

Beyond the Basics: Instruction in Co-Taught Classes

*Resources and related materials for the conversation
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Beyond the Basics: Instruction in Co-Taught Classes

Just as a personal relationship requires nurturing, becoming a true master of co-teaching takes ongoing attention to the details of this complex teaching arrangement as well as critical analysis and self-reflection. Many educators are able to successfully manage having two professionals in the classroom; fewer take their practice to the next level by deliberately striving to refine co-teaching approaches, getting the most out of having two professionals in the class by differentiating, addressing accommodations and modifications, and using principles of universal design for learning. Only with careful attention to instructional matters (and, of course, to partnership, logistic and related issues and dilemmas) co-teaching service options reach their potential.

The purpose of today's session is to go beyond the basic of the six co-teaching approaches to look at the instructional practices in co-taught classes. The goal is to present a means of thinking about how instruction in co-taught classes can be richer, deeper, more individualized, and ultimately, more successful for all learners.

Objectives

At the conclusion of today's conversation you will be able to

1. Review foundational information about co-teaching and related concepts in order to ensure a common vocabulary among implementers and other stakeholders (e.g., collaboration, inclusion, co-teaching, team teaching).
 2. Discuss key concepts related to contemporary instructional practices for students with disabilities and other special needs.
 3. Examine how two teachers can/should address and enhance these dimensions of instruction:
 - Assessment and planning
 - Content, materials and technology
 - The instructional environment
 - The presentation of instruction
 - Student participation in learning
 - Evaluation of student performance
 - Interactions among adults
 4. Apply the above ideas to your current or anticipated co-teaching situation.
 5. Suggest ideas for address common co-teaching instructional dilemmas.
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Co-Teaching Defined

As is true of many concepts in the field of education, co-teaching has been defined in a number of ways. Some individuals consider any arrangement with two adults assigned to a classroom to be co-teaching, even when one of the individuals is a paraprofessional or parent volunteer. A more accurate and useful definition of co-teaching includes these elements:

- *Co-teaching is a service delivery option.*

Co-teaching exists as a means for providing the specialized instruction to which students with disabilities are entitled while ensuring access to general curriculum in the least restrictive environment with the provision of supplementary aids and services.

- *Two or more professionals with equivalent licensure and employment status are the participants in co-teaching.*

Co-teaching is based on parity. When paraprofessionals or other adults assist in classrooms, the contribution is valuable, but it is appropriately considered support rather than co-teaching.

- *Co-teachers share instructional responsibility and accountability for a single group of students for whom they both have ownership.*

Both educators contribute to instruction as part of co-teaching. Perhaps the most significant re-conceptualization critical for co-teaching is the notion of a two-teacher classroom rather than a one-teacher classroom with “help” available from the other teacher.

- *Co-teaching occurs primarily in a shared classroom or workspace.*

Although instructional reasons sometimes exist for physically separating students and teachers, co-teaching usually involves multiple activities occurring in one place.

- *Co-teachers’ specific level of participation may vary based on their skills and the instructional needs of the student group.*

Especially in middle and high school when special educators are co-teaching in subjects in which they have had limited professional preparation, their skill and comfort for contributing to initial instruction may take time to develop. In such situations, care must be taken to by co-teachers to outline roles and responsibilities so that both professionals do have meaningful roles capitalizing on their strengths.

Co-teaching Approaches: Overview

Actual %

Ideal %

One Teach, One Observe. One of the advantages in co-teaching is that more detailed observation of students engaged in the learning process can occur. With this approach, for example, co-teachers can decide in advance what types of specific observational information to gather during instruction and can agree on a system for gathering the data. Afterward, the teachers should analyze the information together.

One Teach, One Assist. In a second approach to co-teaching, one person would keep primary responsibility for teaching while the other professional circulated through the room providing unobtrusive assistance to students as needed.

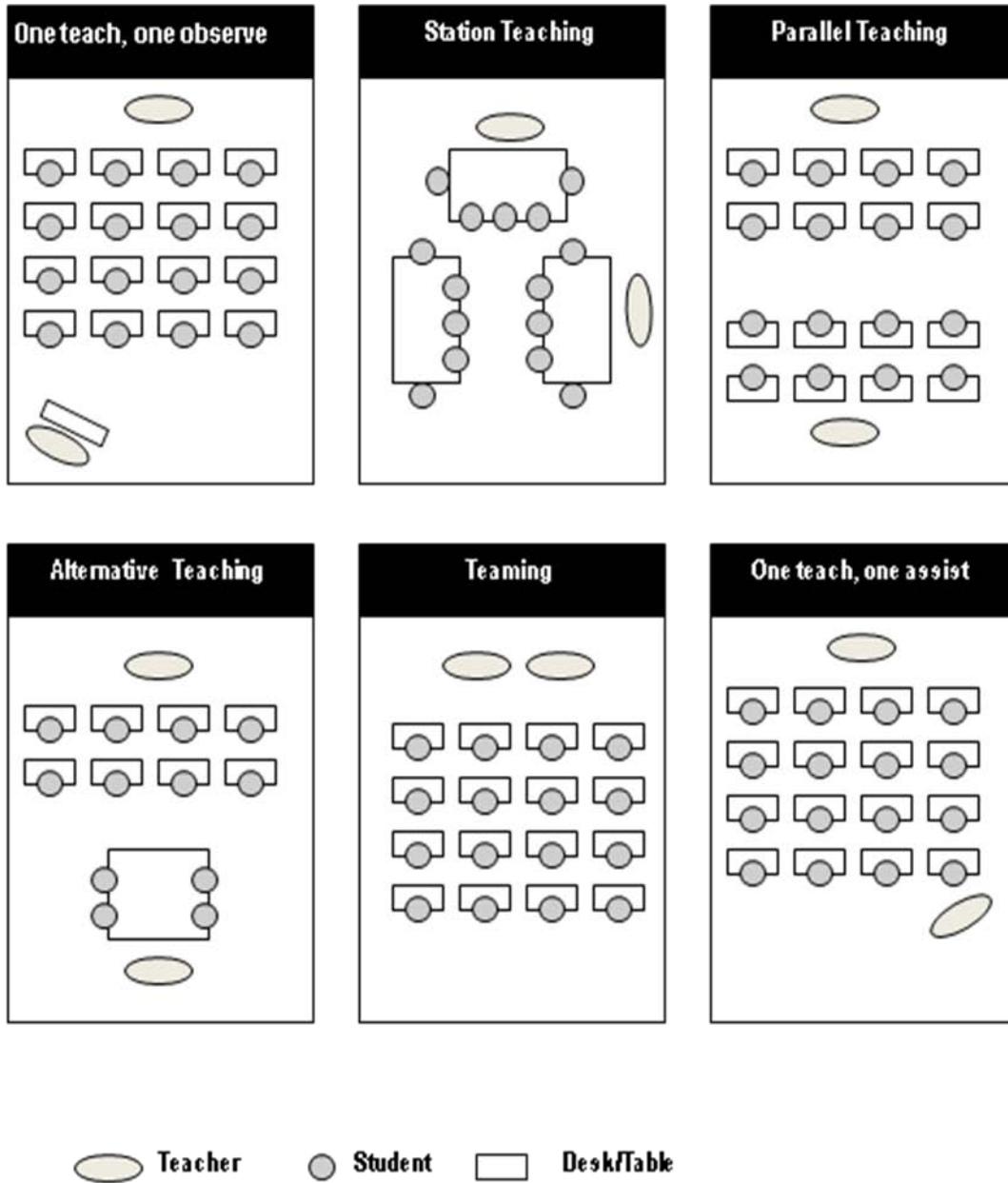
Station Teaching. In this co-teaching approach, teachers divide content and students. Each teacher then teaches the content to one group and subsequently repeats the instruction for the other group. If appropriate, a third "station" could give students an opportunity to work independently.

Parallel Teaching. On occasion, students' learning would be greatly facilitated if they just had more supervision by the teacher or more opportunity to respond. In parallel teaching, the teachers are both teaching the same information, but they divide the class group and do so simultaneously.

Alternative Teaching: In most class groups, occasions arise in which several students need specialized attention. In alternative teaching, one teacher takes responsibility for the large group while the other works with a smaller group.

Teaming: In teaming, both teachers are delivering the same instruction at the same time. Some teachers refer to this as having "one brain in two bodies." Others call it "tag team teaching." Most co-teachers consider this approach the most complex but satisfying way to co-teach, but it is the approach that is most dependent on teachers' styles.

Co-teaching approaches (continued)



Source: Figure 4.2 Co-Teaching Approaches from Friend, M., & Bursuck, W. D. (2009). *Including students with special needs: A practical guide for classroom teachers* (4th ed., p. 88). Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Copyright © 2002 by Pearson Education. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

The Vocabulary of Instruction for Co-Teachers

Universal Design for Learning

Based on principles now applied in architecture and product design in order to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, *universal design for learning* is the concept that as educators design instruction, they should incorporate structures so that nearly all learners can access that instruction and benefit from it. Thus, just as city engineers now ensure that all sidewalks have curb cuts so that people who use wheelchairs can easily access sidewalks, teachers are charged with planning lessons with instructional “curb cuts” so that even students who struggle with reading or who experience difficulty with behavior or who have sensory disabilities can succeed. With this mindset, “disabled” is not seen as a separate category of learner but rather as a variation on a broad continuum of expected diversity.

Differentiated Instruction

The phrase *differentiated instruction* has become a buzzword for twenty-first century educators. In many ways it is the implementation of the principles of universal design for learning. Based on assessment so that individual student needs are the focus, differentiation instruction is proactively designing instruction so that each student can access the instruction, process and make meaning of it, and demonstrate their mastery of it. Many models for differentiation have been offered, and Friend’s (2009) model will be the basis for this workshop. Another simple model directs teachers to consider how they can change *input*, *process*, and *product* as dimensions of differentiation.

Supplementary Aids and Services: Examples

Supplementary aids and services (SAS) comprise a very broad set of supports for students with disabilities that enable them to be successful in the general education setting. SAS are required by IDEA, and the law indicates that, for nearly all students, before a placement more restrictive than the general education setting is proposed, evidence must be provided that the student was provided with SAS and that data indicate those supports have not been effective in assisting the student to meet IEP goals (and, for some, objectives).

Modifications

Significant changes made to the curriculum in order to enable a student to be successful in a general education environment are called modifications. It is important to realize that modifications pertain to changing curricular objectives; the concept is not essential for considering accommodations made in students’ daily work. Although modifications can include a change in sequence (for

The vocabulary of instruction for co-teachers (continued)

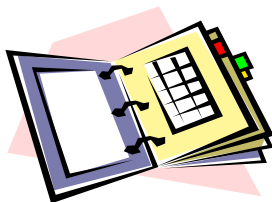
example, the order in which math facts are taught) or the addition of curriculum (for example, instruction in Braille for students with vision impairments), more commonly they pertain to significant reductions in the traditional curriculum (for example, eliminating all but four of the 15 vocabulary words because only those four seem to have life application for the student in question). Modifications generally should be reserved for students with intellectual or other disabilities so significant that they are not expected to meet the same curriculum standards as other students (that is, no more than 2-3 students with disabilities out of every 10). For some students with more mild disabilities, however, educators still find that, because of shortcomings of past instructional practices, they still need modifications. These should be offered with great reluctance and with a plan to decrease modification over time. Some professionals think of modifications as changing **what** the student learns.

Accommodations

Accommodations are instructional tools that enable a student with special needs to more readily access curricular content or to more easily demonstrate understanding of that content. Many students use accommodations, whether they have identified disabilities or not. One simple example of an accommodation is using a calculator during math instruction because basic facts are not known, and this interferes with the new learning. Another is providing extended time for students to complete lengthy assignments. Accommodations continue after graduation for student with disabilities who choose to identify themselves thus; the Americans with Disabilities Act requires “reasonable accommodations.” Some professionals think of accommodations as changing **how** the student learns the same curriculum as other learners.

Strategies

Strategies are techniques, principles, or rules that enable students to learn to solve problems, learn more effectively and efficiently, and complete tasks independently. Many students with mild to moderate disabilities learn strategies that enable them to succeed in the general education curriculum. Strategies may be accommodations, but they also may simply be appropriate evidence-based instruction.



A Framework for Differentiation

Differentiation of instruction can occur in most aspects of instruction. The following seven areas are especially important.

- 1. How preparation for instruction occurs.** This area includes assessment of general student strengths and needs as well as those specific to the instruction. It also includes a clear planning process so that instruction is deliberate and designed to address student needs, including IEP goals.
- 2. How content, materials, and technology are part of instruction.** This area includes the books, manipulatives, and other materials students use during instruction as well as the instructional and assistive technology that facilitates learning. It is also the dimension that teachers discuss related to modifications for a small number of students.
- 3. How the instructional environment is arranged.** Many factors affect learning even though not necessarily directly related to instruction. Examples include physical environment, classroom climate, and the availability of other supplies.
- 4. How instructional content is structured and presented.** Techniques teachers use during large-group, small-group, and individual instruction to foster student learning are usually adaptations. Many students learn strategies as part of curriculum presentation.
- 5. How students learn the instructional content.** This encompasses strategies students use to relate instructional content to other learning, to identify and hold the most important aspects of it, to remember it, and to use it are part of this area.
- 6. How student learning is evaluated.** The fifth area includes alternative approaches for assessing student learning and options for grading students on daily work as well as on report grades. In co-taught options, alternative assessment strategies are often more feasible than in other settings.
- 7. How the adults work together.** Strategies for facilitating instructional accommodations include consultation, preparation of adaptations by special educators or others, co-teaching, in-class services from paraprofessionals and others, intervention assistance and other teams, and systematic problem solving. This workshop captures just one of these options.

Example: Preparation for Instruction

Although few options remain for teachers to select content, they still have the responsibility for prioritizing what students should know. Decisions about the selection of content should be based on assessed student needs and related factors, and the decisions should not be identical for each student. If small pieces of content are deleted, this is considered a usual adjustment. However, if major or core segments of curriculum are deleted, this is a modification of curriculum and might require a change in learning assessment procedures. This level of change should be primarily for students with significant intellectual disabilities; other students rely on accommodations.

Remember that decisions about content should be based on ongoing assessment of student learning. Here are some questions that can help you make decisions about the content of instruction for students with exceptional needs:

- Based on our understanding of this student (from IEP, past experience, current indicators), what is a reasonable expectation for learning the key components of this instruction?
 - What are the characteristics of each student that can inform us about the amount of content a student can learn and how s/he can best learn it?
 - Based on our professional knowledge and experience, which required competencies or standards does this instruction address?
 - Is this an activity in which the student can learn a skill related to the IEP, regardless of whether or not he or she learns the intended instructional content?
 - How critical is this content in terms of helping this student acquire skills for getting a job? Job-related skills are learned beginning in kindergarten, and teachers can foster the learning of such skills throughout a student's school career.
 - How critical is this content in terms of helping this student learn skills to make constructive use of recreational time?
 - How critical is this content in terms of helping this student learn social skills for both vocational and personal situations?
 - How can this curricular content be made appropriate for this student?
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Example: Preparation for Instruction

Co-teaching is planning between the general education teacher and the special education teacher or other specialist. Some teachers note that they do ALL the planning. Some support staff comment that they are afraid to make suggestions for fear their ideas will be viewed as an intrusion. The following three-part planning process is one way to make the collaboration that is part of inclusion at the classroom level be more successful.

PHASE I: CURRICULUM OUTLINE

General education teacher prepares an outline of upcoming curriculum: topics, key concepts, activities, projects. It is best if the teacher makes a copy of this for the other professional.

PHASE II: INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

The general education teacher and special educator jointly decide how to arrange teachers and students to accomplish the curriculum priorities. Both teachers take active instructional roles.

PHASE III: INDIVIDUAL ADJUSTMENTS

Based on shared planning, the special educator makes accommodations for students with special needs. This might include preparing alternative materials, adapting materials, or creating supplemental materials.

Examples: Instructional Materials

Adding Color

Some students, particularly those with attentional problems and learning disabilities respond well when color is used to help them focus attention

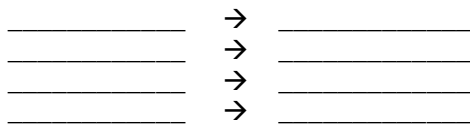
- Use highlighting markers to call out key words, directions, and potential trouble spots. For example, if the directions on an assignment sheet say to "Find three hints in the first part of the story that tell you where it took place," you might highlight the words "three hints" and "where it took place."
- A marker can also be used to indicate to a student which part of an assignment to complete. Some secondary teachers use a black marker as a key tool for making adaptations. They mark which items to focus on during tests, eliminate some parts of assignments, and otherwise adjust student work (ALL students' work, as needed) as they distribute assignments.
- Highlighters also can be used to make textbooks easier to read. For example, use yellow marker to call out new vocabulary words, use pink marker to call out definitions of key vocabulary, and use green marker to call out key ideas. Generally, it is not recommended to have students read and highlight text since they tend to not read carefully when doing both tasks. Also, it is important not to highlight too much--no more than 1-2 sentences for each 2-3 paragraphs should be highlighted. (Remember classmates in college whose books were essentially all yellow? What assistance did that provide for learning?)

Using Pictures and Graphics

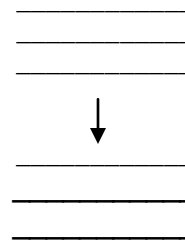
Pictures and other graphics can greatly assist students in their learning. Most teachers already know about mind maps and webs. Here are a few other examples of using visuals.

- If students need to follow multiple directions, use small pictures as cues when directions are posted on the chalkboard (e.g., a pen for write sentences; a check mark to remind students to check their work).
- Try using graphics to help students understand different types of expository text. For example:

Cause/Effect



Problem-Solution



Comparable Materials

In many cases, materials can be adjusted so that curricular goals are preserved but student success is enhanced. A few examples include these:

- A word bank to use for test items that require filling in blanks or writing an essay.
- Assignments shortened so that students address all curriculum competencies but have fewer examples of each so that they can more readily complete the work
- A novel or story that addresses the same English/language arts concepts but that has simpler vocabulary
- Access to the wealth of high/interest low vocabulary materials that are available from commercial publishers
- Use of the alternative activities that often are included in teachers manuals for basal materials in language arts, science, and social studies

Using the Same Materials with a Different Goal

Sometimes students can use the same materials as classmates, but for a different purpose. A young student might use manipulatives to practice one-to-one correspondence, not to master adding. An older student might add the numbers that other students are dividing. A science experiment might be fine motor skill practice for one student, not really a science lesson at all.

Example: The Instructional Environment

The environment in which instruction occurs has a strong influence on students' learning. When students and teachers perceive the classroom as attractive, safe, not distracting, and supportive, student learning is optimized. If students sense they are not welcome, or if the classroom environment fosters inappropriate behavior and detracts from learning, problems are likely to occur. Further, in co-teaching the environment should be arranged so that both teachers can actively work with student groups while ensuring that noise and distractions are kept to a minimum. This may be challenging in overcrowded settings, but still should be a priority.

Classroom arrangement for co-teaching

These are a few questions to consider for setting up a classroom for co-teaching:

- Are we taking full advantage of all the space in the classroom?
- How can we arrange the students and teachers so that student attention can be maximized and interfering noise can be minimized?
- How can we get the teachers seated during instruction so that voices do not carry as much?
- What instructional materials can facilitate the use of space (e.g., small whiteboards)?
- What physical arrangement should we use when implementing each of the co-teaching approaches?
- How could we use other items in the classroom (e.g., flip charts, dividers) to enhance the instructional environment when groups are working?

Physical arrangement of classroom floor space

Some considerations about classroom arrangement are very pragmatic. Are pencil sharpeners and supplies in locations that all students can reach them (even from a wheelchair)? Is there enough room in aisles and around worktables so that students can move easily? Are the desks or tables for students high enough? Too high? Are areas where supplies are located away from student work areas to minimize distraction?

Arrangement of student desks

Particularly in elementary schools, there has been a trend to seat students at shared tables, or to groups four or six desks so students can face each other and readily work with each other. Such arrangements are conducive to cooperative learning and group projects. However, classrooms also need options for students to work individually. For example, for many students rows and aisles may be a preferred desk arrangement during large-group instruction since it results in fewer distractions to learning. Both arrangements should be used.

If student desks are grouped, desk carrels should be available for students needing them, or some students should be permitted to move to a quiet corner of the classroom to work independently. For students with significant ADHD, another desk option might help. Consider providing that student with two desks in the classroom, one that contains all supplies and one that is empty.

Use of wall space and ceilings

Attractively decorated walls can make classrooms have a welcoming learning environment. However, too much decoration can lead to student distraction. It is suggested that displays that stay the same (for example, the calendar display in an elementary setting) be located in areas that students look at during large-group instruction. Three-dimensional, changing, unusual displays should be out of students' line of sight. Likewise, learning activities set up on bulletin boards should be toward the rear or at the sides of the classroom. Some teachers decide to decorate their classrooms by hanging student art projects or other items (e.g., Mylar balloons, mobiles students made for a lab) on strings from the ceilings. This practice often interferes with learning for students with attentional problems.

Lighting

Lighting can strongly affect student learning. If a student seems to prefer strong light, that student should sit where the light is brightest. In contrast, some students may prefer to be seated in a relatively dark part of the classroom. If you have a student with a hearing impairment or a student with a vision impairment, you should ask a special educator about lighting preferences. The former student may need a bright area where sign language can be seen and speech reading can occur. The other student may need a low-light area because of the nature of the impairment.

Storage

Student learning is enhanced when their attention is focused on tasks at hand and not drawn to materials, supplies, and personal belongings. If at all possible, arrange for students' belongings (e.g., coats, backpacks) to be out of sight and put away materials for an upcoming science experiment or the canned goods being collected for a school food drive.

Occasionally you might work with a student with disabilities who needs additional storage space in the classroom. The space might be needed for large-print editions of books, manipulatives, adapted tools or devices, computer equipment, and the like. A special educator should be able to assist a classroom teacher in arranging for such space.

Examples: Presentation of Instructional Content

There are many, many strategies for effectively presenting content to students, especially those with special needs, and facilitating student learning. Co-teachers should assess their own teaching styles and select one of ideas like the following to refine their teaching. These are a few of the most critical techniques for teacher-led instruction. Think about how each could be incorporated into the co-teaching approaches.

- **Clear instructional format following these steps:**

- a. Review of previous material
- b. Introduction of new material
- c. Provision of guided practice
- d. Provision of feedback and correction
- e. Practice

- **Tiering instruction.** Another approach to teaching that can help you to meet student needs is tiering. Tiering can begin with instruction, but it also can continue through student participation as well as assignments given. The goal of tiering is to match concepts, questions, and assignments to the abilities and needs of students.

- **Use of pre-reading plans**

Using a pre-reading plan is a means for determining whether students have background related to the lesson about to be presented. For example, you might select two key vocabulary words, present them to students, and ask students to share what they know about those words. After instruction and based on their new learning, students can be invited to change or refine their understanding of the vocabulary that had been introduced earlier.

- **Use of graphic organizers (webs, mind maps, etc.)**

Many teachers already use some form of graphic organizer as part of their instruction. These “pictures” of the content being taught and the relationships among its various parts help some students better grasp the ideas. However, it should also be noted that a few students will be visually distracted by graphic organizers and will not find them useful.

- **Use of sponges during spare minutes (for example, during transitions)**

Sponges are simple activities that make good use of instructional time. For example, when there are just a few minutes left before a transition, not enough time to begin new instruction or continue instruction, the teacher might complete a quick review of what was taught by asking students to recall three important points. Alternatively, they might use “down” time to practice math facts or review vocabulary.

- **Use of anticipation guides**

An anticipation guide is another means for assessing student learning. Teachers would prepare several statements about the topic at hand, some of which will challenge student thinking. Students discuss the statements in a large-group format, or in a small group arrangement. After instruction, each statement is recalled and final comments are made.

Tiering Instruction

Subject: Grade 9 Science

Key Concept: Data Collection and Inference

Tiered according to ability and interest

Background: After studying the organization of data and making inferences students are assigned a project where they must create their own study/experiment with a basis on data collection. Due to the high number of students high school teachers teach, there is less opportunity to truly understand their abilities, and so tiers for this project are made up according to successes.

- Tier I - below average success or students lacking drive in the course.
- Tier II - average success students.
- Tier III - advanced learners.

Within each tier students make choices, based on interest, of which project they wish to do.

Projects: It is beneficial to have books containing experiments and studies on hand for the students to look at. Students learn from examples!

Tier I	Use a variety of pre-made experiments, where the students choose and organize the data collected. These students often procrastinate, use judgment rather than scientific inferences, and achieve low because of a lack of comfort in the subject or academic. When you take away the 'wonder' time you allow these students to move right into achievement.
Tier II	Students will attempt a suggested topic to work within. For example, suggest the group do a behavioral study. One student may study the effects on one's success with vocabulary when being rushed compared to the success of someone not being rushed. Students will see how moods and frustrations play a part in success. Students in this tier are appropriately challenged because they are creating, but you have taken away the weeks of wonder by making a general suggestion for the group.
Tier III	Students will create their own study or experiment. Most of these students have mastered the experimental process and data collection. Therefore, the real learning and appropriate challenge is the process of planning their own experiment.

From <http://wblrd.sk.ca/~bestpractice/tiered/examples4.html>.

Tiering instruction: Example

Subject: Language Arts

Key Concept: Book Report and Presentation

Tiered According to Ability and Readiness

Background: As in any class the book report is an important way for students to discuss the books they are reading and for them to do some writing about the book in question. With so many different learners in each class students will be reading at different levels. Books need to be appropriately picked as does the form of book report. Higher leveled students need more challenging tasks and lower leveled students need less intrusive tasks. Each of the following has been designed considering each type of student's needs.

Book Reports:

<p><i>Below Grade Level</i></p>	<p>Diorama Book Report</p> <p>Students will do different illustrations and paragraphs on paper and glue them into their box after completion. All inside sides are used except the inside top.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Back - students illustrate the setting of the book and write the book title on the picture.• Side - students illustrate the main character.• Side - students illustrate their favorite scene.• Bottom - students summarize the plot in paragraph form.
<p><i>Grade Level</i></p>	<p>Paper Bag Book Report</p> <p>Use a lunch size paper bag and have students create a written plan for their report, including 5 items to go on the inside as well as what will be on each part of the outside.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inside - students will collect and put in 5 things that describe parts of the book.• Front - students write the title, author, and publisher.• Back - students illustrate their favorite scene.• Side - students summarize the plot in paragraph form.• Side - students describe the main character.

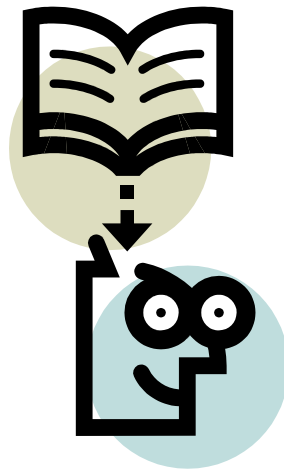
**High
Achievers**

Folder Book Report

Use 14 x 11 inch paper, preferably heavier paper, and fold it into a folder. On each side students will describe a part of the story in a different way.

- **Front** - students illustrate any picture to describe the book.
- **Inside** - students summarize the plot in paragraph form.
- **Inside** - students describe and illustrate the main character.
- **Back** - students critique the book and forward their recommendation.

Assessment: Try using peer assessment, self assessments, and/or checklist/scoring rubric.



Example: Student Participation

How students learn content is the partner to how co-teachers structure and present information. To the extent that co-teachers can help their students become active learners in large and small groups and independent learners when assigned individual work, they are providing them with skills that will help them throughout their lives. These categories of approaches can assist students in their learning in co-taught settings:

- **Increased participation during large-group instruction**

In both elementary and secondary classrooms, large-group instruction should be frequently punctuated by opportunities to actively participate. The more often every student participates in a class activity, the fewer behavior problems will occur and the better student learning will be.

- **Use of learning strategies**

As students learn simple or complex strategies for remembering information, organizing their work, taking tests, and so on, their independence increases. Although the focus of this seminar is NOT on this particular technique, all teachers should familiarize themselves with learning strategies and incorporate them into their teaching.

- **Techniques for completing seatwork or long-term assignments**

Many students with learning and behavior problems experience difficulty completing work independently, and when long-term projects are assigned, they forget about them until just before the due date. Helping them on such tasks is fundamental in inclusive classrooms.

- **Alternatives to traditional instruction**

Many teachers are using centers, projects, problem-based learning, inquiry, and contracts as ways to bring concepts of differentiating together. These approaches encourage student learning while maximizing their strengths.

- **Appropriate opportunities for completing homework**

Homework can be a valuable learning tool or a painful ordeal. Teachers with diverse student groups should consider alternatives to thinking about and assigning homework, keeping individual student needs in mind.

Examples: Promoting Active Student Participation

One fundamental component of effective instruction is active student participation. Some teachers promote active student participation by using cooperative groups and other structured peer-mediated approaches. However, even if you are using a large-group instructional strategy, you can still create many opportunities for student participation using these techniques:

1. **Think, Pair, and Share**

In this approach, students in a large group are first paired with a classmate, either for the specific lesson or for a period of time (for example, for one week). The teacher poses a question to the class and instructs students to think carefully about how they would answer the question. After a short pause, students are then instructed to “pair and share.” That is, they take turns giving an answer to their partners. After a brief time is allowed for this activity (often less than one minute), the teacher solicits answers from the large group.

This strategy not only gives every student in class a chance to participate in responding to each question, it also adds the tremendously important advantage of helping students who are unsure of answers to prepare to participate in the ensuing discussion. By keeping time allotted for answering relatively brief, the teacher also prevents students from getting distracted.

This technique can be used at every age/grade level, in every subject matter, with students with a huge variety of learning abilities. It should be an integral part of all large-group instruction.

Variation: To ensure that each student has an opportunity to share first, the teacher can call the number of the person to go first (the “ones” or “twos”) or students can be reminded to take turns answering first.

Examples:

"What are three animals that live in the woods?"

"Is Sully Sullenberger a hero? Why/why not?"

"Who was the character responsible for most of the story's action?"

Promoting active student participation (continued)

2. Numbered heads together

In this variation of peer mediated approaches, students are assigned to small groups of equal size (usually about four students) and then each member is assigned a number. The teacher asks a question and the small groups have as a goal making sure that each group member can answer the question. After a brief time, the teacher calls the group back together and calls one of the numbers (for example, "Two's up."). All students with that number stand.

The teacher then calls on one of those students to respond to the question. In some versions score is kept and teams that do not miss a question "win." If a class has a student with a significant cognitive disability, it might work best to partner that student with another class member (i.e., the group would have two 4's) so that issues of fairness are avoided.

Like Think, Pair and Share, this strategy helps all students participate and helps students prepare to participate in large-group discussions. Students usually enjoy this strategy because it has elements of both skill and chance. Students often work diligently to help all group members to understand what was asked because of the benefit for the group.

Variation: It is important to call the student numbers randomly so students cannot predict which "number" is "up." This could be done by drawing slips of paper from a container or rolling a die.

Examples:

"What is a beaker?"

"What is the lesson the poet is trying to teach us?"

"Why did the children run away from the shop?"

"What are products produced in the state of New Hampshire?"

"What are the major causes of the Revolutionary War?"

3. Speak or Pass

In this participation strategy, the teacher asks the class group a question for which there might be several answers. Each student in order by rows provides an answer, but may say "pass" if he or she has nothing to contribute. The teacher decides when to stop the Speak or Pass chain.

Promoting active student participation (continued)

Variation: Sometimes, students will find it amusing to say “pass” repeatedly. However, they usually tire of this after a few say it and begin offering their comments on the question. If the problem persists, it might be appropriate for the teacher and students to discuss the issues and agree on a strategy to resolve it.

Examples:

"What is an example of an emotion?"

"Who are the main characters of the novel?"

"What is one of the systems of the human body?"

4. Choral responding

Another simple participation technique is to have students chorally respond to a question. This approach lets every student participate, and yet does not pressure a student who may be unsure of an answer. The teacher asks a simple question and all students answer out loud. If several answers were given, the teacher might call on one student and then ask the question again so all students give a correct response.

A variation of this approach is called "One Say, All Say." In OSAS, the teacher asks a question and call on an individual student. When the student answers correctly, the teacher prompts the entire class to repeat the answer. If the student answers incorrectly, the teacher just calls on another student. Once the correct response is given by all, the teacher might ask the student who missed the question to repeat the answer again.

Yet another variation of this approach can be used during reading. When the material is difficult, the teacher might read one sentence and then have students repeat the sentence. Similarly, fluent readers could read a line that is repeated by the entire class. Sometimes, teachers read with students, eventually dropping out and letting students read alone.

The trick to this classroom approach is to make it fast-paced and interesting for students. If one or two students do not respond, they will hear the answers from others.

Examples: Options for Assignments

- Debate
- Make a speech
- Write an essay
- Write a magazine article
- Create a riddle
- Create a crossword puzzle
- Write a letter
- Construct a timeline
- Create a chart or graph
- Conduct an interview
- Design an exhibit
- Design a greeting card
- Create an ad
- Design a brochure
- Make a clay sculpture
- Create a slogan
- Act out a scene
- Perform a skit
- Invent a code
- Design a puzzle
- Tell a story
- Write a story
- Write a newspaper article
- Make an audiotape
- Re-write the ending
- Make a diagram
- Design a computer graphic
- Keep a journal
- Write a song
- Make a diorama
- Develop a theory
- Take pictures-digital camera
- Design a movie poster
- Design a checklist
- Write an editorial
- Play "Charades"
- Make a videotape
- Draw a caricature

From Heacox, D. (2002). Differentiating instruction in the regular classroom: How to reach and teach all learners. Minneapolis: Free Spirit.

Example: Evaluation of Student Performance

How should students with special needs be graded in co-taught classes? There are many correct answers to that question depending on student needs and teacher comfort level. Here are a few key ideas to keep in mind:

- Students who receive accommodations to enhance learning generally should be evaluated and graded in a manner similar to that of other students. There is no need to indicate that accommodations have been used on report cards. Some students receiving significant accommodations are likely to continue to receive such assistance as adults in the workplace.
- Students for whom significant curriculum reductions are made should have this indicated on the report card, but local policies should be followed to avoid inappropriately calling attention to the student's disability.
- Every student who is working hard and trying to do what is asked should be rewarded for that effort. However, whether effort should be part of a student's grade is a matter for discussion.
- Occasionally and with careful consideration, a student with an IEP might be given a failing grade. This often occurs when accommodations have been made, but the student chronically refuses to attempt the assigned work.
- In secondary settings, alternatives to traditional grading might be available and sometimes employed. Pass/fail or credit/no credit might be used on the report card. In a few instances, students might receive credit for a "special education course" even though fully participating in a general education class. This strategy sometimes alleviates general education teachers' concerns about clear communication regarding the mastery of course content. It is very unusual to use these types of strategies in elementary schools where grades are largely a matter of communication among teachers, parents, and students.
- If grades are modified, co-teachers have an increased responsibility to ensure that parents understand their meaning. Conferences that include specific examples of student work and explanations of how the work is evaluated can assist in this effort.
- Expectations about grading should be discussed before co-teaching begins so that differences can be addressed.
- What is most important is that grading systems for all students have a rationale that addresses both standards and special needs and that they are implemented throughout a school.
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Example: Partnership Considerations

Part of making instructional accommodations for students involves finding effective and efficient ways to work with special education and other support services staff.

1. Keep in mind that you have a frame of reference that influences your interactions and that others may have a frame of reference very different from yours. If you do not recognize both these facts, your communication may miss the mark. Remember that what you say is not the issue, it's what and how the other person hears the communication.
2. When another person relates a concern, think about why the person is sharing information to avoid concluding that he or she wants advice from you.
3. When another person relates a concern, avoid the temptation to trade your stories related to the topic. This type of "one-upping" often leads the other person to perceive that her message is not valued. It also interferes with accurate listening.
4. Much miscommunication occurs because of poor listening. You can confirm that you have accurately heard others' messages by paraphrasing the information and asking for confirmation that you have correctly received it.
5. As much as possible, focus your interactions on information that is observable. The more you rely on opinions and inferences, the more likely is miscommunication.
6. Nonverbal communication is essential in effective interactions, but should be considered in context. You have a double responsibility related to nonverbal communication: to monitor your own, and to take others' with an understanding of its potential inaccuracies.
7. When you interact with others, beware of the impact of words that have a strong emotional content. If you tell another person that he or she is "angry," that person may become angry even if that was not the case. When speaking to parents, use of words such as "oppositional," "bad attitude," and "uncooperative" may also serve as "hot words."
8. If you have an opinion, you should take ownership for it. Likewise if you have a concern related to an issue with a colleague or parent, you should acknowledge that the matter is yours.
9. Although you do not need effective communication skills for all your interactions, if you do not practice such skills when they are not essential, they will not be present when they ARE essential. The more tense or awkward the interaction, the more needed are communication skills and the more difficult they are to implement.
10. As you identify your own typical communication patterns, it is often helpful to generate scripts for responding to others. Scripts are patterns of communication that can guide your communication when a high level of skills is critical.

Reaching ALL Learners in a Co-Taught Class

Co-teaching serves as a type of differentiating in and of itself. However, within a co-taught class, teachers should continue to make efforts to provide students with several options for learning so that they can maximize their success. Here is how it works:

1. Co-teachers should review assessment and other data about their students, taking into account their knowledge of students' strengths, interests, and learning needs as well as their readiness for the specific instruction about to be addressed to determine how to best teach the required material.
2. Next, co-teachers should review the big ideas, key concepts, curricular competencies, and related learnings that students are to master during the instruction.
3. Co-teachers should then brainstorm ways to reach all students throughout the instructional process.
4. The next step is for co-teachers to consider how to best group students in order to facilitate student learning (e.g., whole group-teaming? two groups-parallel teaching? small groups? stations?).
5. They should then complete more detailed planning related to how they can meet a variety of student needs through differentiating, using the seven dimensions that are presented elsewhere in this material: assessment and planning; content, materials, and technology; the instructional environment; instructional practices; student participation and other interaction with the content; evaluation of student performance; and the partnership between the adults in the classroom.
6. No single correct approach to differentiation exists for co-taught classes. The key is to be sure that all seven dimensions are considered and that multiple approaches to co-teaching are implemented.
7. If adjusted materials are needed as part of differentiating, the special educator often will create those materials or locate those that are commercially available. If rubrics are needed for various types of assignments, both teachers typically make decisions about the rubrics.
8. Ultimately, in the most effective co-taught classes not all students do the same work at all times. Having a different assignment is the norm, not the exception. Similarly, in differentiated classrooms, instructional groupings vary so that whole-group is just one of many approaches, not the dominant one.

Planning to Differentiate

Lesson Topic _____

Date _____

Objectives _____

	Task/Activity 1	Task/Activity 2	Task/Activity 3	Task/Activity 4
Assessment and content				
Materials and Technology				
Environment				
Content				
Student learning				
Student evaluation				
Adult interactions				

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