

EFFECTIVELY USING THE CO-TEACHING MODEL IN THE PDS

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Introduction

All of us have had an experience as a student working under the guidance of a mentor or cooperating teacher in our teacher preparation programs. Many of us have had interns or student teachers in our classrooms. These experiences helped us to create a “script” in our heads of what the field experience should look like and the roles and responsibilities of both the intern and mentor teacher. Usually, it involved the teacher or intern teaching and the other observing or doing other tasks. The teacher would turn over her classroom to the intern for a few days or weeks. This is the familiar model for field experiences. But research has shown that this may not be the best model for preparing university students to be effective teachers, for K-12 student learning, or even for professional growth for experienced teachers. Yet, it is hard to step away from this “script” that is so engrained in all of us. The ideal field experience allows the mentor and intern to remain fully engaged throughout the placement maximizing learning for all.

It is the hopes of this partnership that all intern/teacher partners will let go of this “script” that is so familiar, and utilize the co-teaching model during field experiences. Co-teaching increases learning of student interns, provides opportunities for mentor teachers to study their own practice and improves K-12 student learning. Both the intern and mentor teacher are engaged in instruction and assessment throughout the process, better enriching understanding by the intern while enhancing K-12 student learning. In the hope of helping you to build a “new script” during field experiences, this handbook provides information on the co-teaching model and how you can implement it during field experiences.

Background

Traditionally the model for a teacher working with a student intern has followed a set of prescribed steps starting with the teacher teaching and modeling and the intern observing, the teacher leading the planning and the intern following, the intern gradually assuming planning and teaching responsibilities while the teacher begins to gradually turn over control of the classroom, and finally, the intern teaching and the teacher observing. A significant problem with this model is that the teaching skills of both the teacher and student intern are not being effectively utilized during this experience. In other words, you have two teachers in the classroom, but only one is teaching at any given moment in time. Additionally, the student intern doesn’t truly see the process used by experienced teachers to plan, teach, assess, and reflect. Co-teaching helps to solve these two problems.

Co-teaching is when two or more teachers, beginning or experienced, collaborate to teach a group of students and reflect on teaching and learning (Gallo-Fox, Scantlebury, Wassell, Juck, & Gleason, 2005; Tobin, 2005). It focuses on the K-12 student learning, supports the learning of the student intern in regards to planning, teaching, and reflecting, and provides professional development for practicing teachers. For student interns and experienced teachers,

co-teaching emphasizes responsibility, reflection, respect, and collaborative planning and teaching (Gallo-Fox et al. 2005, p. 2-3).

As described by Tobin (2005), co-teaching is when the teacher and student intern plan and implement a lesson together with either the teacher or student intern taking the lead teacher role and the other acting as the support teacher. While the lead teacher is teaching, the support teacher assists students by actively participating in the lessons, looking for signs of confusion in students, or working with individual students needing assistance. The support teacher can interject comments seeking clarification of a point made, provide an example to make instruction clearer, engage in a discussion with the lead teacher and class, or ask a question. Following the teaching, the student intern and teacher spend time reflecting on the teaching of both, identifying strengths and needs, and looking for ways to improve student learning.

Tobin (2005) recommends *co-generative dialogs* as a way to increase the learning during the co-teaching experience. Co-generative dialogs involve the student intern and teacher engaging in conversations about the shared planning and teaching experience. These conversations allow deeper analysis of the teaching that took place, an increased awareness of the student intern's and teacher's practice, and the identification of changes that need to be made to improve student learning and the learning environment (Tobin, p. 5). These co-generative dialogs not only allow the intern to learn about teaching by reflecting on the planning and instruction that has occurred, but also provides the teacher with an opportunity to improve practice through this collaborative reflective experience.

This handbook shares information on the co-teaching model, looks at different co-teaching strategies, and hopefully prepares you to effectively incorporate co-teaching into PDS field experiences.

What Is Co-Teaching?

- Co-teaching is when two or more teachers collaborate during planning, teaching, and assessment followed by a reflective discussion.
- Co-teaching allows teachers, novice and experienced, to critically analyze teaching and learning.
- Co-teaching is used as professional development for both student interns and mentor teachers.
- Co-teaching allows the mentor teacher and the student intern to remain engaged in the classroom as either a lead or support teacher.
- Co-teaching is **NOT** the mentor teacher and intern taking turns teaching with one teaching and one sitting out.

Why Do We Want to Use the Co-Teaching Model During Field Experiences? What are the Benefits of Using the Co-Teaching Model?

- Co-teaching allows for active engagement by both the mentor teacher and student intern; the power of two.
- Co-teaching provides guided practice for student interns.
- The interns are learning by doing.
- It provides a lower student/teacher ratio.
- It provides more opportunities to differentiate instruction.

- It tends to decrease classroom management issues. Four eyes and hands are better than two.
- The interjections by the mentor teacher when the intern is the lead teacher are seen as constructive rather than criticism.
- It provides professional development for the mentor teacher through reflective practice.
- It energizes and rejuvenates teachers.
- It tends to allow for more ambitious and/or creative lessons.
- It provides more teaching opportunities for the interns – more experience. They are involved in all learning activities.
- The students see the interns as teachers. They do not differentiate the roles.
- The interns gain a better understanding of the planning process.
- The interns feel and exhibit greater competence and confidence in their teaching.
- It provides the interns with experience in working effectively and collaboratively with others.
- Research shows that it improves K-12 student learning.

What are the Elements of the Co-Teaching Model?

- ***Co-planning*** – The mentor teacher and the student intern plan together. During the planning session the mentor teacher thinks out loud, explaining why she is making the instructional choices. She models good planning. The student intern can bring ideas to the discussion. As the student intern takes on more responsibility, she will take the lead in some of the planning discussions. During this time, roles throughout the lessons are determined.
- ***Co-teaching*** – The mentor teacher and the student intern use different co-teaching strategies during most lessons. One takes on the role of lead teacher and the other the support teacher. The important idea is that both teachers are involved with the students.
- ***Co-generative dialog*** (reflection) – The mentor teacher and the intern reflect on lessons, student learning and assessment during and after lessons. These conversations are used to revise upcoming instruction and assessments.

What Does Co-Teaching Look Like During Senior Internships?

- ***In the beginning of the field experience*** – The mentor teacher takes on the role of the lead teacher and is modeling planning, instruction, and reflection. The intern takes on the supporting role and shares during planning, instruction, and reflection. The intern is responsible for knowing and understanding lesson content.
- ***In the middle of the field experience*** – The mentor teacher and the intern share in taking the lead role in planning, teaching, and reflecting. The mentor teacher takes on some lead roles and some support roles. The intern takes on some lead roles and some support roles. Both are actively involved in planning, instruction, and assessment.
- ***The end of the field experience*** – The mentor teacher and the intern are both still in the classroom working with students. The intern takes on more lead roles in planning, instruction and reflection, while the mentor teacher takes on more support roles. Planning, teaching, and reflecting continue to be collaborative.
- ***Solo teaching in a co-teaching placement*** – The student intern does not have a traditional solo time where she is doing all of the planning and teaching independent of

the mentor teacher. During what was traditionally the solo time, now becomes a time where the intern takes the lead more in planning and teaching. Do note that throughout the placement, it is fine for the intern or the mentor teacher to have some solo time. This is a great time for the mentor teacher to do some formal assessment. However, in a co-teaching classroom, the mentor teacher does not have to leave the classroom or not participate in instruction.

What Does Co-Teaching Look Like During Junior Internships?

- The mentor teacher assumes the role of lead teacher during most of the field experience. Since the junior intern is not in the classroom every day, she cannot participate in all planning and teaching activities. However, the mentor teacher can co-plan with the intern on days that the intern is present. This allows the interns to get a better understanding of the planning process.
- The junior intern can take on the role of support teacher during all of the lessons on field placement days. The mentor teacher should explain the roles and responsibilities for the interns for all lessons throughout the day. The teacher should reflect with the intern on instruction and student learning.
- The mentor teacher and the intern should co-plan all lessons that the intern is responsible for teaching. The intern should come to these discussions with lesson ideas and role responsibilities for the mentor teacher. The mentor teacher should take on a support role during the lesson. The intern should lead the reflection on these lessons.

What is the Role of the Lead Teacher?

- Lead planning
- Lead instruction/assessment
- Lead reflection
- Include the support teacher in planning, instruction, and reflection

What is the Role of the Support Teacher?

- Supports the instruction of the lead teacher
- Supports student learning
- Interjects comments, clarifications, examples, questions
- Actively participates in discussions
- Looks at the lead teacher for signals, voice inflection, eye contact, body movements, or predetermined points in the lesson to interject ideas
- Attending to what is being said
- Scanning the students for signs of confusion or needs for assistance
- Monitoring the participation of the students
- Tutoring one or more students who needs assistance

Important Note – Remember that roles are not necessarily permanent during any given lesson. The mentor and intern can change roles throughout the lesson with each taking turns being the lead and the support teacher. This is called synchronized teaching.

What are the Four Approaches to Co-Teaching?

- Supportive teaching – One teacher is the lead teacher while the other provides support for instruction and to the students. Strategies used in this model include graze and tag, proximity, conferencing, strategic pull-out, one-on-one.
- Complementary teaching – One co-teacher enhances the instruction of the other. Strategies used in this model include record and edit, demonstrations, simulations, activity/lab set-up and break down, technology assistance, and modeling.
- Parallel teaching – Co-teachers work with different groups of students in different sections of the room. Strategies used in this model include tiered instruction, centers, stations, cooperative learning, and literature circles.
- Team teaching – Co-teachers are actively engaged together in instruction and management of the class. Strategies used in this model include role playing, modeling, cooperative learning, think alouds and project-based instruction.

Co-Teaching Strategies¹

Graze & Tag – The lead teacher role shifts between co-teachers during instruction. While one co-teacher leads instruction the other grazes, assisting students and maintaining order.

Think-Alouds – Co-teachers contribute alternative solutions and approaches during instruction offering students different ways to solve problems by “thinking out loud”.

Demonstrative Modeling – While one co-teacher provides instruction in the lead voice, the second co-teacher demonstrates skills and procedures for the benefit of learners.

Cognitive Apprenticeship Modeling – One co-teacher assumes the role of a student and models appropriate learner behavior: sitting among learners, demonstrating on-task attentiveness, asking questions, making suggestions, and simulating information acquisition while the “lead teacher” conducts the class.

Record & Edit – The lead teacher elicits responses from students during a brainstorming session while the co-teacher paraphrases and records responses on an overhead, a whiteboard, chalkboard, or poster – allowing the lead teacher to focus on the lesson’s instructional tempo and student engagement.

Cooperative Learning – During a cooperative learning activity, co-teachers are involved in the planning, preparation, and monitoring aspects increasing the effectiveness and manageability of the activity.

Conferencing – Co-teaching affords one co-teacher opportunities for small group conferencing to support learners while the other co-teacher provides large group instruction. Additionally, both co-teachers can engage in simultaneous conferences with individual students such as during Writers’ Workshop.

¹ Reprinted with permission. Salisbury University Professional Development School Program (2007). *Co-teaching: Mentoring in a collaborative school setting*. Salisbury University.

Strategic Pull Out – As the lead teacher provides instruction the co-teacher may use an adjacent room, lab, or media center for small group instruction or to remove one or more learners for individual attention or behavior correction.

One-on-One – While the lead teacher provides whole group instruction, the co-teacher supports student learning through individually administered assessments, tutoring, book conferences, make-up work or enrichment.

Parallel Teaching – Co-teachers conduct similar lessons simultaneously with smaller groups. Sometimes instruction may take place in the same classroom; at other times, a nearby teaching space may be utilized to minimize distractions.

Literature Circles – Teachers assign roles to students in groups who then conduct book study discussions monitored by co-teachers.

Stations – Co-teachers assemble, structure, monitor, and assess student learning at multiple learning stations.

Learning Centers – Similar to stations but not requiring the rotation of all learners, centers are designed, equipped, and monitored by co-teachers to facilitate individual and small group learning.

Staged Arguments – Student attention is never higher than when learners believe that co-teachers are embroiled in a verbal disagreement. Careful scripting of “arguments” can be an effective way of presenting the pros and cons of an issue.

Games/Simulations – Co-teachers organize, monitor, and manage games and simulations, especially activities that might prove too complex and unwieldy for one teacher alone.

Tiered Instruction – Used in conjunction with other strategies, co-teachers can meet the needs of different levels of students by appropriately combining and redistributing classes.

Experiments – As with stations, centers, games, and simulations, the active involvement of co-teachers facilitates the assembly, management, assessment and clean-up associated with lab and classroom experiments.

Role Play – Co-teachers prepare in advance to assume roles that will enrich instruction such as storytelling, historical characterizations, debates, and problem-solving scenarios. Alternatively, co-teachers may assign roles to learners for discussions, simulations, or demonstrations that are managed more easily by co-teaching colleagues.

Open Door Policy – Internship mentors sometimes find themselves hosting a senior and junior intern simultaneously. The presence and active involvement of three collaborators improves the student-teacher ratio during instruction and serves to enhance the co-teaching skill set of the junior intern.

Proximity/Grazing – The mere physical presence of a co-teacher near a learner often has a positive effect on engagement and compliance with behavior expectations. While one co-teacher is providing the lead voice in instruction, the other can “graze” the room to use proximity with potential management challenges and to offer quiet assistance and support as needed.

Eavesdropping – When co-teachers engage in “teacher talk” that learners are subtly permitted to overhear. This strategy can enhance student attention and motivation. Learners are all ears when they listen in on teachers’ staged whispered conversations such as “Do you think we should put this on the exam next week?”

What are some Questions to Guide the Co-Generative Dialog (reflective conversation)?

- What good things happened today?
- What are the strengths of today’s teaching
- What didn’t work?
- What problems did we encounter?
- What do we need to consider as we plan for tomorrow’s instruction?
- What can we do to meet our students’ needs in tomorrow’s lessons?
- What did we learn about our teaching today?
- What did we learn about our students today?

What are the Challenges of Co-Teaching?

- Time – Co-planning and reflecting take time.
- Assessment of interns – It can be challenging to effectively assess an intern or use the assessment tools when the mentor teacher is actively engaged in teaching.
- Habit of mind – It can be hard to “change the script” of the field experience. Most mentor teachers come to the table with experience in traditional roles of cooperating teacher and student teacher.

What is the Key to Success with Co-Teaching?

- The key to success with co-teaching is the creation and maintenance of successful communication between co-teachers and between teachers and the students. Good communication will improve intern learning and student learning.

Give it a Try!

- You are strongly encouraged to use co-teaching during all PDS field experiences. This can be a valuable learning experience for interns, students, and mentor teachers.
- If you would like help implementing this during this placement, contact Laurie Palmer (lpalmer@udel.edu) and she will be happy to join the conversation.

Self-Assessment: Are We Really Co-Teachers?

Directions: Check “Yes” or “No” for each of the following statement to determine your co-teaching score

Yes	No	In our co-teaching partnership...
		1. We decide which co-teaching approach we are going to use in a lesson based on the benefits to the students, the intern, and the mentor teacher
		2. We share ideas, information, and materials.
		3. We identify the resources and talents of the intern/mentor teacher.
		4. At times, we teach different groups of students at the same time
		5. We are aware of what our partners is doing even when we are not directly in one another’s presence.
		6. We share responsibility for deciding what to teach.
		7. We agree on the curriculum standards that will be addressed in a lesson
		8. We share responsibility for how to teach.
		9. We share responsibility for deciding who teaches which part of a lesson.
		10. We are flexible and make changes as needed during a lesson.
		11. We identify student strengths and needs.
		12. We share responsibility for differentiating instruction.
		13. We include other people when their expertise or experience is needed.
		14. We share responsibility for how student learning is assessed.
		15. We can show that students are learning when we co-teach.
		16. We agree on discipline procedures and carry them out jointly and consistently.
		17. We give feedback to one another on what goes on in the classroom.
		18. We make improvement in our lessons based on what happens in the classroom.
		19. We communicate our concerns freely.
		20. We have a process for resolving our disagreements and use it when faced with problems and conflicts.
		21. We celebrate the process of co-teaching and the outcomes and successes.
		22. We have fun with the student and with each other when we co-teach.
		23. We have regularly scheduled times to meet and discuss our work.
		24. We use our meeting time productively.
		25. We can effectively co-teach even when we do not have time to plan.
		26. We explain the benefits of co-teaching to the students and their families.
		27. We model collaboration and teamwork for our students.
		28. We are both viewed by our student as their teacher.
		29. We include students in the collaboration/co-teaching role.
		30. We depend on one another to follow through on tasks and responsibilities.
		31. We seek and enjoy addition training to make our co-teaching better.
		32. We are mentors to others who want to co-teach.
		33. We can use a variety of co-teaching approaches (supportive, complementary, parallel, and team teaching)
		34. We communicate our need for logistical support and resources to our administrators.
		TOTAL

Adapted and modifies from: *A guide to Co-Teaching: Practical Tips for Facilitating Student Learning*, by Richard A. Villa, Jacqueline S. Thousand, and Ann I. Nevin. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2004.

Lesson Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities	Mentor Teacher	Student Intern
What are my specific roles and responsibilities before the lesson?		
What are my specific roles and responsibilities during the lesson?		
What are my specific roles and responsibilities after the lesson?		

This is helpful for the interns to bring to planning meetings and to include with their lesson plan when they are the lead teacher. It helps to facilitate the discussion of roles throughout the lesson.

References

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