.

Figure 6: Co-Teaching Class Planner-Prekindergarten Example

Grade Level/ Content Area	General Education			Special Education Resource/ Supplemental Support	Self-Contained Support
	No Special Education Support Needed	Itinerant Support	Co-Teach Support		
Social and Emotional Development					
Language and Communication					
Emergent Literacy Reading					
Emergent Literacy Writing					
Mathematics					
Science					
Social Skills					
Fine Arts					
Physical Development					
Technology					

Figure 7: Co-Teaching Class Planner-Elementary Example

Grade Level/ Content Area	General Education			Special Education Resource/ Supplemental Support	Self-Contained Support
	No Special Education Support Needed	Itinerant Support	Co-Teach Support		
Kindergarten					
Reading					
Language					
Math					
Science					
Social Studies					
Behavior					
Social skills					
Organizational Skills					
1st Grade					
Reading					
Language					
Math					
Science					
Social Studies					
Behavior					
Social skills					
Organizational Skills					
2nd Grade					
Reading					
Language					
Math					
Science					
Social Studies					
Behavior					
Social skills					
Organizational Skills					
3rd Grade					
Reading					
Language					
Math					
Science					
Social Studies					
Behavior					
Social skills					
Organizational Skills					

Grade Level/ Content Area	General Education			Special Education Resource/ Supplemental Support	Self-Contained Support
	No Special Education Support Needed	Itinerant Support	Co-Teach Support		
4th Grade					
Reading					
Language					
Math					
Science					
Social Studies					
Behavior					
Social skills					
Organizational Skills					
5th Grade					
Reading					
Language					
Math					
Science					
Social Studies					
Behavior					
Social skills					
Organizational Skills					

Grade Level/ Content Area	General Education			Special Education Resource/ Supplemental Support	Self-Contained Support
	No Special Education Support Needed	Itinerant Support	Co-Teach Support		
English					
English I					
English II					
English III					
English IV					
Other					
Mathematics					
Algebra I					
Geometry					
Algebra II					
Pre-calculus					
Other					
Science					
IPC					
Biology					
Chemistry					
Physics					
Other					
Social Studies					
U.S. History					
World History					
World Geography					
Government					
Economics					
Other Co-Teach Courses					
Behavior					
Social skills					
Organizational Skills					

Figure 8: Co-Teaching Class Planner-High School Example

Lesson Plans

In addition to lesson planning references in the scheduling and planning section, other considerations must be addressed with collaborative planning. As well as available commercial lesson plans, a district or campus may choose to adapt current lesson plans to include co-teaching approaches.

Regardless of campus-specific format or design, required student IEP accommodations and modifications as well as their specially designed instruction must be incorporated into the teachers' planning. It is important, therefore, that general educators have access to IEP documents including:

- present level of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statements,
- annual goals (including benchmarks/short-term objectives, if included),
- accommodations,
- behavior intervention plans (BIPs), and other relevant information.

In addition to having a copy of the relevant portions of the IEP, 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §89.1075 (c) also requires that each teacher be informed of specific responsibilities related to implementing and documenting the implementation of the student's IEP. Special educators have all of this information, and they should also have reviewed students' psychological reports and other available information so that they can design instruction that takes learner characteristics into account.

Lesson plans should be data-driven. Co-teachers should continually review student data to develop and revise lesson plans. The lesson plan should be used as a planning tool so that the special educator can make contributions to it.

To plan effective lessons that include all students, educators need advance notice of students with special needs being assigned to their classrooms. While this is not always possible with transfer students, it is usually possible if a student is changing classes and is certainly possible when classes are set up at the beginning of the school year. Professionals cannot develop, during the planning process, specially designed instruction, accommodations, and modifications within the lesson plan to support students who are placed in the co-taught classroom unless they have sufficient data.

Use of Personnel

Co-teaching is not an occasional arrangement or a service offered when it is convenient. It is an accountable means for students to receive mandated special education. Due to the nature of a co-taught classroom, it is crucial co-teachers provide instruction to students on a consistent basis. Not meeting a student's written IEP schedule of services can result in a finding of noncompliance for the local education agency (LEA). Additionally, inconsistent implementation of a co-teaching program does not allow students opportunities to experience the benefits of the co-teaching environment, nor does it provide a true picture of how successful co-teaching can be.

Another personnel matter for co-teaching relates to substitute teachers. Campus leaders should carefully consider how co-teaching is explained to substitute teachers and what reasonable expectations are when a substitute teacher is in a co-taught class.

Have you thought about the role of a substitute teacher in a co-taught classroom?
If you're fortunate enough to work in a LEA where the same individuals substitute in a school on a regular basis and are familiar with school programs and services, preparing for substitutes may not be a serious issue. However, if you are usually not sure who might be the substitute teacher, you should clarify what occurs in the co-taught class and what the substitute teacher should expect.

For general education teachers...

- How do your plans for substitute teachers clearly explain that co-teaching occurs in your classroom?
- What would you expect a substitute teacher to do during the co-taught class? Should the substitute have primary responsibility for the class or step back and have the special education teacher take the lead?
- Should the substitute teacher work on other preparation tasks or grading instead of trying to actively contribute during a lesson when a special education teacher is
- available to teach the class? How is this information communicated to the substitute teacher?

For special education teachers...

- Do your plans for substitute teachers clearly explain that co-teaching occurs as part of the services you provide to students?
- Is it clear from your plans where in the school the substitute teacher should be for each instructional period or segment of the school day? Which classes or parts of the day are co-taught versus instruction in a separate setting?
- What is the expectation for the substitute teacher in the co-taught classes? What arrangement have you made in advance with the general education teacher concerning the role of a special education substitute teacher?

For your school....

- Is co-teaching addressed in the packet of information substitute teachers receive about the school? What information should be included?
- How could your school develop standard policies for addressing the topic of substitute teachers and the co-teaching program?

Further, the district needs to ensure that information about co-teaching exists on its website in multiple locations or is linked to a central area from multiple locations on the website. Co-teaching should not be listed solely under "Special Education," even if students who receive special education services are the target population identified by the district. More than anything, co-teaching creates a classroom environment that facilitates learning for all and should be a reflection of the district's value/mission statement.

Dually Certified Teachers

An additional personnel matter relates to professionals who are dually certified. According to the Student Attendance Accounting Handbook 2019-2020 (109), one dually certified teacher may not provide both general education and special education services at the same time. If the general education teacher is also special education certified, and the student's IEP requires special education support in a general education setting, the general educator cannot provide general education instruction to one group of students while providing specific IEP-directed special education supports/instruction to the student whose IEP requires it at the same time. If a student's IEP requires direct special education support/instruction in a general education setting, the direct special education support/instruction must be provided in addition to the general education instruction provided by the general education teacher. Having one teacher who is dually certified does not follow state policy, nor does it create a co-teaching situation. (See the Student Attendance Accounting Handbook for specific information/exceptions regarding 3- and 4-year old students.)

Paraprofessionals

While paraprofessionals may or may not be present in a co-taught (or other) classroom, pairing a paraprofessional and a teacher does not constitute a co-teaching arrangement. Use of paraprofessionals in any classroom, including a classroom that also has two teachers, requires that the campus define the roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessional while he or she is present. Regardless of these roles and responsibilities, the teacher is responsible for ensuring that students' IEPs are implemented as written. While paraprofessionals are a tremendous support, they should not be functioning separately from or in lieu of the classroom activities/instruction. For example, paraprofessionals should not be providing direct instruction to one group of students while the teacher is in the front providing instruction to the rest of the students; likewise, paraprofessionals should not spend a majority of their time on clerical chores. Paraprofessionals provide valuable

support to students and teachers, but they do not co-teach. For additional guidance on paraprofessionals, please reference Working with Paraprofessionals: A Resource for Teachers of Students with Disabilities located on the Texas Sped Support website.

Supports for Personnel

The campus administration must ensure that co-teaching staff have needed supports for the program. For example, are there two teacher desks and chairs in the co-teaching classrooms or does one of the teachers have to sit at a student desk or table in the back of the classroom? Is there technology for both teachers (for example, two projectors or one projector and one large monitor or Apple TV or the equivalent)? Are there two whiteboards or one that is stationary and one on wheels for flexible classroom use? Do co-teachers who travel from one classroom to another have a convenient way to transport materials easily from one room to another (such as a rolling cart) instead of having to make multiple, time-consuming trips? Attention to such details creates a positive context for co-teaching and improves the efficiency of the educators who co-teach.

Student Progress Reporting

Co-teachers should discuss how student progress will be determined and reported, and there should be consistency across teachers within a school. Generally, specially designed instruction should have no impact on grades as these strategies and techniques enhance curriculum access. The same can be said for accommodations; they foster access and do not affect the standards. However, modifications, which generally imply a reduction in standards, are usually appropriate for students taking the STAAR-Alt 2, and may have an impact on grading, especially in middle and high school.

Generally, co-teachers work collaboratively to determine student grades (and this collaborative grading may even be required by a student's IEP). While taking into account students' disabilities or other special needs and the accommodations and modifications detailed in the IEPs, the co-teachers keep in mind the importance of holding students to high standards. Regardless of how the names end up on the rosters, report cards, and so on, **both co-teachers are accountable for student performance.**

Co-teachers should also discuss their roles and responsibilities for parent communication. Who contacts parents on a day-to-day basis should be clearly outlined and shared. Special educators generally have accountability for formal progress monitoring related to the IEPs. However, both teachers should participate in parent conferences and conversations.

Program Evaluations

Evaluation of professional staff has been described in the District Considerations Section. A comprehensive program evaluation should be in place to review the overall co-teaching program regarding fidelity of implementation, student outcomes, and stakeholder perceptions. This process should be data-driven, include an evaluation of student progress, and incorporate teachers, parents, and community perceptions of the co-teaching program. In essence, an evaluation examines questions such as these:

- What is high quality co-teaching?
- How are students with disabilities receiving specially designed instruction in co-taught classes?
- When high quality co-teaching occurs, what are the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding its implementation?
- What data supports the impact of co-teaching on student learning?
- When high quality co-teaching is not occurring, what steps are needed to improve its quality?

Sample topics for program evaluation across the district were included in the preceding section and are appropriate for each campus to use as well. In addition, some quality indicators of co-teaching are included in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Quality Indicators of Co-Teaching

The list is a set of indicators of a quality co-teaching program. These indicators could also be used as part of a pre- and post-assessment of a co-teaching program.

	The list is a set of indicators of a quality co-teaching program. These indicators could also be used as part of a pre- and post-assessment of a co-teaching program.
☐	Co-teachers are provided adequate time to plan collaboratively.
☐	Administrators have defined and shared their expectations with co-teachers.
☐	Co-teachers have been provided joint training in co-teaching.
☐	A mission and vision have been established and communicated regarding co-teaching.
☐	Roles and responsibilities for co-teachers have been defined.
☐	Students are scheduled by need rather than by teacher preference of schedule convenience.
☐	A system is in place for co-teachers to access support.
☐	Resources (i.e., books, videos) have been provided for co-teachers.
☐	There is a method in place for measuring student success in co-taught classrooms.
☐	Co-teachers are provided tools with which to evaluate their co-teaching partnerships.
☐	Co-teachers understand their responsibility to provide specially designed instruction as an integral part of co-teaching.
☐	There is evidence that accommodations/modifications are implemented in co-taught classrooms.
☐	Co-taught classrooms have a feeling of collaboration and community.
☐	Evaluators have received specialized training on evaluating co-teaching partners.
☐	A thoughtful process is in place for assigning co-teachers.
☐	Resources (personnel, materials, time) are committed to implementing and sustaining the co-teaching model.

Communication of the Program to the Community

Co-teaching should be a natural part of what is happening on the campus and should be accessible on the district/campus website. To ensure answers to co-teaching questions are consistent and accurate and to avoid unnecessary concerns, district/campus personnel should adopt a common vocabulary and a thoughtful approach when communicating co-teaching principles and values to parents and community members. When a second teacher is in a classroom to assist with reading instruction, public meetings are not held to explain it to the community. The same should be true of co-teaching. The campus can explain the philosophy that some classes have two professionals in them as determined by the needs of the students in the classroom. The second professional may be a reading teacher, a special education teacher, a speech therapist, or another specialist.

Occasionally, the parents of a student with a disability may have questions about co-teaching as their child's service. IEP teams should have consistent ways to discuss co-teaching so parents truly are partners in this decision-making and do not feel like their child is missing service that used to be provided in a special education setting.

Program Management

Co-teaching has many important elements that schools must put in place in order for co-teaching to be effective. Campus leaders have two jobs in the program management of co-teaching. First, they must work to ensure all the details of an effective co-teaching program are in place on their campus. Secondly, as the school leader, they must keep the big-picture perspective on program development, implementation and evaluation of their co-teaching services. Figure 10 presents a sample walk-through form for co-teaching classrooms and Figure 11 outlines the yearly cycle for program sustainability, both elements of looking broadly at effective co-teaching.

Figure 10: Sample Walk-Through Form for a Co-Teaching Classroom

This sample walk-through form has some co-teach elements embedded.

General Information		Student Engagement		
Teacher Name (Sp Ed):		□ Use of graphic organizers	□ Use of visuals	
		□ Students moved around	□ Use of technology	
Teacher Name (Gen Ed):		□ Independent work	□ Partner work	
		□ Active response	□ Group work	
Date:		□ State changes/transitions	□ Games	
Grade/Subject:		□ Whole class instruction	□ Use of manipulatives	
Number of students:		**Co-Teaching Approach**		
Observer:		□ 1 Teach/1 Observe	□ Alternative Teaching*	
□ Follow-up observation		□ 1 Teach/1 Assist	□ Parallel Teaching*	
□ Video instruction		□ Station Teaching*	□ Team Teaching	
□ Video debrief		□ Teachers are comfortable with the selected approach.		
□ Video permission slips: □ Teachers □ Students		□ Co-taught classrooms have a feeling of collaboration and community.		
Co-teacher Communication		**Classroom Management**		
□ Non-verbal communication		□ Rules/routines have been established (transitions, timing, materials).		
□ Verbal communication		□ Behavior management is shared by both teachers.		
□ Communication between students and teachers		□ Students respond to management techniques.		
□ Positive teacher to teacher rapport/respect		□ Both teachers move freely around the room.		
Lesson Development/Presentation		□ Students are seated heterogeneously.		
□ Beginning (activate background knowledge, pre-assessment, hook, review, lesson obj.)		□ Positive Behavior Support		
		Differentiation		
□ Middle (guided practice, independent practice)		□ Language considerations	□ Modifications	
□ End (closure, re-teach, assessment, preview, review)		□ Accommodations	□ Pre-assessment	
□ Teachers appear competent with curriculum and standards.		□ Check for understanding	□ Wait time	
□ Lesson is presented in variety of ways.		□ Supported background knowledge		
□ Instructional responsibilities are shared.		□ Chunked content		
Classroom Climate		□ Consideration for student readiness or interest		
□ Teacher to student feedback		□ Instructional strategies:		
□ Student to student feedback				
□ Error correction				
□ Praise of effort/affirmation		□ Specially designed instruction		
□ Students are on task		**Comments:**		
□ Humor				
□ Class is comfortable with both teachers				
Goal(s) for refining co-teaching knowledge and skills:				

Figure 11: Annual Implementation of Co-Teaching

Identify and group students.

Identify and prepare teachers.

Address logistics (e.g., schedule).

Check quality of implementation.

Assess outcomes & revise program.

Guidelines for Teachers: Considerations for Implementing Co-Teaching in The Classroom

As with any relationship, building a co-teaching partnership takes time. As teachers work together, they build trust and establish a structure in which both teachers can work smoothly. These are some key points to keep in mind about both developing and mature co-teaching relationships:

1. The first conversation co-teachers should have is to clarify their understanding of a wide range of teaching responsibilities. Discussing and clarifying the role and responsibility of each teacher helps establish clear expectations. Co-teachers should discuss responsibilities such as preparing lesson plans, instructional delivery, and incorporating SDI into the lessons and assignments. In addition, co-teachers should discuss classroom chores such as cutting out materials for kindergarteners or preparing lab stations for high school students.

2. Co-teaching takes time to develop, but co-teachers cannot delay implementing co-teaching approaches until they feel their partnership is perfect. This means from day one the co-teachers need to show a united front with the students to establish that they are both teachers in the classroom. A good place for co-teachers to begin is using stations to review activities and skills, or parallel teaching to introduce the same standard using two levels of reading.

3. If either co-teacher is uneasy or dissatisfied with the division of labor or the way the co-taught class is being operated, that professional should raise the concern as soon as possible, preferably when there is time for a discussion. Small problems seldom resolve themselves. Without a constructive conversation they are liable to grow and potentially negatively affect the partnership and thus student outcomes.

4. As co-teachers gain experience, they often can banter, and communication is clear and flexible. However, in new partnerships the teachers often should discuss topics such as interrupting each other, what to do if one notices the other has made an error, voice levels that can be intrusive, and other similar issues. Discussing these and similar topics before they are problems and having strategies to address them can prevent misunderstandings.

5. Both the co-teaching approaches and specially designed instruction tend to become more refined as co-teachers gain experience. Partners create variations on the basic six approaches, adjusting them to be deeply responsive to student needs and curricular demands. Specially designed instruction becomes better integrated into lessons, and students are both challenged and supported.

6. Sometimes, professionals who have been co-teaching for several years need to refresh their practice. They might visit another co-taught class (even in another subject area or grade level), attend advanced professional development, or teach other teachers about co-teaching.

Topics for Establishing Co-Teaching Relationships

In order to begin building relationships and create a team, both teachers must have a common understanding of co-teaching and share a vision for student achievement and collaboration (Scruggs and Mastropieri 2017). Teachers often possess different teaching styles, aspirations, attitudes, expectations, and abilities to adapt to change. T**he first step to bring two professionals into a shared space should involve conversations about each teacher's preferences.** There are many reflective inventories available that ask teachers to rate or describe various aspects of teaching, such as student expectations and classroom routines, and to identify any issue that they consider to be "non-negotiable." The teachers generally complete the surveys separately, then come together to discuss their responses. When areas of disagreement arise, co-teachers can mutually decide how best to proceed. While some aspects may not be immediately addressed, being able to identify these areas can help teachers navigate through their new relationship. The critical components related to creating a successful co-teaching relationship are maintaining open communication and building trust. Most importantly, using inventories or other strategies to structure discussions enables differences to be raised and addressed before they become classroom problems or sources of conflict.

Some co-teaching and collaboration issues for discussion may include:

- having a shared belief/vision regarding co-teaching;
- finding a planning time and using it effectively;
- deciding how to address specific student needs during co-teaching;
- determining how to resolve conflicts with co-teaching partners;
- exploring the six approaches of co-teaching (how/when to implement them);
- incorporating specially designed instruction into daily lessons;
- establishing classroom routines and behavior management;
- articulating student expectations (performance and procedures);
- sharing teaching styles and preferences;
- determining grading procedures and accountability

Tip for Co-Teachers: Make sure the world—and this includes the students—knows you are a team!

- Make sure both teachers are viewed as equal partners in the classroom.
- Make sure both teachers' names are on the door (or, at least, on the board).
- Ensure all parent correspondence and the class syllabus include the names of both teachers.
- Introduce the teachers as a team.

Figure 12 summarizes information for making sure co-teaching begins on a positive note and develops into a robust and successful means for supporting students.

Figure 12: Co-Teaching: Tips for Starting Off on the Right Foot

Effective co-teachers combine several elements: a shared, belief that a teacher's primary responsibility is to help every student succeed; knowledge and skills for effectively teaching diverse learners; recognition that two teachers, with different but respected points of view, can generate more ideas for reaching students than a teacher working alone; and a commitment to success that blends flexibility and a sense of humor with a strong allegiance to the partnership. Of course, it takes time to develop exemplary co-teaching, and the first step is beginning the school year on a positive note. Here are suggestions for doing just that:

- As soon as you learn who your co-teaching partner will be, reach out to that individual, suggesting a meeting prior to the start of the school year, even if that option has not formally been arranged by your administrator.
- Before teaching, discuss what each of you considers non-negotiables—those beliefs that are most important to you as a teacher. If some of the items conflict (e.g., general educator believes she should deliver all curriculum, but special educator disagrees; special educator believes he should work exclusively with students with disabilities but general educator disagrees), it is important to reach an agreement before facing students. Be sure to address instruction, SDI, behavior, and, classroom management.
- Discuss how introductions will be handled on the first day with students. How will it be communicated to students that you have parity in the classroom, even if one of you is not there at all times?
- Create a relatively detailed lesson plan for the first day with students, one that includes grouping students and has both teachers assuming an active teaching role.
- Plan out the first week of lessons, extending the conversation about the first day to grouping strategies and teaching responsibilities.
- Discuss several "what ifs:" What if one of us makes a mistake during teaching? What if one of us is concerned about something the other person says to students? What if one of us dislikes the way a particular instructional or behavioral issue was addressed during class?
- Begin a conversation on other important matters including the delivery of specially designed instruction, evaluation of student work, adjustments for evaluating the work of students with disabilities (e.g., avoiding a grade penalty when accommodations are made), report card grades, or options both of you (or one or neither) are comfortable with for appropriately addressing diverse student needs.
- Discuss teaching chores and how they will get done (e.g., copying, lab set-up).
- Set up several times during the first month of school when you will touch base regarding instruction, behavior, and your partnership.
- Spend a few minutes getting to know each other as professionals and people—it will help the process of becoming comfortable as teaching partners!

Planning for Instruction

All educators know that lesson planning is a critical part of instruction. Through the process of mapping out instruction, teachers are able to reflect on the instructional objectives and necessary supports to help students achieve. This process is even more critical for co-teachers because they need to discuss the roles and contributions of each member of the team during the delivery of instruction. Co-planning should be an ongoing activity, preferably with specific, designated planning times as discussed earlier in this guide. The greatest benefit of the co-teaching planning process is the team's ability to tap into each teacher's area of expertise and have thoughtful conversations about student needs. It also allows teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of co-teaching, analyze student formative data, celebrate successes, and address any questions or concerns.

Depending on the size of the school district, the special educator may use an itinerant model and co-teach with a variety of general educators in the same school or across several campuses. This may create additional difficulty in finding time to co-plan. It is critical that the teachers come together periodically and include alternative forms of collaboration such as electronic platforms, web-conferencing, phone, or email. Although sometimes challenging, co-teachers must find ways to have meaningful and effective planning conversations about the students and instruction. Two sample planning templates are included in Figure 13 and Figure 14.

Figure 13: Sample Meeting Agenda Form

This is a sample agenda for a co-teach planning meeting. The intent is to ensure that the majority of the planning meeting is spent on curriculum and instruction.

Date:	Teachers:

Upcoming Curriculum Topics/Units/Lessons (12 minutes)

Student Data Summary/Discussion (10 minutes)

Likely Instructional Challenges/Specially Designed Instructional Needs (15 minutes)

Co-Teaching Approaches, Arrangements, and Assignments (15 minutes)

Relationship/Communication/Housekeeping/Logistics (8 minutes)

Note: Laminate or reproduce this or a similar form and use it for each planning meeting.

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Figure 14: From Isolation to Partnership: Applying Co-Teaching Approaches

This lesson plan is a tool that can be used to re-design a specific lesson to incorporate co-teaching. Complete each section for a one-teacher lesson and then note options for changing the lesson plan to take advantage of the talents of two teachers.

Subject:	**Topic/Lesson**:	**Date**:

Competencies/Objectives:

TEKS Student Expectation(s):

Materials:

	One Teacher Lesson	**Co-Taught Lesson–Teaching Approach**	
		□ One Teach, One Observe	□ Station Teach
		□ Parallel Teach	□ Alternative Teach
		□ Teaming	□ One Teach, One Assist
Anticipatory Set			
Procedures			
Independent Practice			
Closure			
Assessment			
Accommodations/ Modifications for Specific Students			
Specially Designed Instruction			
Notes			

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Many co-teaching lesson plan templates are available, both commercially and without cost from the Internet. Many of the planning documents are designed to be filled in by both the general and special educator and include the following components (Dieker 2006; Friend 2019):

- Big ideas/goals;
- Lesson activities;
- Assessment (standard/modified);
- Co-teaching structure(s);
- Specially designed instruction;
- Behavior interventions;
- Materials/supports needed; and
- Performance data/notes.

Example of the Co-Teaching Planning Process

1. The teachers discuss what the students need to know and be able to do (enrolled grade level TEKS). This will often address a week or more of instruction, or a unit of instruction.

2. They both determine how the students will demonstrate understanding (evaluation).

3. They identify any developmental, linguistic, physical, or experiential challenges that could impact student learning (individualization).

4. They design learning activities with the necessary specially designed instruction that contributes to meeting IEP goals and addressing learner characteristics.

5. They incorporate accommodations and modifications as needed so the students can develop and demonstrate understanding of the grade-level expectations.

6. They select the co-teaching approach and class arrangement that best supports the intended outcome and coordinate what each will do before, after, and during instruction.

Figure 15 and Figure 16 illustrate two styles for creating day-to-day lessons. These examples highlight the critical elements in lesson plans for co-taught classes.

Sample Co-Teach Lesson Planning Considerations

A general educator and special educator plan a 5th grade science lesson in which students are expected to complete a graphic organizer that compares the physical properties of matter. The class has:

- two students who use a sign language interpreter,
- five students with an intermediate English language proficiency level, and
- two students with specific learning disabilities.

The teachers know that the concepts of mass and density are difficult to describe in sign language and may pose a challenge to the English learners in the class.

Introduction of Lesson:

The special educator decides to take the lead at the beginning of the lesson to build background knowledge and introduce icons and gestures that conceptualize the target vocabulary for the task. During this phase of the lesson, the general educator serves in a supportive role and interjects relevant examples as needed.

Guided Practice:

For the guided practice activity, the general educator takes the lead while the special educator strategically uses gestures to visually reinforce the concepts and points to a flow chart showing each step of the process.

Cooperative Groups:
Next, the students work in cooperative groups to compare the physical properties of matter, complete their graphic organizers, and share their work with the class. During this activity, both teachers monitor student groups and provide additional support as needed.
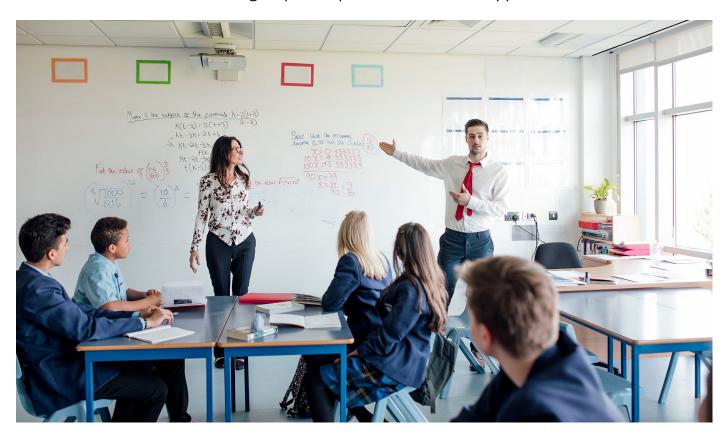
Figure 15: Sample Co-Teaching Lesson Plan

This sample co-teach lesson plan uses the 5E (engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration, and evaluation) planning model.

Sample Co-Teach Lesson Plan

Teachers:

Students with Special Needs:

Subject Area/Course/Grade Level:

Date:

TEKS/SEs:

Lesson objective(s):

Lesson Activities	Materials/ Resources	Curriculum Modifications & Instructional Accommodations	Co-Teach Model*	Student Performance Notes
1. Engagement				
2. Exploration				
3. Explanation				
4. Elaboration				
5. Evaluation				

*Co-Teach Approaches

T-O	One Teach, One Observe**	**A**	Alternative Teach***
S	Station Teach***	**T**	Teaming
P	Parallel Teach***	**T-A**	One Teach, One Assist**

**Indicate which teacher is leading instruction

***High-yield co-teaching approach and preferred for most instruction

The 5E model was developed by the Biological Science Curriculum Study.

Figure 16: Sample Co-Teaching Lesson Plan

This sample Co-Teach lesson plan uses the gradual release instructional framework.

Sample Co-Teach Lesson Plan

		Students with Special Needs:
Teachers:		
Subject Area/Course/Grade Level:		
Date:		

TEKS/SEs:

Lesson objective(s):

Lesson Activities	Materials/ Resources	Specially Designed Instruction	Accommodations, Modifications	Co-Teach Model*	Student Performance Notes
Model Instruction (Teacher does ALL)					
Shared Instruction (Teacher does, students help)					
Guided Instruction (Students do, teacher helps)					
Independent Instruction (Students do ALL)					

*Co-Teach Approaches

T-O	One Teach, One Observe**	A	Alternative Teach***
S	Station Teach***	T	Teaming
P	Parallel Teach***	T-A	One Teach, One Assist**

**Indicate which teacher is leading instruction

***High-yield co-teaching approach and preferred for most instruction

The Gradual Release Model was introduced by Pearson and Gallagher (1983).

Figure 17: Planning for Co-Teaching

Prior to meeting
General education teacher prepares to overview upcoming curriculum.

During the meeting
- General education teacher explains upcoming curriculum;
- Educators plan co-teaching approaches;
- Educators discuss specially designed instruction and needed accommodations and modifications;
- Educators discuss individual student needs; and
- Educators touch base on their perceptions of co-teaching.

After the meeting
Special education teacher prepares major accommodations and modifications for planned instruction.

Identifying Student Needs

The culture of a co-teaching classroom should meet the academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs of all students (e.g., McLeskey et al. 2019). In order for this to occur, teachers need to be familiar with the unique needs of all students and should be familiar with each student's individualized education program (IEP) before the first day of class. Special educators should also review information found in students' psychological reports; those documents often provide valuable guidance on the techniques and teaching procedures likely to match student learning characteristics (for example, language processing problems). This allows time for teachers to identify any necessary supports or procedures and have them in place so students are successful the first day of class and feel a sense of community with their peers and teachers. The well-intentioned preference of some general educators to not know which students have IEPs in order to avoid bias causes a serious problem. Without knowing about students' special needs, appropriate supports cannot be put into place.

Some questions co-teachers should consider to meet students' needs are:

- What are the IEP goals to be met in the co-taught class? How can these goals be mapped onto the curriculum for the semester or school year?
- Do students' IEPs include behavior plans? If so, what are the target behaviors and supports necessary to address them?
- Do any students have challenging physical or cognitive abilities that may require specialized supports or services? If so, what are they? What additional information is needed? Is additional training or support needed?
- Do students' IEPs include any accommodations or modifications? If so, how can instruction best be tailored for the students and efforts documented?
- Do any of the students need social or emotional support? If so, how can the co-teachers create nurturing, supportive learning environments?

Role of the Paraprofessional

Paraprofessionals play an important role by supporting teachers in the delivery of instruction. Co-teaching is defined as two certified or licensed professionals who are equally responsible for instructional planning, delivery, and evaluation. Since these tasks fall outside the scope of a paraprofessional's responsibilities, a classroom with a teacher and paraprofessional is not considered a co-teaching arrangement.

Paraprofessionals work under the direction of a certified teacher and serve in a supporting role. Paraprofessionals can be asked to work with small groups of students tolead a review of concepts already taught, gather data, and assist a teacher in monitoring student attention, behavior, and work. At first glance, their work may seem like it is a partnership with the general education teacher, but the differences in licensure requirements, scope of responsibilities, and accountability for students clearly dictates that this is a constructive and valuable, but different, type of working relationship.

In a co-teaching setting, the strategic use of a paraprofessional can help the team meet the unique needs of all students and execute all activities purposefully and seamlessly. It is extremely important to maintain open communication among co-teachers and paraprofessionals to assure the entire team understands the instructional objective and their individual responsibilities before, during, and after instruction. For additional guidance on paraprofessionals, please reference Working with Paraprofessionals: A Resource for Teachers of Students with Disabilities located on the Texas Sped Support website.

Monitoring Student Progress

One benefit of a co-teaching relationship is the ability to share responsibility for collecting and documenting student progress. During the planning phase, teachers may decide to identify a skill that needs to be evaluated and then work together to determine the best way to capture student information. They also need to discuss the implementation of specially designed instruction as well as which student-specific accommodations and modifications to use and which format is most appropriate to maximize student learning. Depending on the skill, one teacher may observe students by using a checklist, an observation log, or other system to record progress while the co-teaching partner leads the activity. Also, as teachers prepare to co-teach, they should discuss multiple forms of data used to evaluate student understanding and performance (i.e., daily grades, project grades, checklists, rubrics, work samples, observation/anecdotal records, benchmark tests, etc.) and how frequently they will collect progress monitoring data. The special educator should keep the team informed of the IEP data that need to be collected and assure the data provide sufficient information to document progress toward the annual goals.

Co-teachers must assure that grades accurately reflect student achievement as related to content standards (TEC §28.0216, (SB 2033, 81st Texas Legislature)). According to O'Connor (2007), teachers should avoid common pitfalls that distort the accuracy of grades:

- Don't include student behaviors (effort, participation, adherence to class rules, etc.) in grades; include only achievement.

- Don't reduce marks on "work" submitted late; provide support to the learner.

- Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods or simply summarize into a single grade; organize and report evidence by standards/ learning goals.

- Don't assign grades based on student's achievement compared to other students; compare each student's performance to pre-set standards.

- Don't leave students out of the grading process. Involve students; they can—and should— play key roles in assessment and grading to promote achievement.

- The use of rubrics for students to assess their own work can be helpful in getting students involved in grading.

For additional information on grading and progress monitoring, refer to the document, Grading and Progress Monitoring for Students with Disabilities.

Online resources for curriculum based measurement include:

- Curriculum Based Measurement: A Manual for Teachers

Evaluating the Program: The Co-Teaching Relationship and Effectiveness

On-going communication and program evaluation are critical keys to co-teaching relationships. Throughout the year during planning, co-teachers should talk about the progress of the co-teach relationship, celebrate successes, and identify potential barriers and areas for improvement. At least annually, the campus may elect to use a reflective evaluation tool to determine the effectiveness of the co-teaching program. Consider the use of Figure 9 Quality Indicators of Co-Teaching as a post assessment tool for this purpose.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. I hold dual certification in both general and special education. Can I serve in both roles in the classroom?

No. A teacher may not serve simultaneously as both general and special educator in grades K-12.

Excerpt from the Student Attendance Accounting Handbook: **4.7.10.1 Requirements Related to Teachers Providing Instruction in Mainstream Settings** A student with a disability receives specially designed instruction. The specially designed instruction documented in the IEP is provided by special education personnel. One teacher, even if dually certified, must not serve in both a general education and a special education role simultaneously when serving students in grades K–12. Students with disabilities who are aged three or four years may have an instructional setting code of 40, mainstream, if special education services are provided in classroom settings with nondisabled peers. The only context in which a dually certified teacher may serve in both a general education and a special education role is in an early childhood program for students aged 3 or 4 years.

2. I am a certified deaf educator in a co-teaching setting. Is a sign language interpreter necessary when I am in the room?

Yes. To serve in the role of an interpreter, 19 TAC §89.1131 requires the individual to hold a valid interpreter certification through the Texas Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI), Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), or be a certified member of RID. Therefore, being a certified teacher of the deaf does not qualify the teacher to serve as an interpreter for students who are deaf or hard of hearing in a general education classroom.

In the event that a deaf educator is also a certified interpreter, the deaf educator should not be expected to serve in both roles simultaneously. Co-teaching requires that both teachers are actively engaged in planning, delivery, and evaluation of instruction. Serving in the role of an interpreter limits the deaf educator's ability to provide specially designed instruction as well as to arrange accommodations and modifications, keep up with the lesson, and arrange the necessary supplementary aids and services to help students meet instructional objectives. If the deaf educator is serving as the interpreter, it should not be considered co-teaching and IEP teams may need to consider whether a teacher of the deaf or a certified interpreter would best meet the needs of the student.

3. If I am paid with special education funds, am I allowed to work with students who do not receive special education services?

Yes. In a co-teaching setting, general and special educators share the responsibility of teaching all students in the classroom; therefore, both teachers are expected to support all students. Since both teachers possess expertise in a variety of areas (i.e., curriculum, instructional strategies), they work as a team to determine the unique needs of all students

and use flexible grouping configurations to assure that students with similar needs receive the support necessary to meet instructional objectives. This arrangement may require co-teachers to work with different groups that may or may not include students who are identified as having disabilities. Depending on the intensity of the necessary specially designed instruction, accommodations, and modifications, the teachers decide how to arrange whole, group, small group, and individual instruction.

4. How are inclusion, least restrictive environment (LRE), and meaningful access to the general curriculum distinct from one another?

Students with disabilities must have meaningful access to the general curriculum in a least restrictive environment.

Inclusion is a belief that every child is a vital part of the learning community and has a right to belong in a classroom with age appropriate peers. Inclusive schools provide whatever it takes to ensure that students access meaningful learning and do not require students to have certain prerequisite skills or abilities to belong. An inclusive belief system is based on a deep respect for diversity. Note that inclusive schools sometimes find that services in a separate setting are necessary in order to meet student needs.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is a term used in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (34 CFR §300.114) that refers to a setting where students with disabilities can be educated alongside their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent possible unless the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. The LRE for a student with disabilities may fall along a continuum of placement options from a general education classroom to a residential treatment facility.

Meaningful access to the general curriculum is a phrase that emphasizes the importance of aligning instructional expectations with the enrolled grade level content standards; the mandated standards for all students are the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). In some instances, students with disabilities may need modifications or accommodations to demonstrate proficiency or to develop the foundation skills aligned with the grade-level standards.

5. Is co-teaching similar to content mastery?

No. Content mastery programs generally provide supplemental tutoring/support to assist students in completing grade level work. Content mastery support is usually provided in a separate classroom. Generally, in districts implementing content mastery, a student with a disability receives direct instruction in a general education setting from a general education teacher and then leaves that setting to receive more individual support (but not core instruction) from a special education teacher in a special education setting.

6. Is co-teaching the same as itinerant support?

No. Generally, in itinerant support the planning of instruction, delivery of instruction, and evaluation of student learning is not collaborative in nature. Often, the special education

teacher supports students in multiple classrooms during the same class period. For example, the special educator may spend 20 minutes in Classroom A and 30 minutes in Classroom B during the same class period. This is another type of inclusive practice, but is not considered a co-teaching model because both teachers are not equally responsible for the instruction of all students in the classroom.

7. Can co-teaching be considered an intervention for a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS), such as Response to Intervention (RtI)?

No. Co-teaching is used as an inclusive service delivery model for students with disabilities in which a certified special education professional and a certified general education professional in the same classroom simultaneously provide instruction to all students within that classroom and ensure that specially designed instruction is provided to the students with disabilities. RtI is a tiered intervention model in which teachers implement research-based interventions to support struggling learners and closely monitor the impact of the interventions on student learning. Co-teachers may use an RtI model in the classroom to meet individual student needs. Similarly, on some campuses in which a group of students are receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention, a decision could be made to co-teach to facilitate delivery of the intervention. Since co-teaching in such situations is a model that supports all students, it would not be considered an individualized intervention.

8. What is the difference between an accommodation and a modification?

While these terms have very distinct meanings, educators frequently and mistakenly use these terms interchangeably. Although there are no legal definitions of the terms modification and accommodation, the following definitions are used in Texas and can be found in the *Legal Framework for the Child Centered Special Education Process:*

> "Accommodations are changes to materials or procedures that enable students with disabilities or English learners to participate meaningfully in learning and testing. It is important to keep in mind that while some accommodations may be appropriate for instructional use, they may not be appropriate or allowable on a statewide assessment."

> An accommodation does not change the content expectations for the student; it is intended to reduce or eliminate the effect of the student's disability. An accommodation generally adjusts how the student is accessing learning (for example, extended time, assignments in smaller chunks, word lists, audio recordings of print materials) but not what the student is learning.

> "Modifying content material requires structural, cognitive changes in the level of the material. Modifications change "what" is learned and therefore changes the content of the grade-specific curriculum."

> A modification changes the nature of the task or skill. Generally, a modification is adjusting what the student is learning and infers the possibility that the student cannot reach the curriculum standards set for all learners.

9. How does co-teaching relate to universal design for learning (UDL) and differentiated instruction (DI)?

UDL, explained earlier in this guide, is a framework for thinking about being responsive to learners' needs. Differentiation operationalizes UDL. It is the responsibility of all educators for every student; it is the character of teaching in the 21st century and implies that effective teachers adjust instruction based on their students' needs. Co-teachers differentiate instruction in addition to providing specially designed instruction. That is, they are addressing all students' needs at the same time that they provide the special education that some students are entitled to receive. Co-teaching is not implemented for the sake of differentiation, but it often enhances teachers' ability to differentiate for their students.

10. How should co-teaching be reflected in the IEP?

The IEP must define the special education services the student needs, including the frequency, duration, and location of these services. Co-teaching is not a special education service; it is a delivery model for an inclusion support service. Therefore, the IEP of a student who needs inclusion support services would specify the frequency, duration, and location (which would be general education classroom for inclusion support services). The school administration would then determine how that service would be provided. For example, it could be an itinerant support model or a co-teach model of service delivery.

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