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CO-PLANNING FOR CO-TEACHING

*Time-Saving Routines
That Work in Inclusive
Classrooms*

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Introduction

I love co-teaching but there is hardly any time for us to plan lessons. I'm in two elementary classes each day, a 2nd grade and 4th grade, so it is very difficult to co-plan with the two general education teachers. In addition, I've co-taught 2nd grade before but this is the first year that I am together with the 2nd grade teacher. I've never co-taught 4th grade so I am with a new co-teacher and learning a new curriculum.

—Special Education Co-Teacher, Elementary

I co-teach in 3 biology classes with 3 different general education teachers. Although the curriculum is pretty set, and I've made it my business to learn the content, the 3 teachers have very different styles. I'm able to co-plan with one co-teacher but not the others, so my role in each of the classes is very different. It's impossible to co-plan with 3 teachers.

—Special Education Co-Teacher, Secondary

Instituted to address diverse learning needs of students, inclusive classrooms wherein a general educator and special educator share the teaching duties—that is, co-teach—expanded and evolved throughout the past 20 years. Co-teaching in inclusive classrooms is commonplace in

schools in the United States, and co-planning by co-teachers is both complex and time consuming. Often frustrated by lack of time for co-planning, co-teachers frequently over rely on ineffective ways of addressing the needs of students and become overwhelmed and discouraged.

Time-saving routines that both increase the active roles of each co-teacher and intensify instruction for students in inclusive settings make exponential differences in the learning of students. By co-thinking logistics, routines, strategies, and technologies, co-teachers streamline their co-planning and their co-teaching becomes more effective. This book provides co-teachers in inclusive settings, administrators supervising co-teachers, and pre-service teachers substantive suggestions and real-life examples on how co-teachers can co-plan effectively.

Co-Planning: The Key to Successful Co-Teaching

Why is co-planning so essential to successful co-teaching? Co-planning allows the general and special educators to communicate the needs of students in relation to the curriculum and the teaching of daily lessons and tasks. With co-planning, co-teachers realize together how the process of teaching content to students with exceptionalities requires focusing on the potential barriers that impede

efficient learning. Co-planning allows co-teachers to find ways to remove the barriers to effective teaching practices while keeping the rigor of the coursework intact, to take the time to decide the big ideas that need to be understood and together make sure that those ideas are propelling lessons, and to create learning environments that support all learners and enable students to succeed. With co-planning, parity between the co-teachers is entrenched in spirit and in reality.

Without co-planning, lessons often remain unchanged, and the needs of diverse learners may not be specifically addressed. Without co-planning, parity between the co-teachers can be illusive and may result in one co-teacher doing the bulk of the planning and teaching. Without co-planning, students with special needs are likely to be underserved and their needs only marginally met.

Making the most of two teachers in an inclusive classroom is intricately aligned to the level of co-planning and an understanding of the appropriateness of each of the five major models of co-teaching routinely incorporated within daily classroom lessons.

Five Co-Teaching Models

Effective co-planning requires an understanding of the five major co-teaching models—one teach/one support; teaming; alternative; parallel; and station. Each model has its