

Some Approaches to Co-Teaching

Marilyn Friend and Lynne Cook (1996a) have presented several approaches to co-teaching that provide ways for two teachers to work together in a classroom. Their videotape (1996b) also explains these approaches, which are briefly discussed below. They include: one teach, one support; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; station teaching; and team teaching.

1. ONE TEACH, ONE SUPPORT

With this model one teacher has the primary responsibility for planning and teaching, while the other teacher moves around the classroom helping individuals and observing particular behaviors. For example, one teacher could present the lesson while the other walks around or one teacher presents the lesson while the other distributes materials.

Some advantages of this approach are:

- Students receive individual help in a timely manner
- It's easier to keep students on task because of the proximity of the teacher.
- It saves time when distributing materials.
- As a process observer, the supporting teacher can observe behavior not seen by the teacher directing the lesson.
- The supporting teacher can walk around and still continue to observe the other teacher model good teaching practices.

Some disadvantages of this approach are:

- Through the eyes of the students, one teacher has more control than the other.
- Students often relate to one person as the teacher and the other as a teacher's aide.
- Having a teacher walk around during the lesson may be distracting to some students.
- Students begin to expect immediate one-on-one assistance.

2. PARALLEL TEACHING

In parallel teaching, the teacher and student teacher plan jointly but split the classroom in half to teach the same information at the same time. For example, both teachers could be explaining the same math problem-solving lesson in two different parts of the room. If the room had two computers, each teacher could use a computer to model the use of the Internet or a new piece of software to half of the class. Each half of the class could be involved in a literature study group during a novel study.

Some advantages of this approach are:

- Preplanning provides better teaching.
- It allows teachers to work with smaller groups.
- Each teacher has the comfort level of working separately to teach the same lesson.
- Splitting the class allows students to be separated who need to be.

Some disadvantages of this approach are:

- Both teachers need to be competent in the content so the students will learn equally.
- The pace of the lesson must be the same so they finish at the same time.
- There must be enough flexible space in the classroom to accommodate two groups.
- The noise level must be controlled.

3. ALTERNATIVE TEACHING

In alternative teaching, one teacher manages most of the class while the other teacher works with a small group inside or outside of the classroom. The small group does not have to integrate with the current lesson. For example, a teacher could take an individual student out to catch him/her up on a missed assignment. A teacher could work with an individual or a small group for assessment purposes or to teach social skills. A small group of students could work together for remedial or extended challenge work.

Some advantages of this approach are:

- Working with small groups or with individuals helps meet the personal needs of students.
- Both teachers can remain in the classroom so one teacher can informally observe the other modeling good teaching.

Some disadvantages of this approach are:

- Groups must vary with purpose and composition or the students in the group will quickly become labeled (e.g., the “smart” group).
- The students might view the teacher working with the larger group as the teacher in control.
- Noise level must be controlled if both teachers are working in the classroom.
- There must be adequate space.

4. STATION TEACHING

Both teachers divide the instructional content, and each takes responsibility for planning and teaching part of it. In station teaching, the classroom is divided into various teaching centers. The teacher and student teacher are at particular stations; the other stations are run independently by the students or by a teacher’s aide. For example, three or more science stations, each containing a different experiment, could be organized with the teacher and student teacher working with the two stations that need the most supervision. It is also possible to use an aide or parent volunteer to supervise stations.

Some advantages of this approach are:

- Each teacher has a clear teaching responsibility.
- Students have the benefit of working in small groups.
- Teachers can cover more material in a shorter period of time.
- Fewer discipline problems occur because students are engaged in active, hands-on learning.
- It is possible to separate students who need to work away from each other.
- This approach maximizes the use of volunteers or extra adults in the room.

Some disadvantages of this approach are:

- To work effectively, this approach requires a lot of preplanning.
- All materials must be prepared and organized in advance.
- The noise level will be at a maximum.
- All stations must be paced so teaching ends at the same time.
- One or more groups must work independently of the teacher.

5. TEAM TEACHING

Both teachers are responsible for planning, and they share the instruction of all students. The lessons are taught by both teachers who actively engage in conversation, not lecture, to encourage discussion by students. Both teachers are actively involved in the management of the lesson and discipline. This approach can be very effective with the classroom teacher and a student teacher or two student teachers working together.

Some advantages of this approach are:

- Each teacher has an active role.
- Students view both teachers as equals.
- Both teachers are actively involved in classroom organization and management.
- This approach encourages risk taking. Teachers may try things in pairs that they wouldn't try alone.
- "Two heads are better than one."

Some disadvantages of this approach are:

- Preplanning takes a considerable amount of time.
- Teachers' roles need to be clearly defined for shared responsibility.

Co-Teaching References

- Friend, M. & Cook, L. (1996a). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals*. White Plains: Longman.
- Friend, M. & Cook, L. (1996b). *The Power of 2: Making a difference through co-teaching* [Videotape]. (Available from the Forum on Education, Smith Research Center, Suite 103, Indiana University/On-site, Bloomington, IN 47405-1006)
- Walsh, J.J. & Snyder, D. (1993, April). *Cooperative teaching: An effective model for all students* ED 361 930. Paper presented at the annual convention of the Council for Exceptional Children, San Antonio, TX. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 361 930)