

CO TEACHING
DO'S, DON'TS,
and
DO BETTERS

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CO-TEACHING DO'S, DON'TS, *and* DO BETTERS

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Introduction

This book invites its readers to value co-teaching as a viable collaborative instructional model that assists students as they learn side by side with grade-level peers. It acknowledges how far we've come since the rise of co-teaching, what we now know about the do's and don'ts of co-teaching, and why we need to do it better. Explanation and application of the eight *co-teaching spokes* of co-teaching models (CTM), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Understanding by Design framework (UbD framework), social-emotional learning (SEL), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), differentiated instruction (DI), Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and specially designed instruction (SDI) are offered with elementary and secondary curriculum applications. Chapter sections include best practices (the do's), common pitfalls (the don'ts), and raising the bar (the do betters). Curriculum Connections are threaded throughout each of the six chapters across the grades and disciplines for elementary and secondary co-teachers. Each of the six chapters begins with the collaborative goals and then revisits these goals by reflecting on the applications that allow the evidence-based co-teaching practices to live and breathe in K-12 lessons. Corresponding tables, charts, and forms for planning, instruction, assessment, and reflections are included in each chapter.

Chapter 1, "The Co-Teaching Spokes and Inclusive Principles," offers the do's, don'ts, and do betters of a co-teaching environment. This includes the co-teaching norms that avoid having one teacher viewed as the "real" one or teams looking for a magical formula. This chapter outlines how the inclusive environment needs to be a proactive, evidence-based one, with a variety of co-teaching models and the multitiered framework of co-teaching supports that incorporate a specific learner's specially designed instruction. The collaborative goals address how to maximize successes through shared responsibilities of the inclusion principles, along with the flexibility, respect, integrity, time, honesty, and fidelity to co-deliver evidence-based practices to diverse learners in elementary and secondary classrooms.

Chapter 2, “The Relationship and Collaborative Roles,” invites teachers to learn about and from each other. Educators have different co-teaching skill sets and prior knowledge. Collaborative relationships begin with a solid foundation of communication, positive input, and respectful interactions that invite general and special education teachers to figure out how to collaboratively divide and conquer instructional roles and responsibilities. This chapter outlines what is nonnegotiable, including strengthening communications, possessing positive ability attitudes, and increasing the knowledge of research-based practices, learners, and the curriculum to advance everyone’s skill sets.

Chapter 3, “Planning for Instruction and Assessment,” outlines the co-teaching basics that ensure that co-teaching pairs increase learners’ knowledge and skills. This chapter covers how to plan lessons with meaningful and respectful co-taught instruction and assessment. This includes instruction with the whole class, small groups, centers/forums, cooperative learning, 1:1, parallel, and minilessons. This chapter includes how evidence-based practices, such as Universal Design for Learning, should be used to vary representation, engagement, and expression. Chapter 3 delineates how assessment monitors progress toward individualized educational program (IEP) goals and lesson objectives to drive the co-teaching decisions. The chapter also outlines how co-teaching includes modeling, scaffolding, and reinforcement. It offers elementary and secondary examples of how co-teachers collaboratively differentiate assignments based on learners’ skills and interests across the disciplines.

Chapter 4, “Collaborative Teaching in Action,” continues with what needs to occur during instruction. This includes the provision of verbal supports, the sharing of classroom spaces, and the necessary reflections on the benefits and challenges of the co-teaching models, along with how the data drive the instructional decisions. We offer a whole-part-whole design to vary learner grouping so that co-teachers can provide opportunities for enrichment, practice, and repetition. This chapter empowers all students to learn with co-teachers who act as co-facilitators able to collaboratively spin the bumps in the road into best practices.

Chapter 5, “Academic and Behavioral Co-Teaching Supports and Interventions,” shares what we know all teachers should do, what they commonly do and should stop doing, and where they should focus on improving. This includes assignments based on skill, interest, learning preferences, random grouping, and assistive technology. We share pragmatic ways for co-teaching pairs to clearly communicate the essential instructional and functional objectives to each other and the students. Chapter 5 offers information on how PBIS, social-emotional learning,

peer supports, and strategic learning allow the co-teaching pairs to select informative and responsive interventions.

Chapter 6, “Collaborative Reflections, Improvements, and Co-Teaching Celebrations,” explores how collaborative reflection works, offering guidelines for co-teachers on embedded interventions, functional scaffolding, reinforcement, and using feedback and results to guide their next steps. Reflections and celebrations are offered across the grades for students and co-teaching partners. The most important aspect is that the co-teaching should occur in a positive learning environment that breathes. This collaborative inhalation and exhalation includes trust, humor, and inquiry that support the lesson content for the learners and the co-teaching pairs. The last chapter acknowledges the challenges but also the skill sets of staff and students within a growth paradigm. The chapter sums up with the co-teaching reflections of what occurred, what was learned, and the next steps co-teachers can take to share the power to be powerful.



The Co-Teaching Spokes and Inclusive Principles: The Do's, Don'ts, and Do Betters of a Co-Teaching Environment

Collaborative Goals

- 1.1: Establish the co-teaching spokes as the evidence-based practices that support effective co-teaching.
- 1.2: Implement the evidence-based practices to strengthen the effectiveness of the environment.
- 1.3: Decide what is nonnegotiable with co-teaching partners and collaborative staff.
- 1.4: Think *ours*, never *mine*.
- 1.5: Maximize successes through shared responsibilities of the inclusion principles.
- 1.6: Value flexibility, respect, integrity, time, and honesty.

Do's ↑	Don'ts ↓	Do Betters ★
Vary co-teaching models (CTM).	Have one co-teacher viewed as the "real" one.	Establish co-teaching norms.
Establish Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) as an instructional framework.	Provide core instruction during Tiers 2 or 3.	Honor student diversity and each individual learner.
Be proactive with Universal Design for Learning (UDL).	Mandate instead of invite.	Demonstrate inclusion through more than physical presence.
Provide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).	Stay on the honeymoon too long.	Model, scaffold, reinforce, and enrich with inclusion principles.
Value differentiated instruction (DI).	Look for a co-teaching or inclusion formula.	
Plan lessons with the Understanding by Design framework (UbD framework).		
Implement specially designed instruction (SDI).		
Respect the importance of social-emotional learning (SEL).		

Best Practices: The Do's

Co-teaching occurs when two educators, typically a special education (SE) and a general education (GE) teacher, work together in an inclusive classroom. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires school districts to educate students with disabilities in their least restrictive environment to the maximum extent appropriate with the provision of supplementary aids and supports (U.S. Department of Education [OSERS], 1994). IDEA does not use the word inclusion, but the general education classroom is considered the first option of service (Karten, 2015).

Inclusion embraces the notion that learners of different ability levels are educated side by side (Friend, 2015/2016; Karten, 2016). Inclusion occurs with and without a co-teacher in the room, but if there are two educators present, then the responsibilities translate to both the general and the special educator teaching *all* learners. More students can be supported as co-teachers work collaboratively to implement evidence-based practices and co-taught interventions. For example, students who are culturally and linguistically diverse often struggle in school, with disability and diversity sometimes acting as a double jeopardy (Fallah & Murawski, 2018). The co-taught classroom can truly be an unrestrictive environment that offers students with and without exceptionalities the supports and services required to learn side by side.

Ideally, co-teachers share responsibilities for all students, including those with and without exceptionalities and those with cultural and linguistic diversity. In reality, the co-teaching relationships from one class to the next across schools and even within the same school often differ based on the schedule, supports, resources, content, and diversity of the students and the co-teachers. Stein (2016) views co-teaching through the lens of it being a teaching *experience* rather than a teaching *assignment*. We begin our collective experience with the first collaborative goal.

Collaborative Goal 1.1: Establish the co-teaching spokes as the evidence-based practices that support effective co-teaching.

Just as spokes radiate from the hub of a wheel to ensure movement and prevent wobbling, co-teaching has its own spokes that allow this shared instructional model to be effective. Throughout this chapter and subsequent ones, we describe these spokes in more detail, providing elementary and secondary curriculum lesson connections.

Co-teaching requires more than merely putting together two educators with differing expertise. The eight spokes portrayed in Figure 1.1 depict the evidence-based practices with which co-teachers need to be not only familiar but also comfortable and eventually at mastery. These big topics are critical to the success of the inclusive classroom, and co-teachers can use these spokes to help build their competence together. The spokes rest on the curriculum objectives, which are the ultimate goal for most lessons. When co-teachers discuss the curriculum objectives and use the collaborative goals offered in these chapters, in conjunction with the co-teaching spokes, the magic known as learning can happen in that co-taught classroom!

Collaborative Goal 1.2: Implement the evidence-based practices to strengthen the effectiveness of the environment.

Evidence-based practices allow learning to move forward. These practices are interrelated, as the circular graphic indicates, with general and special education co-teachers, families, students, and administration at the core and the curriculum objectives at the base. In order for co-teaching to be successful, evidence-based practices must be emphasized, with implementation not just desired but expected. This ensures that your curriculum is attainable for the students and, more important, for advancements to occur for learners of all levels. Without these evidence-based practices, the curriculum may be too difficult for all learners to grasp.

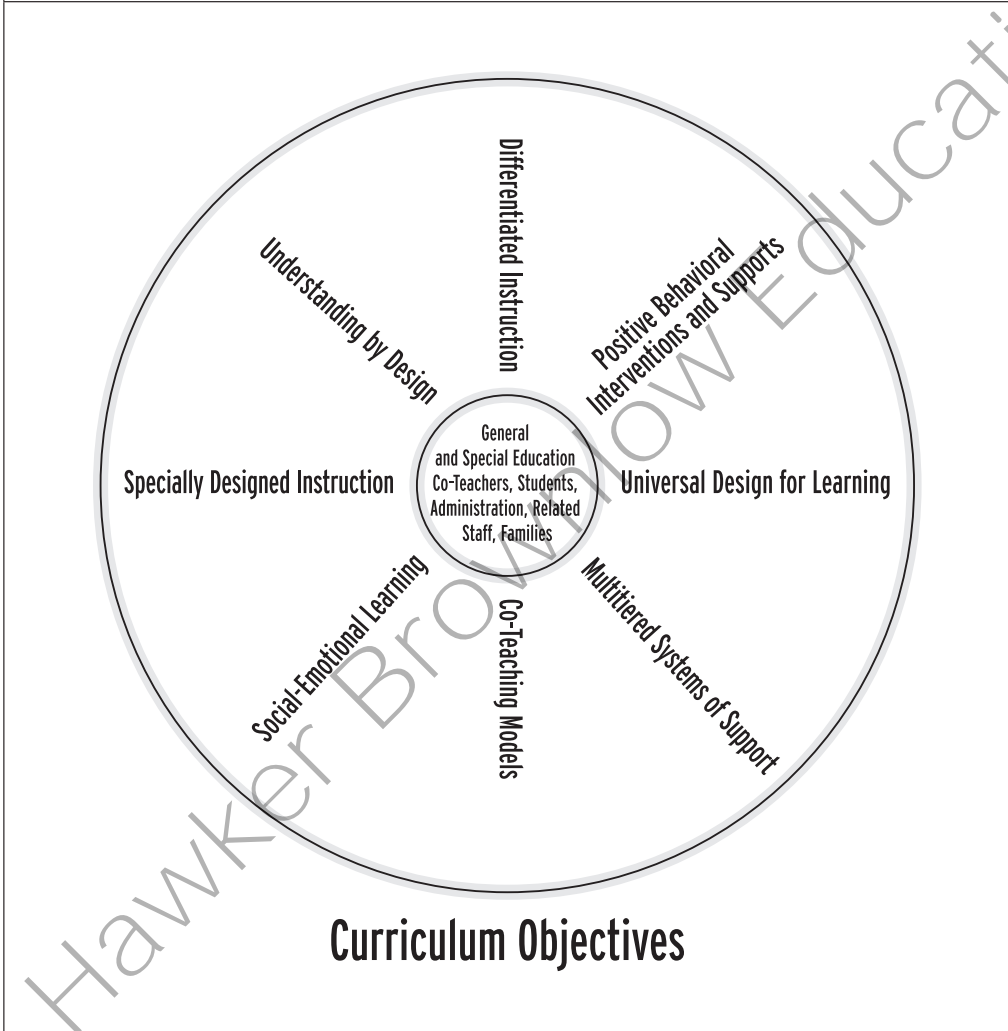
Co-teachers in a general education environment look at the academic, social, emotional, behavioral, communicative, physical, and curricular hoops that students will experience and figure out how they will collaboratively tackle those differences. More explanation and application about these evidence-based practices, offered here as the co-teaching spokes, will be discussed throughout this book.

↑ Vary Co-Teaching Models (CTM)

Though co-teaching itself has been in place in special and general education since the early 1980s (e.g., Garvar & Papania, 1982), Marilyn Friend and Lynne Cook introduced the original five co-teaching models in the early 1990s (1992):

- One teach, one support
- Team teaching
- Station teaching
- Alternative teaching
- Parallel teaching

Figure 1.1
Co-Teaching Spokes



In later works, they added a sixth approach by breaking up one teach, one support to include both one teach, one assist and one teach, one observe (Friend & Cook, 1996). We reference these initial five co-teaching models and offer additional elaboration and collaborative practices with K-12 lesson applications as we connect these models to classroom realities.

After providing a short introduction to these five CTMs and the foundational pros and cons, we'll continue to share strategies on each approach that are student-based and not solely attached to one particular model so that you and your partner can ultimately expand your co-teaching practices.

One teach, one support. This model is also known as lead and support; one teach, one assist; one teach, one observe; or supportive co-teaching (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989; Friend & Cook, 2017; Hughes & Murawski, 2001; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2013). In this approach, as the title suggests, one of the co-teachers takes the lead for direct instruction while the other engages in support activities. These may include circulating, collecting data, monitoring behavior or comprehension, managing materials, taking roll, setting up technology, and so forth. Either teacher may take the lead. This approach is the most commonly used (Weiss & Lloyd, 2003) because of its simplicity and familiarity; it also requires the least amount of collaboration, communication, and planning. That said, co-teachers should ensure that the individual in the support role is doing something that is meaningful, not just walking around or standing against the back wall watching. The goal is to move beyond one teach, one support (Spencer, 2012).

Team teaching. This model is also known as teaming (Friend & Bursuck, 2019; Karten, 2015). Though some use the term co-teaching synonymously with team teaching, team teaching is the approach wherein both teachers share the stage. Co-teachers select this approach when they want to model information, role-play something, debate a topic or instructional strategy in front of students, or show two different ways of tackling a task (Murawski, 2009). While it is fun for students to see both of their teachers interacting in front of the class, it can also model communication and collaboration. Unfortunately, team teaching can be overused as well. When both teachers are in front of the class, no one is engaged with small groups or individuals. Another potential drawback is that the class can begin to feel like a tennis match, with verbiage going back and forth from teacher to teacher, ultimately confusing students or just taking twice as long to cover the same content. Teachers who choose to do team teaching should select it for a particular purpose; use it strategically to get attention, demonstrate parity, and make a point; and then return to a regrouping type of co-teaching approach.