# Models of Co-Teaching

Picture this: It’s the first day of your internship. You’re excited to begin working with students, and you’re also slightly nervous. The nerves come from not really knowing what to do once you get to the classroom. Obviously, you need to get acquainted with the classroom culture, rules, and procedures first. And, of course, you need to learn names. But what comes after the first few days of getting to know the class? Are you just on your own?

Thankfully, the answer to that question is no. You’re not alone. Your mentor teacher will continue to support you throughout your time in the classroom. Ideally, they will use co-teaching to help integrate you into the classroom gradually.

According to the Council for Exceptional Children, “Co-teaching is a collaborative approach to instruction in which two teachers…work together to plan and then implement instruction.” Often, co-teaching is utilized in classes with high populations of students with IEPs or high populations of English Language Learners. In these instances, a general education teacher partners with a special education or ELL teacher to provide instruction to both identified students and non-identified students simultaneously. This isn’t the only time co-teaching is used, however. Co-teaching can be beneficial for pre-service teachers as well as it provides interns in field experiences with a gradual release of responsibility as they begin teaching.

## **Co-Teaching Models**

There are six co-teaching models, and each of them requires the participation and cooperation of both teachers as well as pre-teaching conversations and as much shared planning as possible. The image below shows these co-teaching models.

### One Teach, One Observe

In this co-teaching model, one teacher presents a lesson to the class while the other teacher observes the lesson or the class. You can find an example of this co-teaching model . While this model may seem like it requires little to no effort on the part of the observing teacher, this isn’t the case. The observing teacher and the presenting teacher should communicate before the lesson so that the observing teacher knows what to look for in the lesson, which may include the following:

●      Classroom management strategies

●      Instructional strategies

●      Specific student behaviors

Through purposeful observation, the observing teacher can learn new skills and strategies or collect student data.

The One Teach, One Observe model is an excellent way for new teachers to integrate themselves into the classroom as it allows them to observe classroom practices as they prepare to become more involved later in their field experience.

### One Teach, One Assist

In the One Teach, One Assist co-teaching model, one teacher presents a lesson to the class while the other assists students during the lesson. is an example of this co-teaching model in practice.

Similar to the One Teach, One Observe model, the One Teach, One Assist model requires work on the part of both teachers. While the presenting teacher teaches the lesson, the other teacher should move around the classroom, assisting students as needed and using proximity to control the behavior of students who may be inattentive or disruptive.

The One Teach, One Assist co-teaching model allows new teachers to begin to interact with students once they have acclimated to the classroom, learned the mentor teacher’s policies and procedures, and established a level of positive rapport with students. Through assisting students during a lesson, interns gradually begin to build teaching skills and status as a teacher in the eyes of the students.

### Station Teaching

Unlike the previous two co-teaching models, Station Teaching requires both teachers to present to students. When utilizing Station Teaching, teachers communicate before a lesson to determine how to divide a day’s learning into segments or to divide students into groups to provide them with learning experiences tailored to their needs. Once the teachers have made these decisions, they will both work to prepare materials for short activities for groups of students to engage in, either with or without teacher guidance.

At the beginning of a Station Teaching class period, the teachers will briefly introduce each learning activity to the students, providing written instructions for stations with no direct teacher instruction. Once students are familiar with the activities and how they will rotate from station to station, including the time they will have to complete each activity, the stations begin. Both teachers present to groups of students while other groups of students work on station activities together. When the predetermined amount of time has passed, students move to the next station in their rotation, and the class continues. You can find an example of Station Teaching and more information in the image below.

Station teaching allows interns and new teachers to gain experience in instructing students while keeping their audience small, thus making it less intimidating for them to begin presenting to students.

### Alternative Teaching

In Alternative Teaching, one teacher instructs most of the class while the other teacher instructs a small group of students. This co-teaching model is often utilized when there is a small group of students who either need more intensive instruction to meet learning objectives or a small group of students who have already mastered learning objectives. Because these students are performing differently than their peers, different instruction is warranted.

To prepare for Alternative Teaching, teachers must discuss the progress of each student toward class learning objectives, identify those students who need alternative instruction, and prepare a lesson for each group of students. The teacher providing the alternative instruction to a small group of students may either remain in the classroom or move to a separate location to eliminate the distraction of having two teachers talking at once. is an example of alternative teaching in a middle school classroom.

Alternative teaching can allow new teachers or interns to gain experience in differentiating instruction to meet student needs, a skill all teachers need to implement to be successful.

### Parallel Teaching

Parallel Teaching is a co-teaching model in which each teacher teaches half the class. The class may be split according to learning profile, behavior needs, or learning needs. It can even be split randomly!

To utilize Parallel Teaching, teachers must determine the learning goal for the class period. All students will have the same learning goal regardless of which teacher will deliver the lesson to them. Once the learning goal is established, the teachers must determine how to best divide students to meet their learning needs. After they have done this, all that’s left to do is to divide the class and teach the lessons to the students. Many times, both teachers present the Parallel Teaching lesson to both halves of the class in the same room. However, teachers may separate the groups of students if desired. is an example of Parallel Teaching in which both teachers are teaching in the same classroom.

Parallel Teaching is another step for the teaching intern or new teacher to take toward teaching the entire class. Only teaching one half of the class allows the intern to build their confidence in teaching without the intimidation factor of teaching an entire class at once.

### Team Teaching

In Team Teaching, the teachers take turns teaching the whole class during one lesson. This method of co-teaching requires the most collaboration between teaching partners, as both partners must be familiar with the lesson plan so that they may teach their part of the lesson effectively. Ideally, the teachers will work together to make a lesson plan that fits each teacher’s teaching style. ’s what Team Teaching looks like in practice.

Team Teaching allows interns to participate equally to their mentor teacher in teaching a lesson. This gives them further teaching experience as well elevating them to equal status with their mentor teacher while still allowing them the support of teaching alongside their mentor.

## The Co-Teaching Continuum

Every co-teaching model has its place in the classroom. While some models require more involvement from both teachers than others, if used purposefully, co-teaching models can help interns to build skills and begin teaching gradually as they become more confident in their teaching skills and status in the classroom. An intern who begins in the One Teach, One Observe model will observe classroom strategies, procedures, and begin to build an understanding of student needs. Following One Teach, One Observe with One Teach, One Assist will allow interns to further understand student needs while allowing them to begin helping students one-on-one in a low-stakes atmosphere. Building up to Station Teaching, Parallel Teaching, and Alternative Teaching gives interns experience in instructing groups of students before they present to the entire class, ideally using the Team Teaching model before instructing the class on their own. In all, co-teaching gives pre-service teachers the scaffolding and support they need to become highly effective teachers.

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