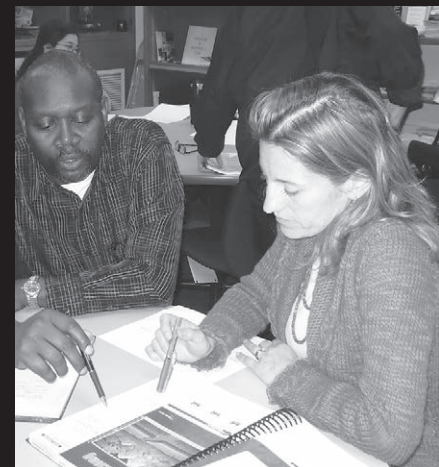


LEADING *the* **CO-TEACHING** *Dance*:

**Leadership Strategies to
Enhance Team Outcomes**



Council for
Exceptional
Children

Wendy Murawski
Lisa Dieker

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This book is dedicated to the educational leaders who truly encourage and inspire collaboration and inclusion in their schools. We admire and celebrate you.



Table of Contents

Preface:	Meet Your Dance Instructors	ix
Chapter 1:	Learning the Basic Moves.....	1
	Defining Co-Teaching	1
	Clarifying Inclusion	2
	Identifying the Menu of Options	3
	Benefits of Co-Teaching	7
	What Co-Teaching Is Not	8
	The Essential Question of Co-Teaching	9
	Five Keys to Co-Teaching	11
Chapter 2:	Setting the Stage	15
	Developing a Culture to Support Co-Teaching	15
	Improving Schoolwide Communication About Co-Teaching	18
	Determining Who Should Participate	20
	Strategic and Differentiated Professional Development	23
	First Steps With New Teams	24
	Building on Success	26

Chapter 3:	Beginning Choreography	33
	Avoiding Common Scheduling Mistakes.	34
	General Scheduling Guidelines	40
	Beginning Stages Versus Veteran Schools.	41
Chapter 4:	Advanced Choreography	49
	Small Schools Versus Large Schools	49
	Models of Elementary and Secondary Schedules	51
	Additional Scheduling Considerations	65
	Steps for Getting Started in Scheduling	68
Chapter 5:	Planning for the Dance	71
	The Need for Planning Time	71
	Creating Time for Co-Planning	73
	Strategies for Building In Time for Co-Planning	74
	Tools to Support Co-Planning	80
	Helping Teachers Use Co-Planning Time Efficiently	82
	When Co-Planning Goes Wrong	86
Chapter 6:	Creating Your Own Moves.	91
	Understanding the Various Approaches to Co-Instruction	91
	Taking Co-Instruction to a Deeper Level	103
Chapter 7:	So You Think You Can Dance	105
	Observation and Feedback for Co-Teaching	105
	Co-Teaching Solutions System Observation Tables	107
	Other Co-Teaching Observation Tools	108
	Identifying Potential Problem Areas.	110
	Providing Feedback for Improvement	120
	Addressing Conflict	124

Chapter 8:	Getting Your Dance Scores.....	127
	The importance of Data Collection	127
	Co-Assessing Strategies	132
	Co-Teaching and Grading	135
	Data Collection by Administrators.....	138
Chapter 9:	Becoming a Dance Pro.....	139
	Lessons Learned.....	139
	Institutionalizing Co-Teaching Through Goal-Setting	147
	Creating an Individualized Education Program for Co-Teaching	148
	Creating Co-Teaching Leadership Teams	149
	Mentoring Others.....	150
	Disseminating Success.....	151
Chapter 10:	Performing for Others.....	155
	Creating a Movement.....	155
	Continuing Your Research.....	156
References	165
Appendices 1 through 11	175

Chapter 1

Learning the Basic Moves

Defining Co-Teaching

Regardless of your interest in dance, we're pretty sure you know that there is a difference between the cha-cha, the bump, hip-hop, and ballet. You don't need to be able to do any of these dances (remember, this is only a metaphor), but you do need to recognize the differences that exist within each genre. If you walked into a dance studio and began to discuss the waltz, only to discover the dancers were doing a samba, you would have lost all credibility with those dancers. Why would they listen to your critique, seek your feedback, or value your input? You don't even know what they are doing.

That is why when Wendy identified the five keys to successful co-teaching in *The School Administrator* (2008), the number one key was "Know what co-teaching is and when it is needed." Let's deal with the first part of that statement first: Know

For Your Bookshelf

Go directly to the source and get a copy of this to-the-point, one-page article to share with other administrators.

Murawski, W. W. (2008, September). Five keys to co-teaching in inclusive classrooms. *The School Administrator*, 27.



Critical Connections

Help your teachers understand the components of co-teaching by connecting it to their prior knowledge. Every teacher needs to plan, instruct, and assess; thus it is clear that co-teachers need to do these things too, but together.



Need to Know

Inclusion — a philosophy that all students can have their individual needs met in the general education setting, with supports and services provided there rather than through pull-out; depending on needs of the child, this can look very different in different settings.



what co-teaching is. We are constantly astounded by how many administrators and other educational leaders have been told by those on high that they need to ensure that co-teaching is occurring in their school or district, without ever getting any personal instruction on what co-teaching actually entails. In turn, they task their own teachers to co-teach, but are unable to provide clear details on how that would look and how it would differ in the range of grades and students being supported in the school or district. We are emphatic that co-teaching is not merely putting two adults in the same classroom; likewise we are emphatic that, as with any new instructional technique, to be successful in co-teaching, teachers need instruction and professional development in order to know how to work together to help students be successful.

What is co-teaching? Cook and Friend (1995) first defined co-teaching as “two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space” (p. 1). Wendy got more specific by stating that co-teaching requires three specific things: co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing (Murawski, 2003, p. 10). If your co-teachers are not doing those three things, we believe they are not truly co-teaching. They may be collaborating. They may be teaming. They may be communicating, consulting, monitoring, or supporting, but they are not truly co-teaching. The rest of this book will provide you with strategies for helping your teachers to do those three things: co-plan, co-instruct, and co-assess.

Clarifying Inclusion

Is co-teaching necessary for all children with disabilities? No. In fact, it is just one of many options for serving students with special needs. Lisa, in her book *Demystifying Secondary Inclusion* (2006), noted that inclusion is not something you do but something you believe. It is a philosophy that drives your resources, professional development practices, and schedules. Co-teaching is considered a “service delivery option” because it is indeed an option, but it is one typically found in a school with an inclusive philosophy. We think co-teaching is an excellent option because it allows two experienced, licensed experts to work with a group of students with various needs. We are open-minded and honest enough, however, to recognize that it is not the only option, nor is it always the most appropriate option.

Inclusion is a term that is often bandied about these days. The main point of inclusion is that the necessary adaptations or assistance that any student needs is provided in the general education setting when appropriate, rather than through a pull-out or segregated model as it was done in the past (and as it continues to be done in many schools nationally). In no scenario is “dumping” a child in a general education class without meeting his or her individual needs an acceptable option. But that is exactly what has happened in many instances in the name of mainstreaming or, more recently, inclusion. In fact, students with mild to moderate disabilities typically receive at least 80% of their instruction in general education classrooms (Annual Report to Congress, 2006; U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, 2021; The American Youth Policy Forum, 2002), and those numbers just keep rising. Co-teaching is one way to help ensure students are getting their legally mandated services, are having their educational needs met, and, more importantly, are getting education of the same quality as their peers without disabilities.

Many parents and professionals support the most inclusive programs for students with special needs and fight for the right for students to be included in general education classrooms with whatever modifications or accommodations they need. Although philosophically many administrators may agree with an inclusive paradigm, logistics and pragmatics often create barriers to inclusion. We will go into those barriers and provide suggestions for addressing them later in this text.

For now, however, we think it is important to clarify that federal law does require a continuum of options for meeting the needs of students with identified disabilities. For some, their least restrictive environment (LRE) may be an institution or hospital setting, for others it may be a special school or room, while for others the general education classroom is indeed the most appropriate setting. Our focus for this book will be the general education classroom, though it is certainly possible for individuals to co-teach in different settings as well. The location in which services are provided to a student is still a decision to be made by the IEP team, driven by collaboration between the school, the parents, and the student.

Identifying the Menu of Options

Monitoring

Prior to jumping right into co-teaching, it is imperative that educational leaders know what the other options are for meeting

Need to Know

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) — a term used in the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires children with disabilities to be educated with children who do not have disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate. The LRE for a child is determined by the individualized education plan (IEP).



students' needs in an inclusive setting (see box, "At-a-Glance: Menu of Service Options From Most Supportive to Least Supportive"). For some, monitoring may be sufficient. Monitoring involves a special service professional (e.g., special education teacher, speech pathologist, school psychologist, occupational therapist) who merely keeps in contact with a child's teacher, is informed when the child is having difficulty, and tracks grades and overall progress. It is never acceptable for a special service provider who has a child on her caseload to state that she doesn't know how the child is doing because she "never sees her." If monitoring was the selected service delivery option, the service provider must be active in ensuring that she is indeed monitoring the child's progress, even if she doesn't have an opportunity to see the child in person. That same service provider is often responsible for keeping parents apprised of the situation as the child progresses. This service delivery option is considered an indirect service to the student, but it is still a service requiring time and support from the special service provider. A move from monitoring to consultation or another service delivery option might be required if a student is faltering without additional services.

Consultation

Another similar option is consultation. In this scenario, a special service provider would consult with the general education teachers regarding the student's progress and provide strategies for differentiation, suggestions for changes in instruction, and modified materials for use in the classroom. The consultant is typically not a regular participant in the classroom, but may at times model the strategies or suggestions provided. Service providers may find it helpful to observe in a class and give the teacher strategies later to help with behavior or classroom management, instructional strategies, or specific methods to emphasize a child's strengths. This option is also considered an indirect support model and might at times include minimal direct intervention with the student.

Facilitated Support

Facilitated support is when a special service provider collaborates with a general education teacher in order to co-plan, co-instruct, or co-assess (Dieker & Hines, 2012). Notice that the operative word is "or." In some cases, there may not be sufficient time or the requisite schedule to allow teachers to co-teach. However, if they share students, they need to be sure that those students are having their needs met. In the case of facilitated support, teachers would jointly decide what makes the most sense in meeting those particular needs. For example, in one situation a speech language pathologist (SLP) and a third-grade teacher may decide it makes the most sense to plan together because the third-grade teacher has multiple children receiving speech services. Instead of coming to the classroom, the SLP meets weekly with the teacher and provides him with strategies for addressing speech goals through the third-grade curriculum. In another scenario, a reading coach comes into the classroom to facilitate a center in a sixth-grade language arts class (see Gokbulut et al., 2020 for

increases in reading scores). Through this co-instruction, she is better able to provide differentiated support for students and see what real needs they have in the classroom; because she plans and runs her own center regularly, there is limited co-planning, and thus it is not actual co-teaching. In the final example, a gifted education specialist may meet with a high school science teacher to work on co-assessment. During these meetings, the gifted education specialist will help the science teacher come up with assignments and assessments that will enrich the curriculum and challenge students appropriately; together they can look at the products of students and determine if they are meeting the standards and if additional higher-order thinking questions need to be included. In each of these examples, educators are collaborating and communicating in the best interest of students. These are valid options for service delivery, though they don't provide the daily, consistent, and thorough support that co-teaching may provide.

In-Class Support

In-class support occurs when a special service provider, most often a special education teacher, is in the general education setting directly interacting with the students. The difference between in-class support and co-teaching, however, is that most of the involvement in the classroom is reactive in nature, rather than proactive. This is also different from the co-instructing aspect of facilitated support in that the special service provider does not have a regular role that has been identified proactively to meet a particular need. Special educators often find themselves going into classes where there has been no co-planning or prior discussion regarding what will be occurring that day; instead they show up and ask, "What are we doing today?" If it is a topic they know, they may be able to walk around and help with instruction; if not, they are relegated to managing behavior through circulating and using proximity control. Even the most confident teacher thrown into this situation finds herself feeling similar to a glorified aide when no co-planning or prior discussion has occurred (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002; Wischnowski, Salmon, & Eaton, 2004).

Paraprofessional Support

Paraprofessional support comes in a variety of forms. For some students, a one-on-one paraprofessional is required, often due to needs so severe that behaviorally, physically, or

For Your Bookshelf

We recommend this handy reference booklet for helping understand how to best utilize paraprofessionals: Gerlach, K. (2010). *Let's team up! A checklist for paraeducators, teachers, and principals (7th ed.)*. Washington, DC: NEA Checklist Series.



academically the child cannot function without continuous adult support. Giangreco (e.g., Giangreco & Broer, 2005) has described numerous research studies that promote the avoidance of an overreliance on a 1:1 paraprofessional to student ratio in the classroom, as it may lead to an increase in learned helplessness and a decrease in independence. Other paraprofessionals might be assigned to a classroom or a teacher to help with the larger needs of a class or caseload. Although these individuals (also known as aides, paraeducators, and assistants) can be a boon to teachers, so too can they be additional burdens if teachers don't know how to supervise, train, or utilize their roles effectively. When well supported, trained, and monitored, however, a paraprofessional can be considered another option for providing student support in the general education inclusive classroom.

Co-Teaching

We now come full circle back to co-teaching. Although co-teaching is not specifically identified by name in federal law, many schools have adopted its use in response to both the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2001) and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004). NCLB calls for highly qualified content teachers, increased standardized and high-stakes assessments, and more uniformity in instructional practices; on the contrary, IDEA calls for individualization, differentiation, and specificity in meeting the particular needs of students with disabilities. These seemingly opposite laws can be met through the collaboration of the general education teacher, who typically focuses on the content standards (and today is the one who will probably be first to engage in professional development on the new common core standards) and overall class needs, and the special service provider, who typically focuses on the individual's needs and strategies for learning content. Voilà! A clear rationale for co-teaching emerges.

As stated, co-teaching requires co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing between two or more professional educators (Murawski, 2009). A history teacher and a school psychologist can co-teach a lesson, as can a special educator and a speech-language pathologist. A teacher of the gifted may co-teach with the librarian, and the technology integration specialist may co-teach with the reading specialist and the teacher of English language learners. A pair of second grade teachers can co-teach, as can high school English, drama, and history teachers. As long as two or more professionals are co-planning what they are going to do, doing it together collaboratively with a group of students, and then assessing the results together, they are co-teaching. The focus of this book will be on the interactions between special education teachers and general education classroom teachers, but feel free to apply our strategies to your own situations, whatever they may be. The concepts will be relevant, as will the majority of the strategies.

At-A-Glance: Menu of Service Options

From Most Supportive to Least Supportive

Self-contained — Services are provided primarily by a highly qualified special education teacher in a separate classroom reserved for students with identified disabilities.

Co-teaching — In this model, support is provided to students with and without disabilities in the general education setting. This support is provided by both the special and general education teachers. The special educator is in the classroom on a regular basis. The two teachers are expected to co-plan, co-instruct, and co-assess together.

Facilitated support — In this model, the special education teacher provides support directly to the general education teacher. Support is provided to the general education teacher and the students through either co-planning, co-instructing, or co-assessing.

In-class support — In this model, the special service provider gives support directly to the students in the general education classroom. The special educator may be in the classroom for all or part of the instructional period, every day or just for a few days a week. They provide support to the students through on-the-spot accommodations or modifications. In-class support may be provided through special education teachers or trained paraprofessionals.

No support — Students with disabilities are included in the general education setting with no direct services from a special education teacher. They may still be monitored or provided indirect support through consultative services to their general education teachers.

Benefits of Co-Teaching

Co-teaching is a strong way to encourage collaboration between teachers in order to support the diverse array of students and student needs in today's schools. We realize, however, that is too pat a response for the stakeholders who are going to ask you why they need to have co-teaching as a service delivery option in schools at all. However, research has found that co-teaching can be effective in serving a variety of learners in a plethora of capacities. For example, students with specific needs, such as those with hearing impairments (Luckner, 1999; Alnasser, 2020) or learning disabilities (Rice & Zigmund, 1999; Weichel, 2001; Welch, 2000), or those who are gifted (Hughes & Murawski, 2001) or are English language learners (Bahamonde & Friend, 1999; Mahoney, 1997) can have their needs addressed. Students learning specific subject matter, such as language (Miller, Valasky, & Molloy, 1998), social studies (Dieker, 1998), or English (Murawski, 2006) classes, can be better served through co-teaching. Co-teaching has also been found to be beneficial for instituting school change and systemic change (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2004). For these and other reasons, schools are embracing co-teaching now more than ever before. As they do so, however, many schools are “rushing the goal line” (Beninghof, 2003) and trying

to do too much without a clear vision as to where they are going. For co-teaching to be implemented effectively, it is necessary that administrators know what it should be as well as what it is not.

True co-teaching occurs between two individuals who have parity, or equality. One does not assume that he or she has more power or credibility or importance than the other. Co-teaching requires respect and trust. To give up control in a classroom is difficult; to do so, a teacher has to feel comfortable that his or her partner is able to instruct students competently. Co-teaching requires a division of labor and a sharing of responsibilities and accountability. Teachers need to know that when they co-plan, their partner will indeed follow through with whatever was decided. Co-teaching requires flexibility. Plans fall through, students don't always react in the ways we expect, and instruction with two teachers is different from instruction with one teacher. All of these things require change, which can be scary for teachers. A leader's job is to alleviate that fear and help teachers embrace positive change.

What Co-Teaching Is Not

Co-teaching is not easy, nor is it what we see in many classes that are calling what they are doing co-teaching. Nationally, schools have been good about meeting four of the six criteria for co-teaching first established by Cook and Friend (1995).

- Two or more adults in the room
- Both are professionals
- Both are collaborating
- Both are delivering substantive instruction
- Students are heterogeneously grouped
- The class is in a single space.

It appears easy to put two or more professionals in the same class together with a group of diverse learners. Less easy, though, is to ensure that those professionals are equipped to collaborate in such a way that both are providing substantive instruction to the students. Instead, what we often see in schools are two teachers who co-exist in a classroom, and that's all.

We see many situations in which one teacher is unwilling to give up control or one teacher is unwilling to step up and share control. We see situations in which a special educator with 27 years of teaching experience is relegated to the role of instructional

aide, walking around and merely providing proximity control. We see situations in which teachers have avoided the need to collaborate or co-plan by immediately dividing students into “your” students and “my” students (or your group and my group) despite the fact that they are physically in the same room, thus essentially doing the pull-out model in a one-room situation. Last, we also see teachers who truly believe they are co-teaching, but all they are really doing is conducting the same whole-group instruction one teacher would, except that they are “swapping the chalk” (or, more likely, the dry erase marker or the interactive whiteboard marker). They take turns getting face time with students, but there is no differentiation, varied teaching strategies, regrouping, or other benefits to students. For a quick reference to these guidelines, see the box on page 10, “At-a-Glance: Dos and Don’ts of Co-Teaching.”

The Essential Question of Co-Teaching

We are finally ready to address the second part of the first key to co-teaching: Know when co-teaching is needed. You can do that by answering the essential question of co-teaching (we have provided you with one here, but feel free to create your own). Essential questions in teaching (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) are those that relate to the big idea of the lesson. They are formed in such a way that students should be able to leave the lesson and answer the question to demonstrate a comprehension of those big ideas. The question should be formed in such a way that there is no ceiling to the response; it is not a true/false or lower level question. Students who are high-achieving or gifted should be able to answer the question in depth and with detail, and those students with cognitive issues should still be able to answer with the main message of the lesson.

Administrators and other educational leaders need to be aware of the essential question of co-teaching. You need to be able to ask your teachers a question that will demonstrate whether or not those teachers are effective in their collaborative interactions. You need to be able to observe co-teachers in action and ask this question of yourself with a degree of satisfaction. If there is no degree of satisfaction in the response (by administrators or the teachers themselves), the way in which co-teaching is being implemented must be questioned.

The essential question for co-teaching that we pose is:

**How is what co-teachers are doing together
substantively different and better for kids
than what one teacher would do alone?**

(Murawski & Spencer, 2011, p. 96).

At -A-Glance: Do's and Don'ts of Co-Teaching	
<i>Co-Teaching is . . .</i>	<i>Co-Teaching is not . . .</i>
Two or more co-equal (preferably credentialed) faculty working together.	A teacher and an assistant, teacher's aide, or paraprofessional.
Conducted in the same classroom at the same time.	When a few students are pulled out of the classroom on a regular basis to work with the special educator. It is also not job-sharing, where teachers teach different days.
Conducted with heterogeneous groups.	Pulling a group of students with disabilities to the back of the general education class.
When both teachers plan for instruction together. The general education teacher (GET) is the content specialist while the special education teacher (SET) is the expert on individualizing and delivery to various learning modalities.	When the general education teacher (GET) plans all lessons and the special education teacher (SET) walks in to the room and says, "What are we doing today and what would you like me to do?"
When both teachers provide substantive instruction together — having planned together, the SET can grade homework, teach content, facilitate activities, etc.	When the special education teacher walks around the room all period as the general education teaches the content. Also, not when the SET sits in the class and takes notes.
When both teachers assess and evaluate student progress. IEP goals are kept in mind, as are the curricular goals and standards for that grade level.	When the GET grades "his" kids and the SET grades "her" kids — or when the GET grades all students and the SET surreptitiously changes the grades and calls it "modifying after the fact."
When teachers maximize the benefits of having two teachers in the room by having both teachers actively engaged with students. Examples of different co-teaching models include team-teaching, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and One Teach-One Support (see Friend and Cook 2000).	When teachers take turns being "in charge" of the class so that the other teacher can get caught up in grading, photocopying, making phone calls, creating IEPs, etc. — or when students remain in the large group setting in lecture-format as teachers rotate who gets to "talk at them."
When teachers reflect on the progress and process, offering one another feedback on teaching styles, content, activities, and other items pertinent to improving the teaching situation.	When teachers get frustrated with one another and tell the rest of the faculty in the teachers' lounge or when one teacher simply tells the other teacher what to do and how to do it.

Note. Adapted from *Demystifying Co-Teaching*, by W. W. Murawski, 2002, CARS + Newsletter, 22(3), p. 19. Copyright 2002 by CARS+. Adapted with permission.

If the lesson could have been presented equally well by one teacher, why are the resources of two teachers being wasted? If the outcomes of the lesson (either academic, behavioral, or social) are not improved, what was the point of having the lesson co-taught? What did it accomplish, other than perhaps being more fun for the teachers themselves? As an instructional leader in the school, consider posting this essential question somewhere you can refer to it frequently when observing co-teachers or talking to them about their interactions in the classroom. This question helps you answer the second part of the first key to co-teaching related to determining when co-teaching is needed. If a general education teacher is already using strategies that a special educator might suggest, and thus adding a second teacher in the classroom doesn't substantively improve the situation for students, is co-teaching in that class really needed? Instead, that might be a good class for students with disabilities who can be more independent, thus freeing the special educator to go and collaborate or co-teach with a different general educator.

Five Keys to Co-Teaching

We have already stated the first key for administrators to consider when supporting co-teaching (i.e., Know what co-teaching is and when it is needed.). The box on page 12, "At-a-Glance: Five Keys to Leading Co-Teaching" shares that key as well as the remaining four, with a brief description of each. Feel free to print a handy copy for easy reference.

The second key is to "Recognize that co-teaching is a marriage and you are the matchmaker." In Chapter 2, we share strategies for identifying potential partners for co-teaching. We urge you to consider a variety of ways to get teacher input in creating partnerships. We have worked with many administrators who have said they selected co-teaching teams based on who they thought would work well together. Although it is true that strong educational leaders really know their staff, it is equally true that teachers do not always share everything with their administrators. You may not know the personal gripes, outside friendships, or common interests that would cement a strong co-teaching partnership (or conversely, tear it apart). A variety of research and literature has emphasized the importance of teacher voice in volunteering for co-teaching and/or for identifying their co-teaching partner (Kohler-Evans, 2006; Murawski, Boyer, Atwill, & Melchiorre, 2009; Sileo & van Garderen, 2010). We recognize that as the administrative leader you are often the matchmaker, and that comes with a lot of responsibility as well as with a caveat: We strongly recommend you get frequent feedback from the teachers themselves related to their prospective dance partners. (Please allow us our mixed metaphors.)

The third key is to "Make scheduling a priority." If you are a school leader, you already know the importance of scheduling. You likely also know the headaches of scheduling. Although we respect that every school has its own culture and that we

At-A-Glance: 5 Keys to Leading Co-Teaching	
Keys to Leading Co-Teaching	Brief Description
#1. Know what co-teaching is and when it is needed.	Co-teaching involves co-planning, co-instructing and co-assessing. If co-teachers are not doing all three, they are not co-teaching. To determine if co-teaching is needed, the essential question must be answered: How is what these two teachers are doing together substantively different and better for kids than what one of them would do alone?
#2. Recognize that co-teaching is a marriage and you are the matchmaker.	As a professional marriage, administrators need to provide opportunities for co-teachers to select their partners. "Voluntariness" and choice are helpful for positive outcomes. Recognize that educational leaders often end up playing the role of "marriage counselor" also.
#3. Make scheduling a priority.	Put students with special needs in the master schedule first, prior to the computer sorting students into classes. Avoid having more than 30% of any general education class be students with special needs, otherwise the class begins to resemble a self-contained class.
#4. Planning is critical.	Without strong co-planning, there will be no successful co-teaching. Teachers need time to plan together and administrators and other instructional leaders need to use a variety of options to ensure they can do so.
#5. Monitor success, give feedback and ensure evidence-based practice.	Work with co-teachers to provide supportive feedback for co-teaching improvement. Identify mentors, peer observers, & co-teaching coordinators. Collect data on student outcomes & teacher perspectives. Identify areas of strength & build on them; identify barriers and work around them.

Note. Adapted from Murawski, W. W. (2008, September). Five keys to co-teaching in inclusive classrooms. *The School Administrator*, 27.

cannot provide a lock-step approach to scheduling, we do have tips for helping to make this more manageable. In Chapter 3, we provide general tips for scheduling, and in Chapter 4 we offer more suggestions for scheduling co-teaching in a variety of schools (e.g., elementary and secondary schools, small and large schools, and schools in which co-teaching is a new concept versus those that have engaged in co-teaching for a while).

The fourth key states that “Planning is critical.” We know this seems to be a no-brainer, yet we have experienced thousands of teachers who come to us lamenting that although they are co-teaching, they never have time to plan with their partner. We would argue that if they never plan together, they are not really co-teaching. Instead, one of the teachers is perhaps providing some in-class support while the other teacher is running his or her own show. Even if those teachers do share some of the instruction, it typically lacks the uniqueness of what would have existed if the teachers had truly planned together. Remember to come back to the essential question of co-teaching: How is what they are doing together substantively different and better for students than what one of them would be doing alone? If teachers haven’t co-planned, it is not likely that the special educator has had much input in the lesson itself. The “special” aspect of special education will be lost; instead, classes will resemble a typical general education classroom with an additional adult support in the room. We don’t know many school districts that can afford that, either financially or logistically. In Chapter 5, we address a variety of strategies for helping to lead effective co-planning between educators, including the incorporation of technology and differentiation into those plans. Chapter 6 provides the language needed to know which instructional approaches co-teachers are using in the classroom.

Finally, the fifth key to co-teaching states that administrators need to “monitor success, give feedback, and ensure evidence-based practice.” Again, this statement may seem obvious, but it reflects a real need in the field. Hundreds of administrators have worked with us and admitted that, although they are being told to include co-teaching as a service delivery option in their schools, they don’t know what it really is; that they are in the position to support co-teaching teams but just don’t know how to do that; and that they are willing to go in to observe co-teachers in action, but don’t know what they are looking for or what would constitute success. School-based administrators are not the only ones creating the need for monitoring and data collection; the field of special education in general has called for more concrete research on co-teaching impact, especially as it relates to student outcomes (Damore & Murray, 2009; Hang & Rabren, 2009; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). Co-teachers report frustration with administrators who come in to observe and question the fact that the special educator is leading content instruction, or administrators who lack the right terminology to acknowledge co-teachers’ use of parallel teaching at the beginning of the period and alternative teaching at the end. These are just a few examples of why it is so important that educational leaders are not only aware of what co-teaching is, but also are well-versed enough in the topic

to provide their teachers with instructional strategies and suggestions to enhance and improve the team outcomes with one another, and especially with the students. Chapter 7 relates to the observation and feedback strategies helpful when observing and/or evaluating co-teachers in action. Chapter 8 provides additional information on ways for co-teachers to collect data on student outcomes, and for instructional leaders to collect data on students, teachers, and even school districts.

Our final chapters (9 and 10) relate to institutionalizing co-teaching by building on successes, creating mentor teams, setting goals for improvement, collaborating with other entities, and disseminating findings. But we are getting ahead of ourselves here. Now that we know what co-teaching is (the first key), we may need to take a step back in order to ensure we have the collaborative culture necessary to make co-teaching a viable option for teachers and students. As part of your role in leading the dance, you can ensure that you are prepared to address the five keys by building a strong foundation (i.e., a “stage”) for your teachers to become strong co-teaching dance teams. Chapter 2 addresses creating collaborative cultures to enable schools to be ready to embrace co-teaching as a viable option for meeting students’ needs.

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