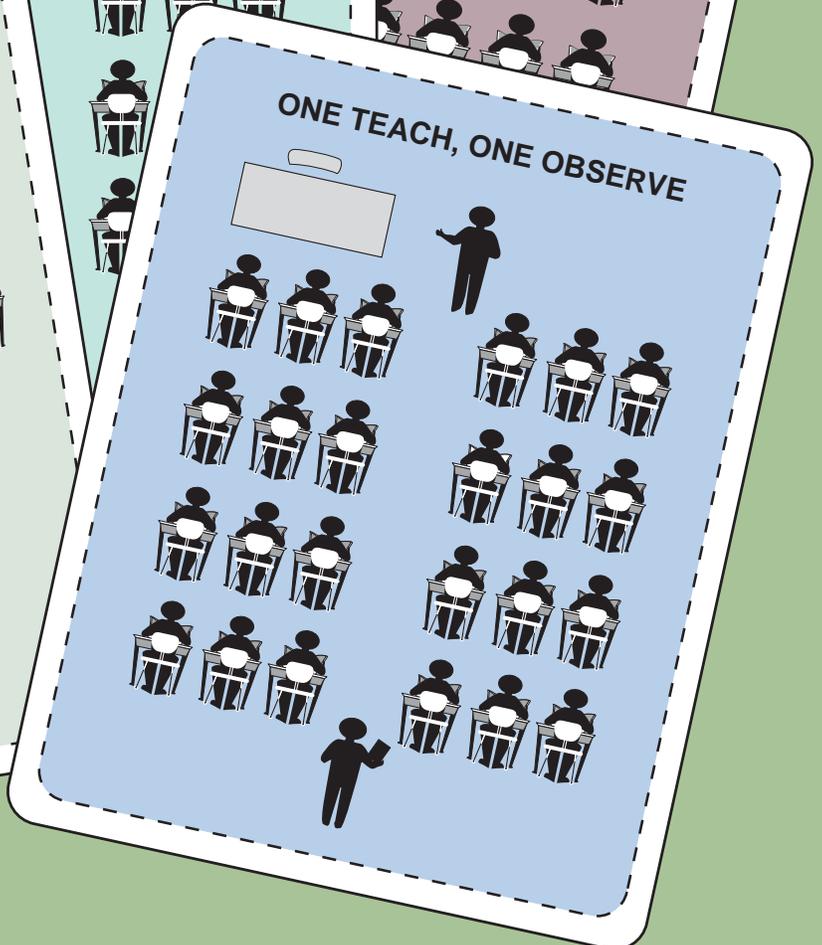
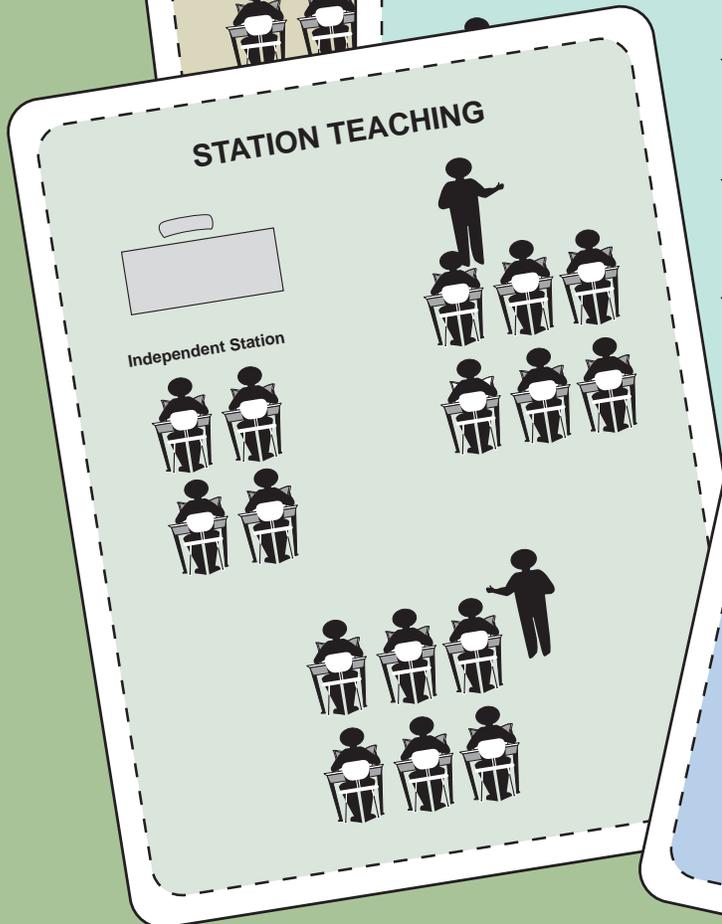
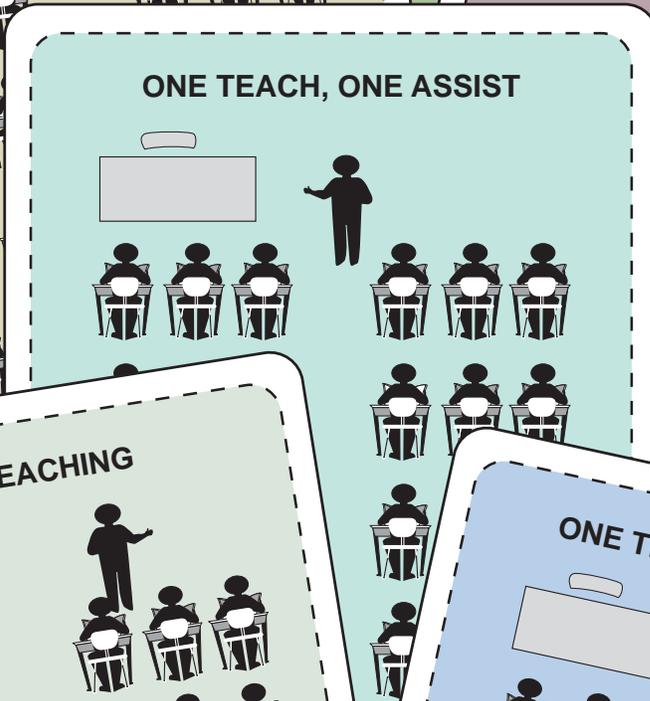
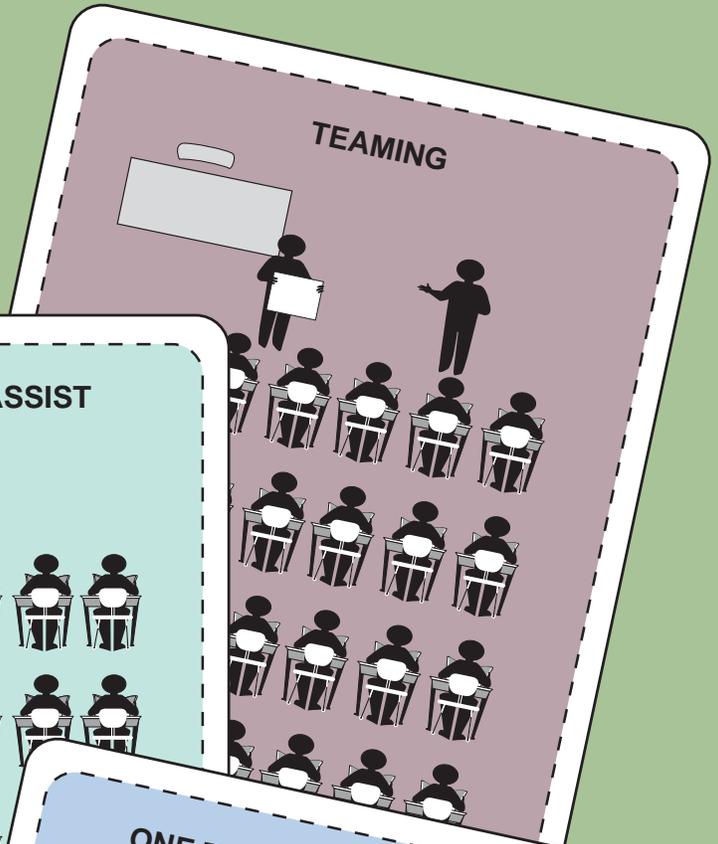
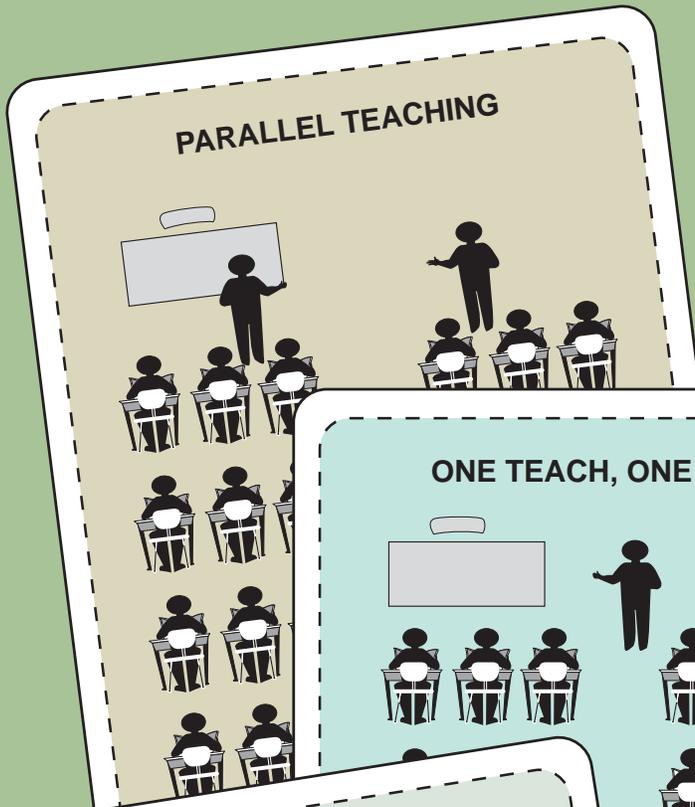


# CO-TEACHING HANDBOOK

*Utah Guidelines*



# **CO-TEACHING HANDBOOK:**

## **Utah Guidelines**

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Dear Utah Educators,

Your ongoing efforts and dedication to improving educational results for all of Utah's collaborative partnerships of education professionals in our public schools. The Utah State Board of Education has made "Promises to Keep" for Utah's public education system. These promises include:

- *Ensuring literacy and numeracy for all Utah children.*
- *Providing high quality instruction for all Utah children.*
- *Establishing a curriculum with high standards and relevance for all Utah children.*
- *Requiring effective assessment to inform high quality instruction and accountability.*

Utah has adopted the Common Core State Standards, the intent of which is to ensure that all students are college and career ready. This new Utah Core Curriculum has resulted in a shift of learning expectations for students and educators, causing traditional instructional methods to be reevaluated to determine effectiveness for student learning. The Promises alone are not sufficient to accomplish needed instructional practice changes. Although we now have higher standards for all students, including those with disabilities, we must continue efforts toward ensuring that all of our students receive quality instruction by highly effective teachers.

One instructional model that has been reevaluated is co-teaching. Co-teaching is an instructional arrangement in which a general education teacher and a special education teacher deliver core instruction (along with specialized instruction as needed) to a diverse group of students in a single physical space. These co-teaching partnerships require general and special educators to make joint instructional decisions and share responsibility and accountability for the learning of all students, while at the same time building on the strengths of each involved educator to provide high quality core instruction paired with needed specialized instruction in an effort to meet the variety of student needs. Co-teaching is an adaptable model, allowing educators to adjust and blend teaching skills - a benefit for students, teachers, and the school, allowing students to receive effective, targeted instruction while teachers continue to learn and apply instructional skills.

We appreciate you taking the time to review this co-teaching manual to determine whether this is an instructional strategy that meets your specific needs. As we continue to collaborate and work together, we will be able to accomplish our goal - to improve educational outcomes for all students. Thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely,

Glenna Gallo, Director of Special Education, Utah State Office of Education

Sydnee Dickson, Director of Teaching and Learning, Utah State Office of Education

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# Foreword

In 2001 the No Child Left Behind Act was passed, and in 2004 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized. These two pieces of Federal legislation put increasing pressure on educators to educate students with disabilities in the general education environment. In addition, there is an emphasis in these two pieces of legislation on having higher standards for students with disabilities and ensuring that students with disabilities receive instruction from highly effective teachers.

With this emphasis in mind, schools are searching for service delivery options that will address the need for quality instruction provided by highly effective teachers to students with disabilities and those at risk of not succeeding. One service delivery model that is receiving renewed attention is co-teaching.

Co-taught classes provide students with disabilities with access to the general curriculum. These co-taught classrooms ensure that each student has a highly qualified content area teacher, as well as a teacher who is highly qualified in differentiation strategies.

The purpose of this document is to provide Utah administrators and teachers - both general and special educators - with a starting point from which to obtain information on different models, some implementation guidelines, and some basic forms when implementing co-teaching. The models described in this document are based on the work of Marilyn Friend. She has been and continues to be the inspiration for educators who implement co-teaching to improve student outcomes. This document is not intended to be the final word or provide comprehensive information when putting co-teaching into practice. Other resources are plentiful, both on the Internet and in published materials, which should be accessed when planning and implementing models of co-teaching school-wide.

# Definition

Co-teaching is the instructional arrangement in which a general education teacher and a special education teacher deliver core instruction along with specialized instruction, as needed, to a diverse group of students in a single physical space. Co-teaching partnerships require educators to make joint instructional decisions and share responsibility and accountability for student learning.

# Several Attributes of Co-Teaching

Students, teachers and schools can receive many overarching benefits when there is a well-constructed co-teaching model(s) in place which is supported by strong, ongoing professional development and a supportive administrator. Listed below are possible benefits for students, teachers, and schools.

Students receive the following benefits from a well-constructed and supported co-teaching model(s):

- Enrichment opportunities
- Tiered levels of instruction within the classroom
- Access to a variety of instructional strategies supported by two highly qualified instructors
- A supportive system for educators that addresses students' needs
- Opportunities for peer interactions
- Accommodations for students
- Reduced stigma for students with disabilities
- Exposure to positive academic and social role models

Teachers receive the following benefits from a well-constructed and supported co-teaching model(s):

- Shared responsibility, which lightens the workload
- Combined ownership of the instructional environment
- Experts to collect and analyze data to inform instruction
- Increased collaboration in lesson development and delivery of instruction
- Mutual goals
- Less teacher isolation
- Greater teacher efficacy
- Shared responsibility for outcomes
- Classrooms with a potential for fewer behavior referrals

Schools receive the following benefits from a well-constructed and supported co-teaching model(s):

- Establishment of a school-based culture of collaboration
- Establishment of a supportive system for all educators
- Decreased student-to-teacher ratio

# Co-Teaching: What It IS, What It Is NOT

Co-teaching IS	Co-teaching is NOT
Joint responsibility for planning, instruction delivery and classroom management	One teacher maintaining all planning and instruction
A component of a continuum of services for students with disabilities	Having a “smaller” class in a large classroom
Carefully matched professionals to ensure success for ALL students	Two professionals providing instruction to a homogenous group of students
Both professionals present in class every day	An extra set of hands in the classroom
Both professionals planning lessons to meet the needs of ALL learners	One paraprofessional and one professional instructing
Both professionals being responsible for ALL students	A special educator working only with students with disabilities

# Tips for School-Wide Implementation

- Start the process before the school year begins by sharing with stakeholders, including parents, proposed program planning, vision, and professional development outcomes.
- Identify and provide common planning time.
- Plan team composition, compatibility, and schedules to ensure effective instruction.
- Identify and provide opportunities for ongoing and targeted professional development.
- Set class size guidelines to enable numbers to be maintained at a reasonable level.
- Maintain effective teams from year to year.
- Teach school faculty members about the benefits of co-teaching.
- Develop a school-wide belief in inclusive practices that increase accessibility to the core for all. The notion of “your kids, my kids” should be replaced with the notion of “our kids”.
- Develop parental support/buy in/knowledge regarding co-teaching.
- It is important to have special education teachers teach in the same content area rather than spreading them across multiple content areas.
- Assign special education teachers to content areas in which they have credentials, expertise or interest.
- When assigning students to a co-taught class, some issues to assess are:
  - The severity of cognitive, behavioral and academic skill deficits of student(s).
  - Compatibility issues of the teachers and students.
  - Seeing that both teachers are familiar with students who have IEPs.
  - Having guidelines in place for the number of students with disabilities in a co-taught class. Friend (2008) recommends the following:
    - Elementary grades in which no more than 25% of the class members are students with disabilities
    - Secondary grades in which no more than 33% of the class members are students with disabilities
  - When the numbers increase at either level, the quality of co-teaching may suffer.

# The Administrator's Role

Teaching has traditionally been an isolated profession, but changes in funding and staffing, as well as the increased focus on improving outcomes for all students and minimizing the achievement gap, has brought co-teaching to the forefront as one of the fastest growing options to address these issues. Unfortunately, it also has been misunderstood and misapplied. This has created an environment or experience that has left many educators resistant to and wary of this practice. Administrative support at the school and district levels is crucial in providing and maintaining a supportive environment for an effective co-teaching program. With this in mind, what are some steps an administrator can implement to create and maintain a supportive environment?

## **Administrators should:**

- Have knowledge and understanding of the definition, purpose and models of co-teaching.
- Assist in the evaluation of the co-teaching process.
- Have the ability to articulate the definition and purpose of co-teaching to stakeholders.
- Understand the models that are most effective and when their use is recommended.
- Provide funding for materials.
- Build and support a school culture that supports educating all students.
- Provide ongoing opportunities and funding for professional development.
- Expect all teachers to be accountable for student outcomes, both behaviorally and academically.
- Develop a school policy that sets criteria for student placement in co-teaching classes.
- Consider class size for co-teaching and evenly distribute students.
- Actively support and be engaged in facilitating change.

## **What are some ways in which an administrator can provide support for co-teaching?**

- View inclusion as a collaborative effort, and consider that the success of students with disabilities is everyone's responsibility, not just the responsibility of special education teachers.
- Ensure there is a continuum of services for students with disabilities. Ensure that appropriate services are provided to students with disabilities based on their unique needs as described in their IEPs.
- Avoid blanket statements such as "All special education students will be served through the co-teaching model" or "We are a totally inclusive school."
- Match educators appropriately to ensure successful co-teaching teams.

- Allow teachers to volunteer to co-teach. By allowing teachers to volunteer, administrators create an environment where co-teaching is more likely to be successful.
- Find creative ways to provide teachers with a common planning time. Providing common planning time may be difficult, but it is crucial that common planning time be provided as often as possible.
- Provide targeted and ongoing professional development opportunities that contribute to successful co-taught classrooms and programs. Some topics might focus on building continuing collaborative efforts for co-teachers, content knowledge, instructional strategies, classroom management, and assessment (formative and summative).

Infusing and implementing any instructional technique or methodology into a school culture can be challenging. The successful implementation of a co-teaching program may depend on several variables, but an administrator's commitment to the process, support for teachers and ongoing professional development may ensure a smoother and more successful co-teaching program.

# Model—Parallel Teaching

## Recommended Use (Frequent)

Teachers are both teaching the same information, but they divide the class into equal groups and teach simultaneously. This allows for more support, more supervision and greater participation from students.

## Implementation:

- Students are divided into equal-sized groups.
- Each teacher teaches the same content in the same amount of time.
- Instructional methods may differ.
- Groups **do not** rotate.

## Opportunities:

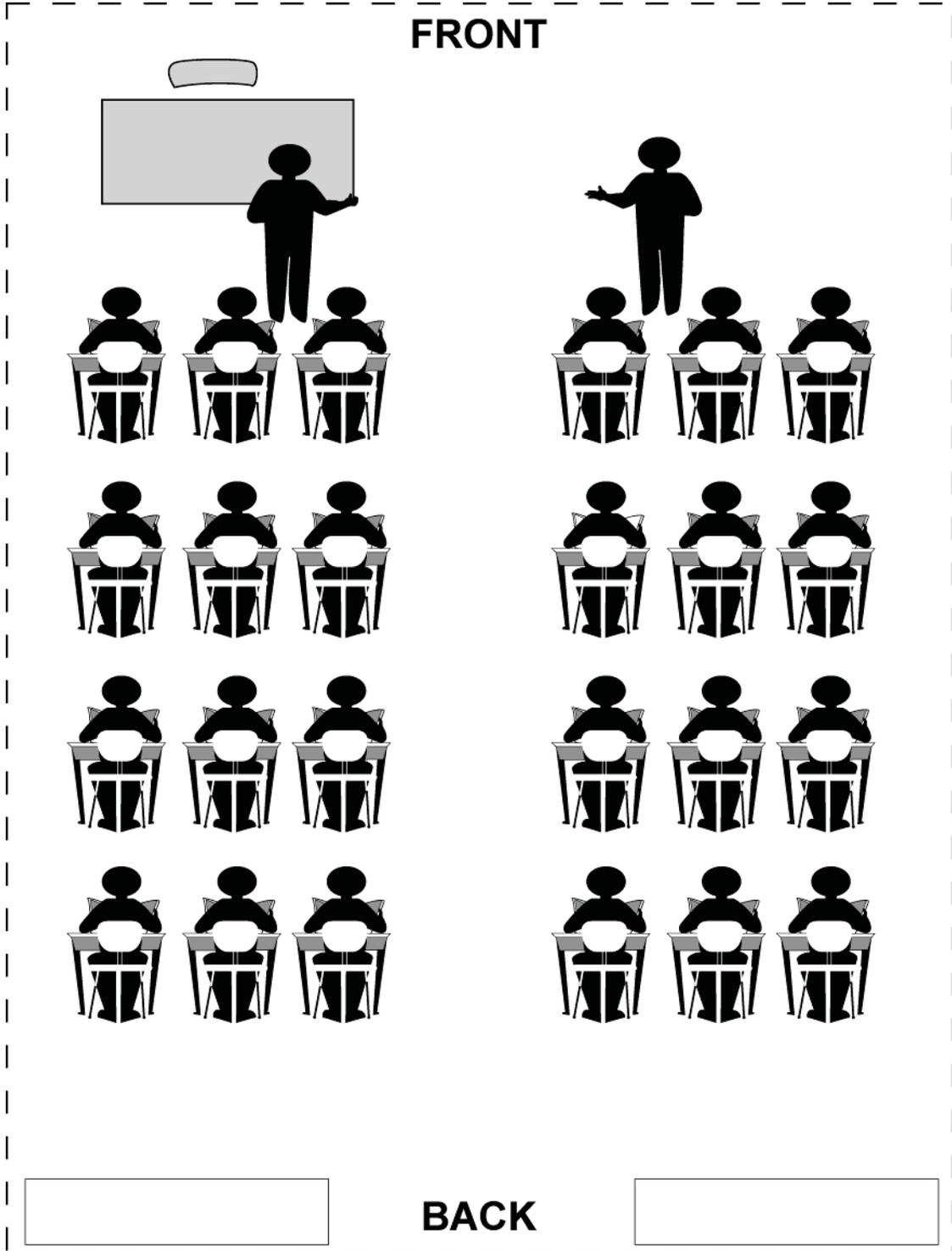
- Students may be divided into groups using a variety of strategies based on student or curricular needs.
- Teacher flexibility can enhance instruction.
- Student-to-teacher ratio may be lower.
- Students have an increased opportunity for response and participation.
- Both teachers play an active role in instructing in this model.

## Challenges:

- Teachers need to identify appropriate physical space.
- Teachers must have adequate knowledge of content and pedagogical skills to provide equally effective instruction.
- Having two teachers instructing at the same time may be distracting.
- Teachers must consider noise level tolerance and purposefully plan for an effective classroom environment.

# Parallel Teaching

## Classroom Setup Model



# Model—Station Teaching

## Recommended Use (Frequent)

Teachers divide content and students. Each teacher then teaches a portion of the content to one group and subsequently repeats the instruction for the other group. A third or fourth “station” can give students opportunities to work independently, accessing peer tutoring and technology.

## Implementation:

- Students are divided into equal-sized groups.
- Each teacher teaches a portion of the content in the same amount of time.
- Teachers prepare two or more stations in advance.
- Groups **rotate** from station to station.
- Secondary teachers may consider station teaching, especially if they are in block schedules.

## Opportunities:

- Teachers have an opportunity to work with every student in the class.
- Allows for a lower student-teacher ratio.
- Results in fewer behavior issues during instructional time due to higher student activity/engagement.
- Allows teachers to more closely monitor student learning and behavior.
- This model may be used to increase student participation.
- This model may be used when content is complex but not hierarchical.

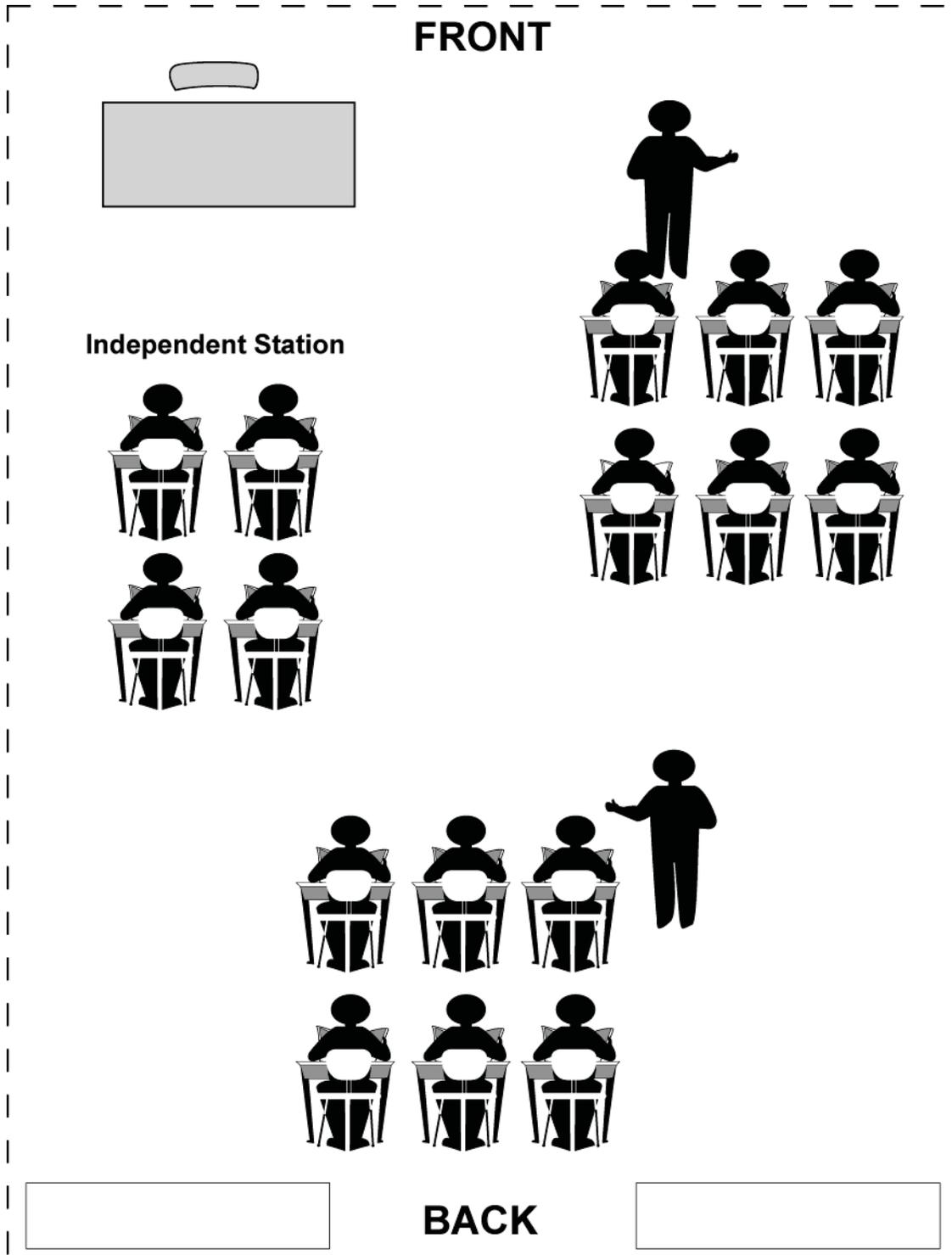
## Challenges:

- Identifying appropriate physical space can be difficult.
- Teacher instructional methods may differ.
- Teachers must have adequate knowledge of content and pedagogical skills to provide equally effective instruction.

- Classroom environment may be distracting for students with two teachers instructing.
- Stations must be designed to function independently.
- Teacher planning time may be significant.
- Teachers must consider noise level tolerance and purposefully plan for an effective classroom environment.

# Station Teaching

## Classroom Setup Model



# Model—Teaming

## Recommended Use (Occasional)

Both teachers are delivering the same instruction at the same time. Some teachers refer to this as having “one brain in two bodies.” Others call it “tag-team teaching.” Most co-teachers consider this approach the most complex but satisfying way to co-teach. This approach is most dependent on teachers’ styles.

## Implementation:

- Both teachers are fully engaged in delivery of the core instruction.
- Both teachers are responsible for classroom management and student behavior.

## Opportunities:

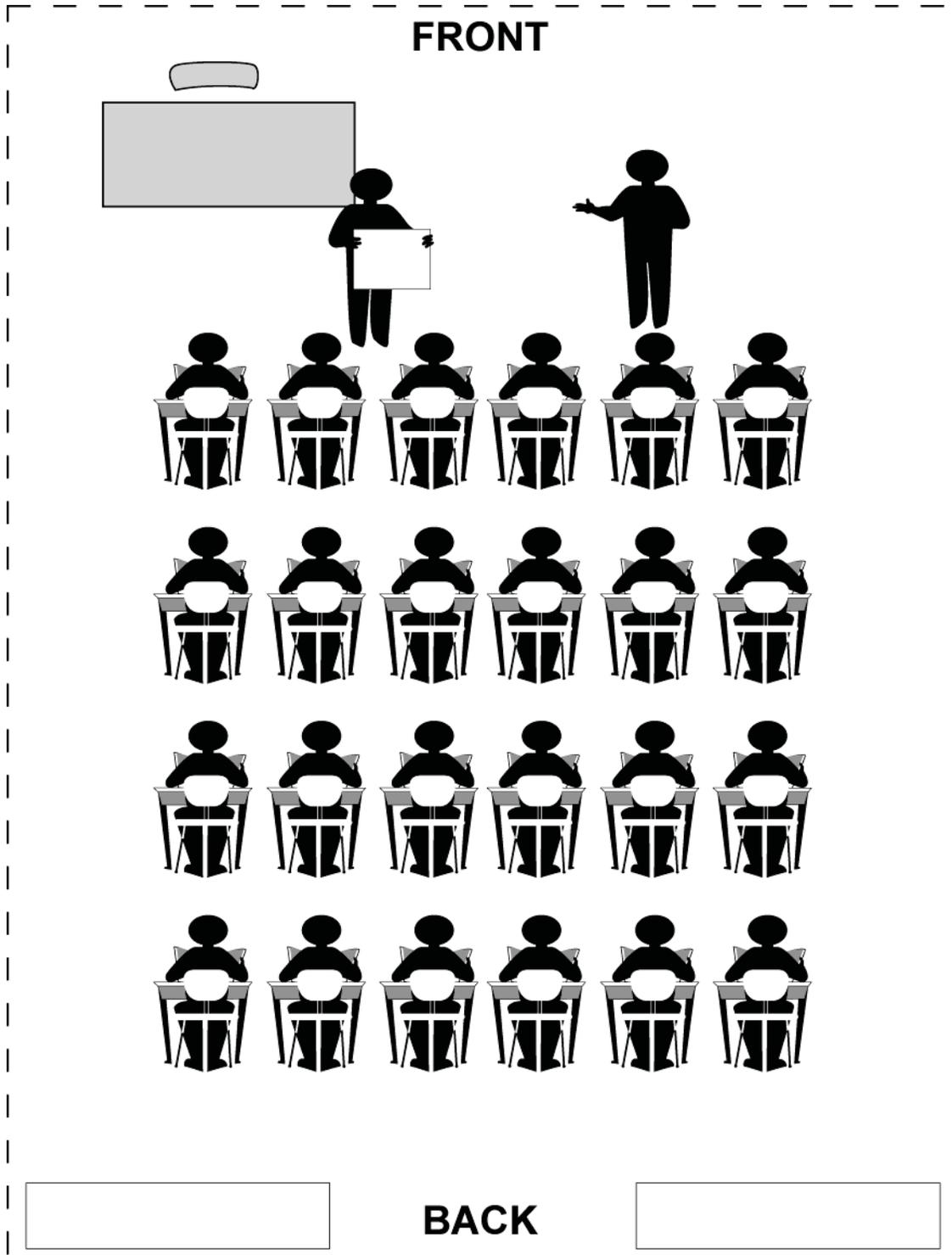
- This model can be very energizing.
- Allows for a broadening of the curriculum through a variety of teaching strategies.
- Allows teachers to work together collaboratively.
- Allows teachers to demonstrate individual expertise.
- Teachers can orchestrate instructional conversation.
- Teachers can introduce new topics/concepts.

## Challenges:

- Both teachers must have strong content knowledge.
- Teachers must gauge their contributions so that pacing is maintained.
- Teachers must have significant planning time available.
- Teachers are required to collaborate effectively.
- Teachers may not be as aware of individual student needs.
- Demands the greatest amount of trust and commitment from teachers.

# Teaming

## Classroom Setup Model



# Model—Alternative Teaching

## Recommended Use (Limited)

One teacher takes responsibility for the large group while the other works with a smaller group. The smaller group is not a permanent subset of the class and can be pulled aside for pre-teaching, enrichment, tiered intervention, to develop a special activity to present to the remainder of the class, or for presentation of content using an alternative method or strategy.

## Implementation:

- Teachers need to determine instructional/intervention needs of class (grouping for the day, who manages specific groups, instructional needs of groups).
- The teacher who works with the smaller group follows the same lesson plan being implemented by teacher in the larger group.
- The small group instructor makes accommodations and/or modifications to instruction to meet the needs of students.

## Opportunities:

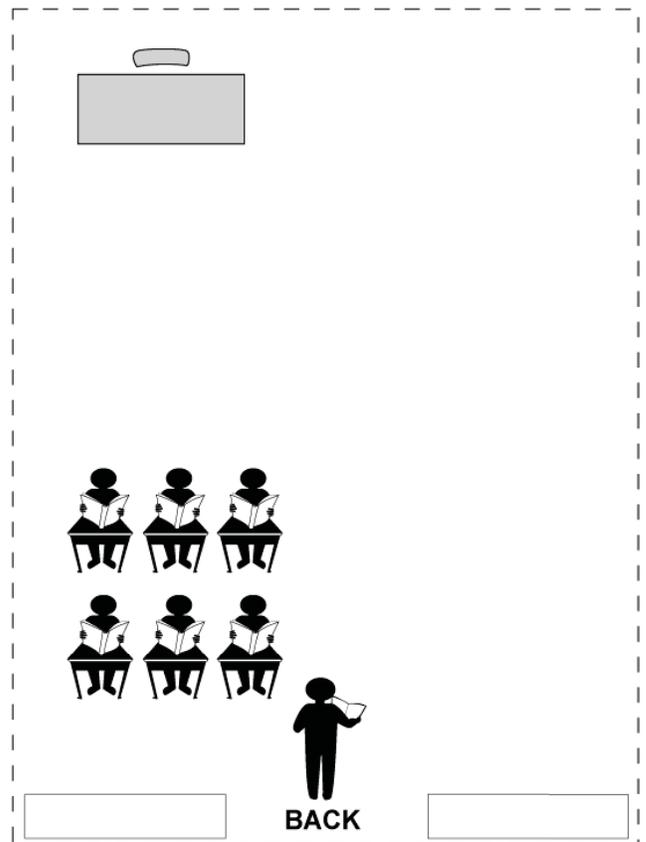
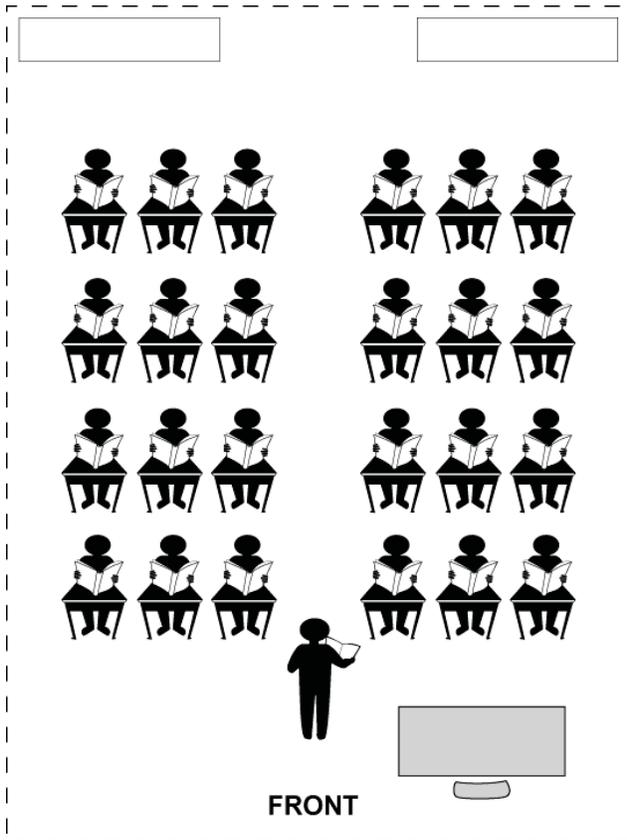
- Use when students' content knowledge varies tremendously.
- Use for managing student behavior to focus student learning.
- Use for monitoring student performance to provide immediate feedback, positive reinforcement, and correction.
- Use for informal assessment to inform instruction and meet needs of students.
- Use for pre/re-teaching, enrichment activities, and intentional observation time.

## Challenges:

- Students with disabilities may always be in the same group at the same time.
- Students may perceive a stigma of being placed into a small group.
- Teachers may have difficulty finding adequate planning time.
- One teacher may dominate the other in content and/or teaching style.

# Alternative Teaching

## Classroom Setup Model



# Model—One Teach, One Observe

## Recommended Use (Limited)

One teacher manages instruction of the entire class while another teacher systematically gathers data that the two teachers have determined to be important. This approach may best be used during the first weeks of school and near the end of the school year. Teachers should use this model five to ten percent of the time during a class period.

## Implementation:

- Teachers review instruction and mastery of concepts.
- Teachers review and record student behavior(s) for decision making.
- Teachers use this model to evaluate the effectiveness and delivery of instructional strategies.

## Opportunities:

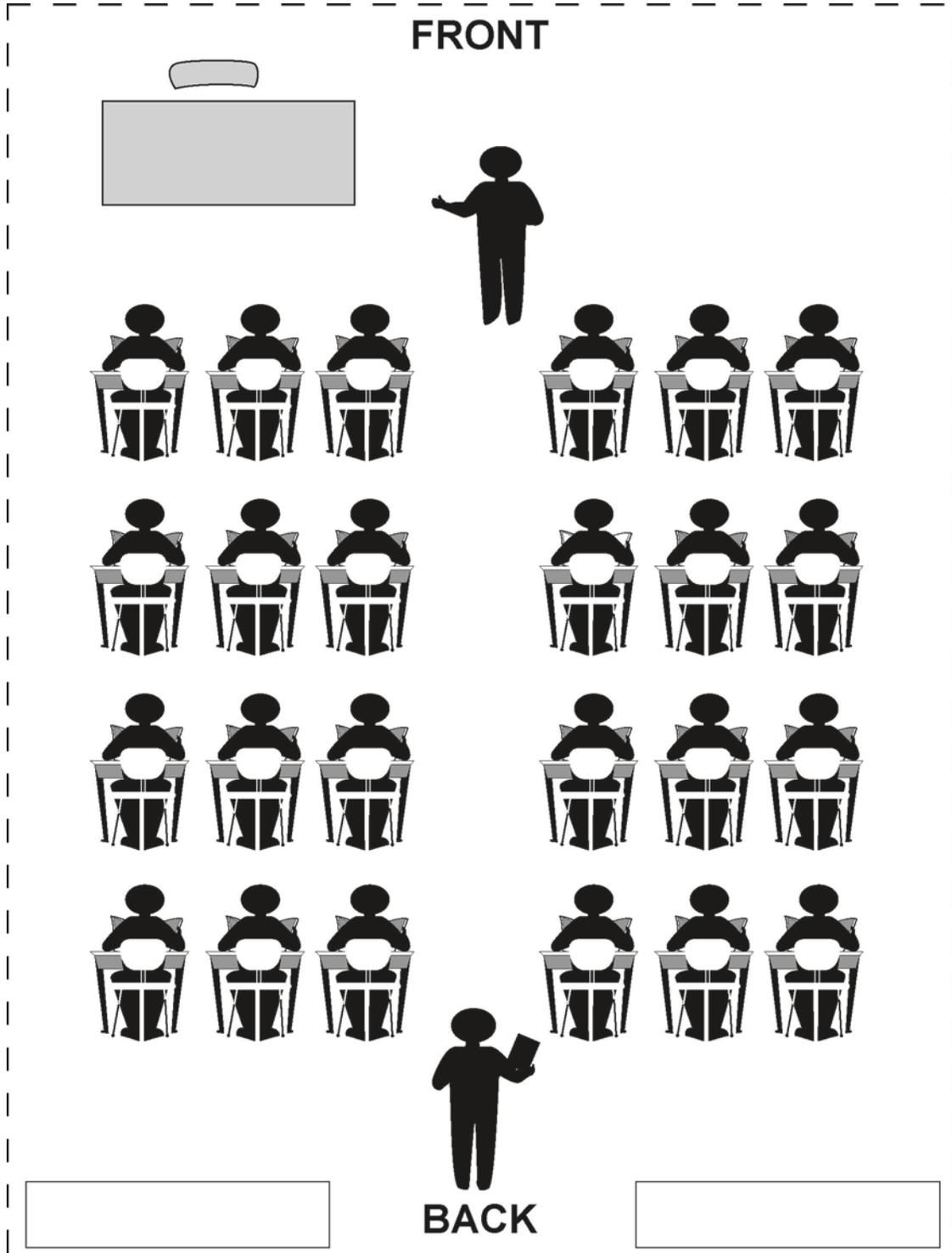
- Teachers focus on students' needs more explicitly.
- Teachers may monitor their own skills.
- Teachers collect data for Individualized Education Program (IEP) planning.

## Challenges:

- Teachers need to know how to collect and analyze appropriate data.
- Teachers' trust level needs to be strong.
- Teachers may overuse.

# One Teach, One Observe

## Classroom Setup Model



# Model—One Teach, One Assist

## Recommended Use (Seldom)

One person takes primary responsibility for teaching the content of a lesson while the other professional circulates through the room providing unobtrusive assistance to students as needed. During certain types of instruction or certain portions of a class period, this approach can be helpful. It should not be overused, and teachers should switch roles so that one isn't the primary provider of content and the other isn't the primary "assistant" in the lesson.

## Implementation:

- Assisting teacher may collect data and observe to ensure student understanding.
- Assisting teacher may provide assistance to struggling student(s).
- Assisting teacher may monitor student behavior.
- Instructing teacher orchestrates learning tasks and classroom discussion.

## Opportunities:

- Students may silently signal an adult for assistance.
- Teachers may monitor more closely students' social and academic behavior.

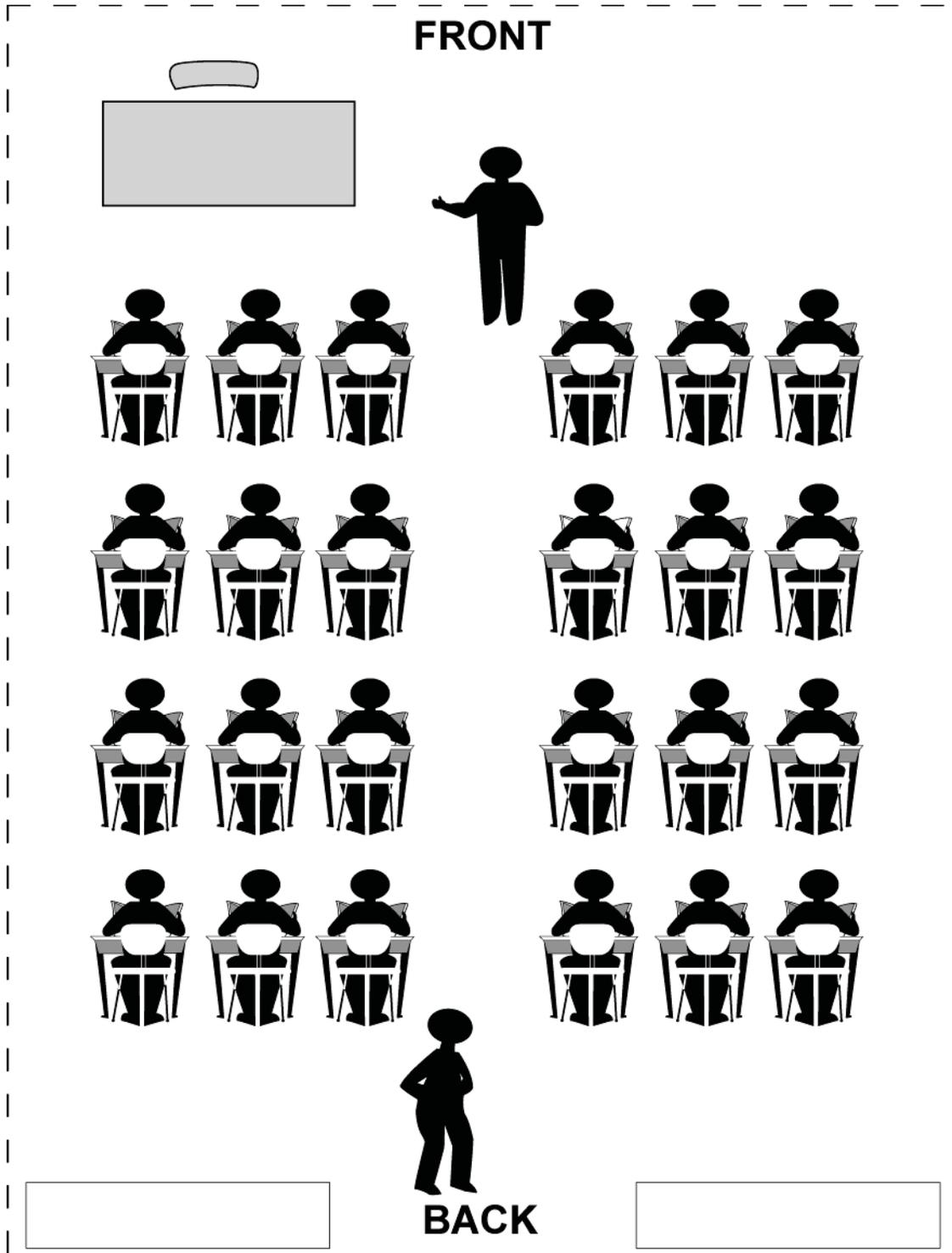
## Challenges:

- Assisting teacher may act as a passive partner while instructing teacher maintains a traditional teaching model.
- Students may view one teacher as the "real" teacher and the other as an assistant or aide.
- Students may be distracted when one teacher walks around.
- Students may expect one-on-one assistance.
- Special educators need to be experts in the content area.
- Teachers should use this model sparingly, and only for a portion of the instruction time.
- Teachers should alternate roles, balancing instruction and assisting.

# One Teach, One Assist

## Classroom Setup Model

*Other teacher moves around the classroom.*



# Evaluating a Co-Teaching Program

The purpose of observing and evaluating any program is to determine the effectiveness of the program and make decisions based on the outcome of the evaluation. The overarching question when evaluating a co-teaching program is *“Does co-teaching positively affect student outcomes?”*

Before implementing a co-teaching program, a school or district should determine whether or not it is “ready” to implement co-teaching. This could be accomplished through a needs assessment or a co-teaching team readiness checklist (see Appendices).

After determining an LEA’s readiness, creating a culture of collaboration, and implementing co-teaching model(s) with fidelity, the evaluation process of co-teaching may involve two levels. The first would be at a classroom and the second at a district level.

## **CLASSROOM-LEVEL EVALUTION**

In evaluating a co-teaching classroom, the principal should understand that there will be many factors to consider. First, as in any classroom, there should be evidence of components of an effective lesson. Differentiated instruction, clear objectives, formative assessment and evidence-based practices should all be apparent in an effective lesson.

Beyond ensuring an effective lesson and instruction, decisions need to be made about observing and evaluating a co-taught classroom. These decisions should be made well before co-teaching is implemented, and co-teaching teams should be aware of any observation and evaluation criteria. Some questions to help move toward an observation and evaluation protocol are:

- ✓ Should teachers be observed separately or as a team?
- ✓ Should the special education administrator observe the special education teacher individually?
- ✓ Should the general education administrator observe the general education teacher individually?
- ✓ Should there be different criteria for each teacher?
- ✓ Would criteria be above and beyond the traditional classroom?
- ✓ Most importantly, what will the criteria be for observing co-taught classes?

School administrators should be clear and consistent regarding criteria for a co-teaching observation and evaluation protocol. G.L. Wilson (2005) has suggested three areas that should be the focus when developing a co-taught class observation and evaluation protocol. The three main areas are (1) meaningful roles for both teachers, (2) use of research-based strategies, and (3) evidence of success.

The following suggestions may help an administrator with defining and developing a protocol in these three areas for a co-taught classroom.

Roles for both teachers:

- ✓ Evidence that each teacher's role is clearly identified throughout the lesson
- ✓ Evidence that the special educator is identified as a teacher with equal instructional responsibilities
- ✓ Evidence that both teachers are appropriately qualified and certified
- ✓ Evidence that both teachers understand the Utah Common Core

Research-based strategies:

- ✓ Evidence of co-planning
- ✓ Evidence of an effective lesson
- ✓ Evidence of research-based effective and systematic instructional strategies, both academic and behavioral
- ✓ Evidence of opportunities to learn, including accessibility strategies and accommodations, where needed, for students with disabilities

Evidence of student success:

- ✓ Evidence that **all** students are actively engaged by asking and answering questions
- ✓ Evidence of progress monitoring
- ✓ Evidence of effective classroom management
- ✓ Evidence of high expectations for **all** students
- ✓ Evidence that the Utah Common Core is being taught

### **District-Level Evaluation**

Although it is important to evaluate co-teaching at the school level, district-level administrators also may wish to evaluate the program district-wide. District evaluation may focus on broader questions such as:

- What are the goals and objectives?
- Have the original goals and objectives been met?
- What are the outcomes for all students?
- Is co-teaching having a positive impact on student outcomes?
- Is co-teaching working in schools?
- Are teachers supportive of co-teaching?
- Is sustainability of co-teaching possible?

School and district administrations can use the above suggestions or create their own evaluation protocols that may be specific to their school or district. The final outcome of any evaluation is to enable a school- or district-level administration to use data to inform decision making with regard to co-teaching.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. What does the research say about co-teaching? Does co-teaching improve the achievement of students?

In education, there are times when practice outpaces research. Research on co-teaching that meets the “gold standard” is limited. However, there are some general conclusions that can be drawn from the limited research available. Some of the conclusions are:

- Administrators, teachers, and students respond to co-teaching in a positive way.
- Teachers report they benefit professionally from a co-teaching relationship.
- Teachers report that students with disabilities benefit academically from a co-teaching model.

In the Resources section there are several journal articles that can provide additional information on co-teaching research, especially in the content areas.

## 2. What type of skills and knowledge should teachers have when participating in co-teaching?

These types of skills and knowledge may be course specific, but some skills and knowledge that should be consistent are content knowledge, special education laws, disabilities characteristics, collaborative skills, and classroom management strategies.

## 3. How does an administrator form effective teams?

Many teachers believe that compatibility is the most important factor in developing co-teaching teams. Co-teaching should be a mutually beneficial arrangement for the teachers and the students involved. Educators who have a desire and a commitment to co-teaching should start the team-building process by communicating about some of the following issues.

- Is there a joint understanding of the definition of co-teaching?
- What are teachers preferences in the classroom about their teaching style?
- How is communicating with parents handled?
- How are lessons planned?
- Is more than one model used?
- Who chooses the co-teaching model(s)?

Other areas to discuss are classroom environment, procedures, rules for behavior, instructional noise level, and other issues that have an impact on effective instruction.

Once a team is formed, maintaining the professional relationship will be an on-going process built upon continued communication about the needs of both the teachers and the students.

#### **4. In what grade level should co-teaching be implemented?**

Co-teaching models can be implemented across all grade levels and content areas.

#### **5. What type of professional development should be considered when co-teaching?**

Co-teachers will require professional development in the content areas, accommodations, general disability areas, instructional strategies, behavior management, and classroom management. Co-teacher teams may wish to meet at regular intervals and discuss and share what is working. Co-teaching teams could access various websites on co-teaching strategies, which could be another source of providing professional development support.

#### **6. Does co-teaching need to look the same everywhere?**

Since there are several different models of co-teaching, there isn't a "one size fits all," nor would it look the same everywhere. The benefit of co-teaching is that a team can use a variety of models, depending on the situation and student needs.

#### **7. How do teachers select the co-teaching approach that works best?**

Co-teachers may select a model to use depending on what instructional outcomes are desired. At other times the choice may be based on the needs of the students and the content or skills being taught during a specific lesson. No one model is recommended to be used exclusively.

#### **8. What are some factors that should be considered when creating a co-teaching school-wide schedule?**

Some elementary schools stagger the content being taught, so that one specific content is not taught in more than one place at the same time. Other elementary schools teach one specific content class to all students at the same time, allowing for student grouping based on need, which may allow the special educator to move among classrooms.

In secondary schools, scheduling co-taught classes first, before other scheduled classes, may allow for clearer expectations of students and teachers. This may

also send the message that co-teaching is important. Some secondary schools assign a special educator to specific departments. This is particularly important where the content may be perceived as being more difficult, such as in mathematics or science classes.

One recommendation would be to begin with a master schedule that shows co-taught classes and the common planning time.

### **9. How can teachers find common planning time?**

There are a variety of ways to create a common planning time. Some ways to build opportunities for a common planning time include:

- Using a substitute to release the professionals for collaboration.
- Using an administrator to cover classes.
- Using paraeducators to cover classes during non-instructional time.
- Using time before or after school.

### **10. How much time is needed for common planning time during the school year?**

The answer to this varies. Many teachers feel that they need to meet once a week, some every day, and others less often. As teachers become more comfortable with their content and role, or as the content changes, the time needed may increase or decrease.

### **11. Is co-teaching always the teaming of a special educator with a general educator?**

This is the typical approach. Co-teaching should always have a general educator as one of the partners. There are other professionals who might be involved in co-teaching; English as a second language (ESL) teachers, high-ability teachers, speech-language pathologists (SLP) or school psychologists may all be involved in a co-teaching situation. The issue isn't the "title" of the other professional, but the fact that both teachers are licensed professionals with the commitment to collaborate and improve outcomes for all students.

### **12. What is the expectation for special education teachers when co-teaching various content areas?**

It would be best practice to have a special educator co-teach in content areas of his/her expertise. If a special educator co-teaches in multiple content areas it may limit or prevent collaboration, instruction and providing other IEP services for students with disabilities.

**13. Should co-teaching be indicated on a student’s IEP? Should all students with IEPs be taught in co-teaching classrooms?**

The special education teacher should check with his/her local special education director to see if there are guidelines regarding this question. If there is no policy, the team should be consistent in how they identify and provide co-teaching. The IEP team makes the placement decision based on where a student with disabilities would be best served. Co-taught classes should not be the only option for students with disabilities to access the general curriculum. A continuum of services must be available.

**14. How are the goals and objectives in a student’s IEP addressed in a co-taught classroom?**

Co-teaching is an optional service delivery model. The IEP team may want to review the goals and objectives in a student’s IEP and the opportunity for specialized instruction in the co-taught classroom. Before considering placement of a student with a disability in a co-taught classroom, the IEP team may wish to consider and discuss:

- The degree of specialized instruction the student needs in order to meet his/her IEP goals.
- The severity of a student’s behaviors.
- The student’s ability to keep up with the general curriculum.
- The prerequisite skills the student needs in order to master the grade-level curriculum.
- The option of a trial placement in a co-taught classroom.

**Remember that accommodations and modifications do not constitute specialized instruction.**

**15. What does co-teaching look like for students with significant cognitive disabilities?**

There is no single answer, but experience suggests that students with significant cognitive disabilities can benefit from participating in a co-taught classroom, even if that exposure is limited. This model might occur more at the elementary level. This service model might help meet the IDEA requirement of least restrictive environment (LRE). A discussion at the local education agency (LEA) level after careful reflection and discussion about inclusive practices would be appropriate.

**16. Does co-teaching work for high-ability students?**

If there is an understanding or belief that high-ability students have exceptional needs, then the answer may be yes. Unlike students with disabilities, there is no mandate for a high-ability student to be instructed in a specific setting. The

school may wish to research the issue, discuss implementation and determine the impact on all students. A discussion at the LEA level after careful reflection and discussion would be appropriate.

### **17. How do I effectively work with a substitute teacher when the other co-teacher is absent?**

It is beneficial to meet briefly with the substitute to review the co-teaching process, and to continue to co-teach with the substitute.

### **18. What are some grouping strategies to use in co-teaching?**

The following strategies might be considered:

- Heterogeneous
  - Unlike needs/interest/skills/mixed gender, this may be useful when assessing instructional or intervention focus for future grouping.
- Homogeneous
  - Like needs/interest/skills/same gender, this may be useful when providing targeted instruction or interventions.
- Skill-based
  - Same skill level; this may be useful when providing targeted interventions.
- Student interest
  - Same research topic/project; this may be useful when a project or topic is assigned for class-wide presentations.
- Action research
  - Teachers may wish to do action research on instructional or intervention strategies for an identified group of students.
- Random
  - No formal organization; allowing students to group themselves.

### **19. How do we address parents' concerns about their students in a co-taught class?**

Implementing co-teaching in a school is like any other change in an educational environment. The more information parents have, the more likely they will understand the benefits for their student in a co-taught class. The LEA should communicate at the first of the school year about the co-teaching model, expectations for students, teachers, and the selection process; this will help alleviate some of the issues. A principal can identify, through a master schedule, which classes and teachers participate in co-teaching, have in place a policy on class grouping, and ensure that parent and teacher input has been gathered and considered. As professionals, teachers in a co-taught class have a responsibility to listen to parents, ask questions and work on solutions to resolve parent concerns or fears. Co-teaching is an option both for students with disabilities and for other students.

# Appendices

# School Readiness Checklist

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
The school administration is supportive and committed to co-teaching, especially regarding co-planning time, scheduling assistance and professional development.		
Teachers have participated in a school-wide pre-implementation planning and professional development on co-teaching.		
The administration has purchased resources (classroom materials, co-teaching literature, etc.) to support co-teaching implementation.		
Plans have been developed for dissemination of information on co-teaching to teachers who did not attend initial training.		
Plans have been developed for regular dissemination of information on co-teaching to parents and other stakeholders.		
Plans have been developed for evaluating the school's co-teaching program.		
Co-teaching implementation has been incorporated as part of the school improvement plan.		
There is collaboration between general and special education teachers to ensure all students succeed.		
Teachers have been provided with mutual planning time for co-teaching.		

# Co-Teaching Partner Checklist

## Co-teaching partners have:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Discussed and understood the definition of co-teaching.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discussed and identified preferred co-teaching model.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discussed and shared understandings with regard to students with disabilities and expectations in relation to accommodations, and instructional needs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Shared, discussed, and identified shared roles and responsibilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discussed perceptions of a shared classroom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Shared and discussed similar beliefs and how to resolve differences if they arise.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Shared the potential strengths and liabilities each teacher brings to co-teaching.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Shared and discussed perceptions on the following topics:
  - Classroom rules
  - Grading
  - Disciplinary issues
  - Parent contact
  - Classroom routines
  - Homework
  - Physical environment of classroom
  - Teacher style or preference
  - Other

Source: Adapted from M. Friend & L. Cook, *Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2010).

# Co-Teaching Classroom Practices Reference Chart

<u>Model</u>	<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>	<u>Recommended Use</u>
Parallel Teaching	Flexibility in teaching; increases students' response time	Teachers must provide equivalent instruction; pacing of instruction can be a challenge	Frequent
Station Teaching	Elementary teachers are comfortable with this model; small groups	Stations must function independently; noise levels	Frequent
Teaming	Appropriate for all grade and content areas; very energizing	Loses valuable instructional strategy of grouping; comfort level of both teachers	Occasional (most popular with teachers)
Alternative Teaching	Provides intense, small-group instruction; enrichment and intervention opportunities	Small-group instruction may be seen as equivalent to a special education classroom; special education students are over-identified to participate in small group instruction	Occasional
One Teach, One Observe	Monitoring of student skills; ability to collect data	Potential to overuse; should not be used in a new co-teaching partnership; may be seen as a "evaluation" of teacher leading instruction	Limited
One Teach, One Assist	Content teacher provides most instruction; individual assistance readily available	Greatest potential to be abused and overused; one teacher becomes "glorified aide"	Limited (for certain instructional situations)

This graphic serves only as a quick reference tool. Please review the information in the document for complete information on the six co-teaching models.

# Resource Websites

<http://www.coteach.com>

<http://www.k8accesscenter.org>

<http://www.doverschools.org>

<http://www.rock-hill.k12.sc.us>

<http://education.wm.edu>

<http://www.iu17org.org>

<http://www.powerof2.org>

<http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>

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