

Co-teaching in a Virtual World:

Ideas for Teachers

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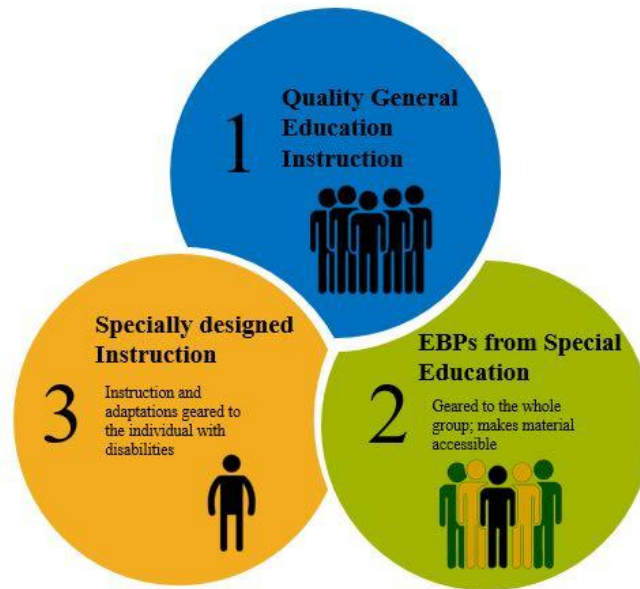
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Co-teaching in a Virtual World

Co-teaching is a widely-used service delivery model for students with disabilities who access the general curriculum. According to Friend and Cook (2017), “co-teaching occurs when two or more professionals with distinctly different areas of expertise jointly deliver core or supplemental instruction to a diverse, blended group of students in a *single physical space*” (emphasis added, p. 160). Given the recent school closures and conversion to online learning due to COVID-19, most instruction is occurring in a *digital* space. What does that mean for co-teaching?

Instructional Framework for Co-teaching

In a recent article, Weiss and Rodgers (2020) presented a framework for co-teaching that focuses on the instruction delivered and the role of the special educator. It provides an overall schema for planning and instruction in co-teaching and direction for the use of the approaches to co-teaching described by Friend and Cook (2017). The foundation of the model is that there are three essential components to instruction in co-teaching: (1) quality general education instruction, (2) evidence-based practices (EBPs) to make the general curriculum accessible to students with disabilities, and (3) specially designed instruction (SDI). The model is presented in Figure 1 and described briefly below.

Figure 1*Three Element Co-teaching Model****Element 1: Quality General Education Instruction***

For a classroom to be effectively co-taught, general education teachers must manage it in a way that maximizes engaged learning time. There must also be evidence of close alignment between the intended general curriculum (i.e., academic standards) and the planned and enacted curricula. General education teachers must be using the EBPs of their discipline because, if they are not, it will be very difficult to add components of instruction to address students with unique educational needs. Quality co-teaching is built on the foundation of quality general education instruction.

Element 2: Making the General Curriculum Accessible

As a special educator enters the co-teaching team, their purpose is to make the general education curriculum accessible to students with disabilities either through instructional, material or physical changes. Special educators incorporate specific EBPs from special education into

general instruction. Examples of EBPs may be practices of explicit instruction approach (EI; Archer & Hughes, 2011). For Element Two, the content of the instruction is relatively the same for all students in the class; however, instruction changes because the practices now include EBPs from special education (e.g., elements of EI, cognitive strategy instruction, use of graphic organizers). Co-teachers intentionally plan when and how to use these EBPs, often by employing different co-teaching approaches (i.e., one teach, one assist). The general education curriculum guides instructional objectives in this element and the special educator works within this curriculum and these objectives. Table 1 describes ways that co-teachers can work to implement Element 2 in a virtual classroom.

Element 3: Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

Co-teaching is ultimately a special education service delivery model. With that in mind, special educators provide more intense instruction (SDI) for an IEP curriculum significantly different from the general curriculum. SDI includes (a) smaller or individual grouping based on skill, (b) instruction on IEP goals and/or material that is a prerequisite or developmental skill related to but not identified as general curriculum for the student's grade level, and (c) EBPs in special education to address that skill. Table 2 describes ways co-teachers can implement SDI in a virtual classroom.

Given the new world of online instruction, co-teachers need to adapt their instructional delivery to meet their objectives and their student needs. Using the affordances of online learning platforms and applications, teachers can still co-teach and provide quality services to students with disabilities.

References

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- Kennedy, M. J., Kellems, R. O., Newman-Thomas, C. (2014). Using content acquisition podcasts to deliver core content to preservice teacher candidates. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 50*, 163-168.
- Weiss, M. P., & Rodgers, W. (2020) Instruction in co-taught secondary classrooms: Three elements, two teachers, one unique idea. *Psychology in the Schools*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22376>

Table 1

Ideas for Element 2

Co-teaching Approach	Role for Special Educator in a Synchronous Session	Role for Special Educator in an Asynchronous Session
<p>One teach, one assist</p> <p>(Provides extra support to SWID when instruction is already strong)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor chat box • Ask questions using Pause Procedure • Prompt/cue students individually using the chat box • Provide pre-planned clarifying/summarizing statements during instruction • Move between break out groups to encourage/monitor • Debrief with general educator after instruction to preplan next session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add supplemental resource links • Annotate/provide notes to go with Powerpoint or other documents • Adjust layout of materials to make more explicit for SWID • Provide explicit instructions for use/completion of the asynchronous work • Provide suggested timelines with tasks broken into subtasks and explained (with specific strategies to use for completion) • Insert summaries/questions into videos or Powerpoints to gauge student understanding
<p>Parallel teaching</p> <p>(Provides an opportunity to reduce the student:teacher ratio in order to teach or practice a more difficult concept or skill. Allows for modifications to instruction based on student need.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use videoconferencing break-out groups feature • Adapt materials to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Greater opportunities to respond (more questions and practice items; smaller student:teacher ratio should allow verbal questioning, can also use raised hands or polling options) ○ More explicit instruction and repetition of key vocabulary (teach vocabulary; make sure to pause and ask for student summaries of material) ○ Provide additional support/scaffold materials for the concepts taught (e.g., graphic organizer, checklist, guided notes) 	<p>In addition to the items above for one teach, one assist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a narrated Powerpoint or video of the material you want to teach (e.g., CAPs*,) that you created • Break material into brief, manageable chunks and provide a means for feedback at each point (e.g., peer review, fixed response questions that can be right/wrong, teacher review; Nearpod, Flipgrid, EdPuzzle) • Use interactive apps (e.g., Google Slides, Google docs) to get students engaged and evaluating their learning

Co-teaching Approach	Role for Special Educator in a Synchronous Session	Role for Special Educator in an Asynchronous Session
<p>Parallel teaching (cont.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teach/use an explicit learning strategy in your instruction; model, provide guided practice and independent practice (e.g., gradual release of responsibility) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use interactive apps (e.g., Nearpod, Flipgrid, Google Slides) to get students actively engaged 	<p>In addition to the items above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Modify assignments/materials for groups according to student needs ● Incorporate visual supports/scaffolds as applicable ● Provide samples of completed work as a guideline for students when possible ● Offer virtual “office hours” where you can meet with groups to offer support
<p>Station teaching (Provides the opportunity to break content into small, manageable chunks and deliver the chunks in reduced student:teacher ratio groups while still providing all students with entirety of instruction)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use videoconferencing break out groups feature—can either assign series of time-limited tasks or move groups around after each “station” ● Use flexible grouping for different instructional purposes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lead one activity (“station;” probably by moving from group to group); differentiate for needs of each group either for content or materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include many opportunities to respond ○ Provide additional support/scaffold materials for the concepts taught (e.g., graphic organizer, checklist, guided notes) ○ Teach/use an explicit learning strategy in your instruction ○ Use interactive apps (e.g., Nearpod, Flipgrid, Google Slides) to get students actively engaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do same thing as in asynchronous session but record/videotape it and set up the interactive apps to work within the narrated powerpoint or video
<p>Team teaching (Provides the opportunity to integrate modifications to instruction/changes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teach the learning strategy while the general educator teaches the content ● Be the interactive app implementor—put in activities that will increase opportunities to respond or teach learning strategies. Examples are in Nearpod, Flipgrid, EdPuzzle, Peardeck; Use the raise hand or polling feature in videoconferencing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do same thing as in asynchronous session but record/videotape it and set up the interactive apps to work within the narrated powerpoint or video

Co-teaching Approach	Role for Special Educator in a Synchronous Session	Role for Special Educator in an Asynchronous Session
to make more accessible within whole group instruction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • app; use Google slides or Google docs to have students collaborate on answering questions or providing responses • Demonstrate an action via video while co-teacher explains verbally • Perform a reading together or model a two-sided debate 	

* CAPs is Content Acquisition Podcast (Kennedy, Kellems, & Newman-Thomas, 2014)

Table 2

Ideas for Element 3 Instruction

	Co-teaching Model	Synchronous Session: Teaching	Asynchronous Session: Practice
Alternative Teaching (Provides opportunity to teach skills and concepts that are individualized and part of IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set instructional goal(s) for the session. Can be related to academic or behavioral IEP goals or prerequisites for the general curriculum. Use videoconferencing break out groups feature Set norms and behavior expectations Use an Explicit Instruction model that provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater opportunities to respond (verbal questioning, raised hands, polling options) Instruction on and repetition/practice of key vocabulary (e.g., direct questioning, Quizlet, Nearpod, Pause Procedure) Provide additional support/scaffold materials for the concepts taught (e.g., graphic organizer, checklist, guided notes; Google Slides, Google docs) Record the session so that it can be included in materials for asynchronous practice If solving problems or doing writing instruction, use Pencasts (livescribe pens capture audio while showing what is being written at the same time—similar to recording presentation on whiteboard) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a narrated powerpoint or video of the instruction and material previously presented so that students can access again if necessary Break material into brief, manageable chunks and provide a means for feedback at many points (e.g., peer review, fixed response questions that can be right/wrong using assessments/assignment features in learning platform, teacher review using a journal feature in learning platform; Nearpod, Google docs, Flipgrid, EdPuzzle) 	
Station Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set instructional goal(s) for the session. Can be related to academic or behavioral IEP goals or prerequisites for the general curriculum. Use homogeneous grouping with the videoconferencing break-out group feature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use homogeneous grouping Replace one assignment with practice activity related to previously-taught material Incorporate supports as described for Alternative Teaching 	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In place of one group activity, provide instruction related to instructional goals, using explicit instruction as described for Alternative Teaching | |
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Note: Asynchronous sessions should be practice opportunities for material learned during instruction. Students should not be learning new material in asynchronous work for SDI.