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Co-Teaching is Like a Marriage: Sometimes Arranged

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Co-Teaching is like a Marriage: Sometimes Arranged



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What is Co-Teaching?

- Co-Teaching is defined as two teachers who co-plan, co-instruct, and co-assess academic content provided to a single group of students at the same time, typically in the same space. Most often, but not always, co-teaching pairs are comprised of a general education teacher and a special education teacher.
- Each partner in the co-teaching relationship brings a set of skills needed for the team to work effectively. The general education teacher is usually the content knowledge expert with an expected pacing guide and has experience with whole-group classroom management. The special education teacher tends to have more knowledge on the learning process, individualized instruction, behavioral plans and they maintain a focus on learning for mastery.

Why use co-teaching? Benefits include:

- The goal of co-teaching is to increase students with learning differences and disabilities access to the general education curriculum standards with the provision of instruction in the Least Restrictive Environment.
- Both students from the general education population and special education population benefit, as well as the teachers themselves.

Student Benefits:

- Establish a respect for differences
- Increase attention
- Use of peer-models
- Development of broader friendships
- Improved self-esteem
- Creation of a belongingness

Teacher Benefits:

- Collaborative problem solving
- Enhanced instructional knowledge base
- Shared responsibility
- Increased grouping options
- Opportunity for teamwork and creativity
- Ability to provide individualized instruction

Challenges

I'm not
telling you
it's going
to be
easy,
I'm
telling you
it's going
to be
WORTH IT.

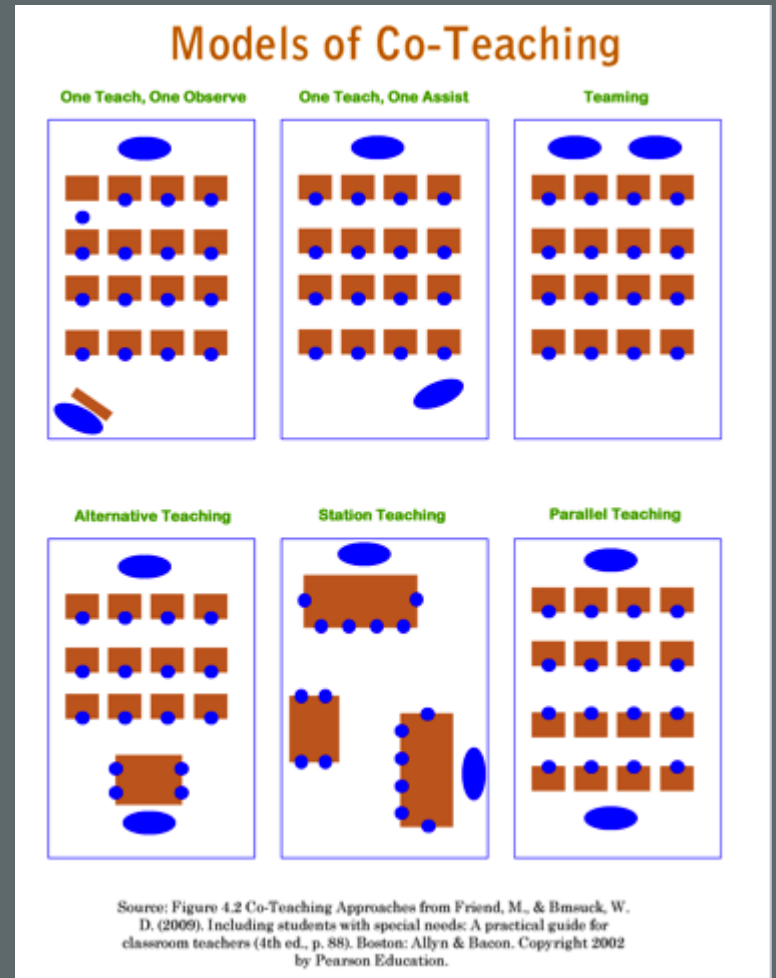
The biggest challenge for teachers is deciding to share a role that has traditionally been individual: to now share goals, decisions, classroom instruction, accountability for students, assessment of student learning, problem solving and classroom management.

Some teachers think that it will be half the work to have a co-teacher because they can “divide and conquer”, this is NOT true. In fact, it takes more work on both parties part because they have to learn another's teaching style and progress students with various learning needs through a rigorous curriculum.

What does research say?

- Time and research has shown that pulling students with disabilities from the general education setting to be taught in a resource setting does not allow these students to benefit from the instruction of content area teachers. (Martison, 1996), (Schulte, A., Osborne, S., & McKinney, J. 1990)
- Additionally, general education teachers are not always equipped with the knowledge and expertise to meet the learning differences posed by students with learning differences. (Villa, Thousand, & Niven, 2004)
- Co- teaching is a collaborative strategy that is being more heavily pushed by schools as a possibility to relieve this situation. However, effective co-teaching is key. (Sindelar, 1995)

Six Co-teaching Models

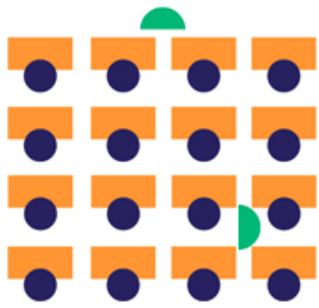




One Teach, One Observe

- Used only periodically
- Typically used for data collection (often behavioral)
- Teachers take turns being the observer
- Reflective teaching practices





One Teach, One Assist

- Used less frequently
- Unobtrusive approach to assist individual students
- Works to help in attentive students stay focused





Teaching

- Used for fast-paced, large group instruction
- Teachers share speaking roles (hard to master)
- Must be carefully planned ahead of time

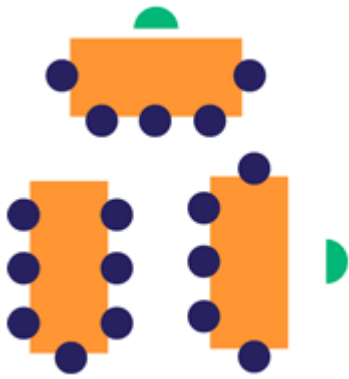




Alternative Teaching

- Used occasionally
- Used for intense instruction for selected students
- Used for pre-teaching, remediation or independent work

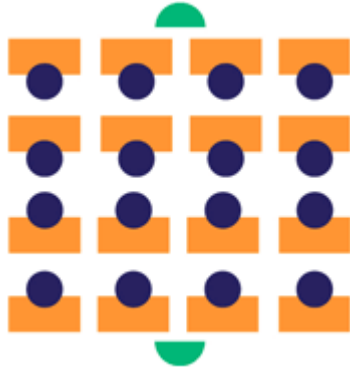




Station Teaching

- Use occasionally for small groups
- Used for intense instruction
- Students rotate through teachers/stations, some may be independent
- Has to be for non-sequential instruction





Parallel Teaching

- Used occasionally
- Allows for class to split into two smaller groups
- Can be grouped on skill level or learning styles
- Still teaching same content



Conflict is to be expected but not accepted

- Co-teaching teams are being forced into the general education classrooms where veteran teachers have been having their reign, uninterrupted, for years. They sometimes feel insulted to have a special education teacher “assigned” to their classroom.
- Special education teachers sometimes feel frustrated that they have been uprooted from their comfort zone as well as their separate space classrooms.
- Gone are the days of close your door and teach in isolation. These feelings and attitudes need to be checked at the door for a healthy collaborative relationship.
- It is unacceptable for adults working together to let their pride to get in the way of what is best for students.

differ

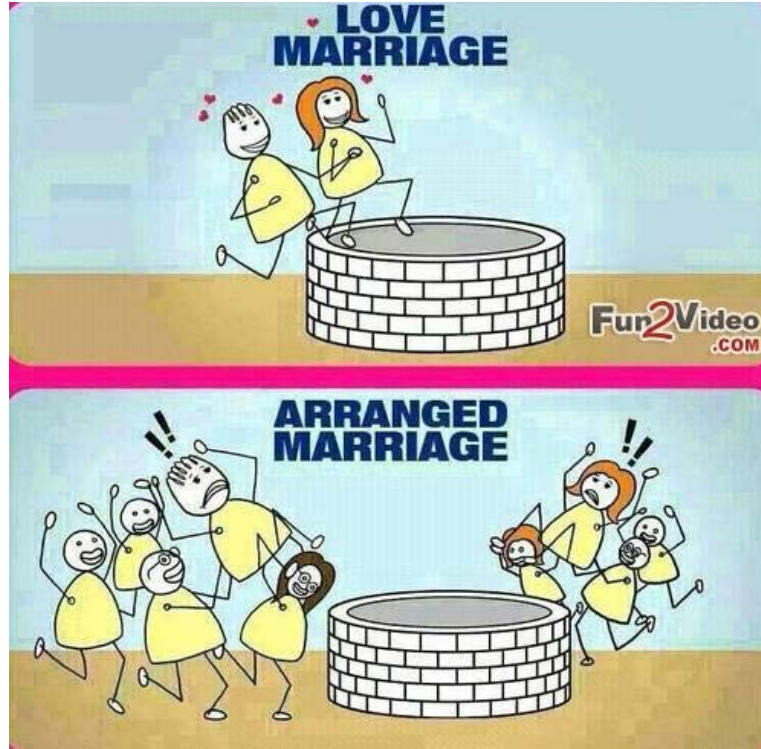


Co-Teaching is like a marriage...



“He thinks of our marriage as an acquisition instead of a merger.”

... Sometimes arranged



Traditional path through marriage...and co-teaching relationship

Meeting: Love at first sight or flirting

Courtship: Dating and getting to know each other

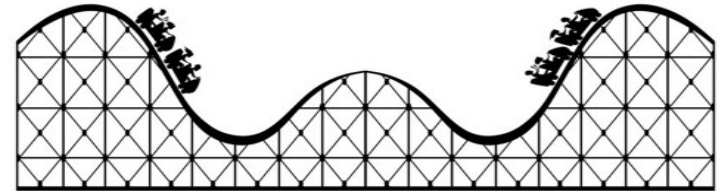
Engagement: Planning and discussing expectations

** Arranged Marriages just start here**

Wedding day: Everything MUST go perfect!

Honeymoon/Newlyweds: Easy peasy but adjustments needed

Years and decades marriage: Roller coaster of ups and downs



Why do half off all marriages end in divorce and how does this relate to co-teaching relationships?

1. Unrealistic expectations → Different perceptions of what it will be like
2. Lack of equality in the relationship → One teacher having more dominate role
3. Communication issues → No communication, misunderstanding or arguing
4. Lack of preparation for the marriage → Limited or ineffective co-planning time
5. No commitment to the marriage → Not having “buy in” from both parties

How do we overcome these things and set up our co-teaching relationships for success?

1: Clear expectations and a common vision

- Learn a little about each other's teaching styles and discuss curriculum goals of the subject area you are co-teaching.
- Determine the each other's understanding of co-teaching and decide if more training is needed before starting.
- Discuss specific students with IEPs (or behavioral plans) and their goals, specifically what accommodations and modifications will be needed on a regular basis for these students.
- Talk about who will bring what to planning time and what is needed with what kind of advanced notice.

2: Equal roles and parity in responsibility

- Start with “Must Have” Conversations:

- How will you introduce yourselves to show parity?
- What are the professional behavioral guidelines that you will follow?
- How will you divide space in the room and materials?
- How will you address organizational routines and procedures?
- How will behavioral/classroom management be handled?
- How will grades and parent communication be handled?
- What are each other’s pet peeves/non-negotiables in the classroom?

3: Communication is key

- Communication is needed whether it is GOOD, BAD or UGLY!
- GOOD: Celebrate successes when things go well and try to record this so you can go back and replicate in other classes. Also, talk about why these things worked.
- BAD: Share if you think yourself or the other could have done something differently so the students understood better.
- UGLY: Be honest when mistakes are made and take accountability for your role in fixing the problem.

4: Effective co-planning time

- TIME is a critical factor! Allow enough time to get units and lessons planned.
- General education teacher must bring a curriculum map for each subject area and special education teacher should have students with IEPs goals and accommodations or modifications in mind while planning.
- Backwards design works well by first determining what students will need to know by the end of the lesson or unit. This way the teachers can keep the end in mind but support the differentiation of the instruction, materials and learning activities based on students needs and curriculum objectives in the process.
- Decide what co-teaching models to use and how to group the students for particular subjects and classes.

5: Sticking with it and staying committed

Use reflective practices to refine your co-teaching craft:

- What worked and did not work?
- What do you need to do differently for those students that are not “getting it”?
- What revisions to instruction, materials, and learning activities are required
- Have we monitored the data for IEP goals and objectives?
- Have we monitored the data for behavior plans?



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