30 DAYS TO THE CO-TAUGHT CLASSROOM

How to Create an AMAZING, Nearly MIRACULOUS & Frankly EARTH-SHATTERING Partnership in One Month or Less

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If an observer walks into your classroom day after day, week after week, what would he or she see:

a) two teachers at the helm
b) one teacher at the helm and one sitting or standing in the back of the room
c) one teacher at the helm and one “floating” through the room to check in with other students
d) a combination of a, b and c
e) both teachers cowering in the back of the room, overwhelmed and unsure of which collaborative structure to use
f) a wide range of collaborative structures and different arrangements of staff, students, desks and materials

If you answered (f) to this question, you can skip this section and the next few as well because you are far ahead of the curve when it comes to getting the most from your human resources, collaborating effectively and using a co-teaching model to differentiate instruction.

If you answered (e), however, we are so glad you are reading this book. We are here to help.
So now that we have covered two ends of the spectrum, we are guessing that the rest of you answered a, b, c or d. If you did, you are not alone. Many co-teaching teams are either unsure of how to expand the range of collaborative structures they use or feel they do not have the time or resources to try something new.

On Day 14, we want to provide you with the support you may be seeking. In these next few pages, we hope to convince you that new structures do not necessarily take more time to implement and that “shaking them up” regularly can not only help you support students more effectively, but also invigorate your teaching. We will start with the basics by introducing you to what we call the core collaborative structures: duet teaching, one teach/one assist, one teach/one float and one teach/one make multisensory.

Duet Teaching

Duet teaching is one of the most common teaching structures and needs to be mastered before you move on to any other model. Why? Because duet teaching requires both educators in a co-teaching partnership to demonstrate their equal status to learners and to work together directly. Duet teaching (Greene & Isaacs, 1999) involves two adults working together to provide instruction. A “duet” lesson or lesson segment typically involves both adults engaging in primary teaching roles in the class; instructors collaboratively lead class discussions, answer student questions or facilitate lectures and activities.

Students need to see their teachers working and teaching together, so the duet structure should be used regularly. However, it cannot and should not be the primary model you use day in and day out. If your school has combined students and resources to make co-teaching a reality, this has happened so that learners can profit not only from the expertise of two people, but from all of the different ways that classrooms can behave, look and feel when there is more than one
adult available to provide supports and deliver instruction. If your administrators have increased the number of students in each classroom due to co-teaching (which they likely have) and brought students with and without disabilities together to learn in a resource-rich setting, you have a responsibility to teach and plan “out of the box.” If a team co-teaches primarily using a duet model, they are not making the most out of having two adults in the classroom and students are getting an experience that is not much different from the one they could have had with just one teacher and fewer classmates.

Having shared that caution, we do feel that duet teaching is critical to the success of a co-taught classroom. Using it on a regular basis communicates to students that their teachers are equals. It demonstrates that you and your partner know how to build off of the expertise and skills of one another, not only behind the scenes but in front of your most important audience: your students. Mastering duet teaching will undoubtedly help you communicate better with your partner and flesh out your strengths and weaknesses as individuals and as a teaching team.

It may be helpful to use duet teaching to:

» introduce a unit or lesson
» conclude a unit or lesson
» facilitate a class meeting
» play a whole-class game
» engage in a community-building exercise

One Teach/One Assist

In the one teach/one assist model, educators typically share lesson delivery responsibilities; one leads the lesson while the other supports in some way (Cook and Friend, 1995). The lead person is usually in charge of the content while the assisting teacher adds examples, distributes supplies or checks in with students.

When many educators start co-teaching, it is the one teach/one assist model that they may initially find the most comfortable. Any teacher who has tried to write while talking or distribute materials without losing his or her train of thought will appreciate having another set of hands in the room to make lessons stronger and more seamless and is, therefore, likely to fall immediately in like with one teach/one assist. We have had our own moments of enchantment with one teach/one assist and agree that this structure should be used regularly in a co-taught classroom.
Like duet teaching, however, teams must take care not to overdo the use of one teach/one assist. According to a 2007 study by Scruggs, Mastropieri and McDuffie, this model is often significantly overused in co-taught classrooms. Some teams fall into a pattern where the general education teacher leads and the special education teacher assists for all or nearly all lessons. When this happens, students do not see their teachers working as a team and educators do not have many opportunities to acquire new collaborative skills as they teach together each day. Therefore, when you are using one teach/one assist, be sure to vary who takes the lead. Both teachers should regularly lead and both teachers should regularly assist.

Think also about how you are using one teach/one assist. That is, be sure that both of you are contributing to the lesson in a meaningful way. If, for example, you have noticed that when you use this structure, one teacher morphs from assistant teacher mode into parrot mode (providing assistance by simply repeating the directions, statements and questions posed by his or her partner), you may want to rethink how you are implementing one teach/one assist. Be sure that both of your roles add to the lesson and be sure parroting is left to the birds.

It may be helpful to use one teach/one assist to:

» set up a complex presentation or demonstration
» manage a lesson with new learning tools or assistive technology
» manage a lesson with a lot of directions or transitions
» set up the classroom for a change in activities
» connect with individual students needing clarification or support

One Teach/One Float

One teach/one float is another common co-teaching structure. On occasion, it is the most appropriate way to use human resources. One teach/one float is a perfect model to use, for instance, during lessons where one teacher is demonstrating something that students need to imitate. So, if one teacher is showing learners how to create land forms with modeling clay, the second teacher can be floating from desk to desk to give support and critique on the sculptures. Or during a lesson that introduces graphing calculators, one teacher may be providing the primary instruction while the other moves around the room to see if students have questions about the work assigned or the use of the calculators themselves.
Like duet teaching and one teach/one assist, one teach/one float is often a bit too familiar to students in co-taught classrooms. One teach/one float should be used sparingly, particularly if it has taken the form of one teacher leading whole-class instruction, while the other crouches next to students’ desks and whispers to them in between lecture points. If you are the floater in this scenario, you are probably not only frustrated by how the structure is being implemented, but also by the knee burns you have undoubtedly acquired.

This is not to suggest that one teach/one float is always ineffective or that it is always abused by those who use it regularly. It should be noted, however, that there are many co-teaching structures that should be used across the weeks and months of the school year and one teach/one float is but one of them. If you are using one teach/one float, you are probably engaged in whole-class instruction. In co-taught classrooms, whole-class instruction should be used sparingly; therefore, one teach/one float should also be used sparingly.

It may be helpful to use one teach/one float to:

 » get students started on independent work or group work  
 » help students assemble into any assigned pairings or groupings  
 » ensure that students are following along with a demonstration, model or example  
 » ensure that students are participating/understanding directions/aware of expected behaviors  
 » provide assistance with any materials or adaptive equipment students are accessing (e.g., specialized seating, standers, slant boards)

One Teach/One Make Multisensory

This co-teaching structure is one of our favorites because it is so flexible; there are surely hundreds of ways to create a one teach/one make multisensory lesson. In this structure, teachers think beyond how to work together and focus on how to teach creatively. To reach this goal, teaching teams may integrate any number of strategies and tools into their lessons, including but not limited to dramatic reenactments, costumes and props, audio cues or music, visuals, presentation software, apps and websites.

One teach/one make multisensory appeals to us as inclusive schooling enthusiasts because it is such a great tool for differentiating instruction for the diverse learners in your classroom. As a way to make this point, we like to ask teachers in our workshops to take any lesson that they would
typically teach alone and morph it into a one teach/one make multisensory model. Through this exercise, educators see that any lesson can be “punched up” with an additional mode of output and that two teachers who are multisensory-minded can do more than just bring two perspectives into a classroom—they can dramatically expand a lesson’s reach and impact.

This is not to say that we feel one teach/one make multisensory is the best possible co-teaching model. In fact, it too can become stale from overuse, but if you vary how you use it on a regular basis, this model can give your lessons a lot of “oomph” and can provide you with options for appealing to students with a very wide range of learning styles.

It may be helpful to use one teach/one make multisensory to:

- offer more than one mode of output during a lesson (e.g., auditory and visual)
- add interest, humor or a bit of drama to a lesson
- show off a new tech tool
- engage in a demonstration
- provide a memorable introduction or conclusion to a unit of study

Because we feel this model has so much potential for supporting and teaching all students, we are including a list of twenty ideas for using one teach/one make multisensory in your classroom in Table 14.1.

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**TO DO LIST**

- Talk with your co-teacher about each of the structures featured on Day 14.
- Plan lessons that will allow you to try each one of these structures.
- Review our one teach/one make multisensory list (Table 14.1) and develop lessons around three of these ideas.
There are so many benefits to co-teaching, but one of the most celebrated is the ability that teachers have to decrease the student-to-teacher ratio and provide a more personalized education to every learner in the classroom. One co-teaching model that instantly creates these opportunities is parallel teaching. Read on as we explore the “what,” the “why” and the “where the heck” of this powerful co-teaching structure.

The “What” Of Parallel Teaching

Parallel teaching (Cook & Friend, 1995) usually involves splitting the class into two sections. In this model, each teacher is responsible for one of these groups. This structure is useful when students “need opportunities to respond aloud, to engage in hands-on activities, or to interact with one another” (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 7). In other words, parallel teaching should be used when a more intimate learning situation is desired.
Parallel teaching is often used to deliver the same exact content to two groups, but it can also be used when teachers want to introduce students to two different activities, concepts or ideas. In this version, the two instructors split the group, teach different content for some part of the class and then switch groups and repeat the lesson with the other half of the class, or don’t switch and let students return to the larger group and share the new content with their peers. For example, a fifth-grade class might split into two groups of equal size, with one group learning about the US Congress from one teacher and the other group focusing on the US Senate. The students could then come back into a whole-class format and teach the content to one other by creating Venn diagrams, or by pairing off to share the content learned in their respective groups.

And there are still other ways to engineer parallel teaching. You can split students into two groups based on their interests and conduct a series of mini-lessons in this formation. Or you can separate students into uneven clusters if you want one teacher to be able to work with a much smaller group from time to time. Interested in even more ideas? Check out Table 15.1 for a list of twenty ways you can use parallel teaching in the co-taught classroom.

The “Why” Of Parallel Teaching

There are many benefits to using parallel teaching in the co-taught classroom. First of all, educators have opportunities to communicate that they have equal roles in the classroom; both are teaching and, in many cases, both are teaching the same content in the same way. Another benefit is being able to connect more directly and informally with students. It can be difficult—even with two teachers—to make connections with individuals in a classroom of thirty or more students. It is much easier to get to know learners and provide appropriate feedback in a group that is half that size. Finally, many students relish the opportunity to work in a small group. These learners may be more willing or able to share comments and contribute to discussions when they do not have to speak up in an entire roomful of their classmates.

The “Where The Heck Is It” Of Parallel Teaching

So, with all of the promise of parallel teaching, why don’t we see more of it in co-taught classrooms? There are actually many reasons educators are lukewarm on this model. Some see it as inappropriate for teams with an uneven knowledge base. Others don’t feel they have the space to parallel easily. Still others may think it is ineffective; they may question splitting the group to
teach something twice that can be taught “just as easily” in a whole-group situation. We feel that parallel teaching is too powerful of a structure to be ignored because of some of its perceived problems, so we have provided responses to some common objections in Table 15.2. We encourage co-teaching teams to review this table and consider how to tackle any barriers that may arise in the planning and implementation of parallel teaching. And then, we invite you to start planning your first parallel lesson. Sure, you will miss your co-teaching pal in those moments you are working in separate spaces or in opposite corners of the classroom, but if absence does make the heart grow fonder, this model may not only help you differentiate instruction, but it could also bring you and your partner closer together. Awwwww.

TO DO LIST

☐ Plan and teach a parallel teaching lesson.

☐ Discuss the lesson afterward. How did it go? What would you have to tweak to use this model again?

☐ Review our spectacular list of parallel teaching ideas (Table 15.1). Add one to two of your own ideas to this list.
### 20 Ideas for Parallel Teaching Lessons

1. Two teachers teach the same content.

2. Two teachers teach the same content using different materials (e.g., one group uses assistive technology to accommodate students with disabilities).

3. Two teachers assess students using the same tools or instruments.

4. Two teachers assess students using two different tools or instruments (based on student needs and abilities).

5. Two teachers assess students using two different tools or instruments; groups then switch so that both groups are assessed in two different ways.

6. Two teachers teach different but related content (e.g., mitosis/meiosis; Axis Powers/Allied Forces; circle graphs/bar graphs); groups then switch.

7. Two teachers teach different but related content; students then pair up to teach the new material to one another.

8. Two teachers teach different but related content, groups then come back together and engage in a whole-class discussion.

9. Two teachers lead a discussion on the same topic.

10. Two teachers lead discussions on different but related topics; groups then switch.

11. Two teachers lead discussions on different but related topics; groups then come back together and engage in a whole-class discussion.

12. One teacher teaches a lesson and the other lets students explore hands-on materials, artifacts or manipulatives that may be in limited supply (e.g., rocks and minerals); groups then switch.

13. One teacher teaches a lesson and the other lets students access technology tools that may be in limited supply (e.g., tablets, heart monitors, microscopes); groups then switch.

14. One teacher teaches a lesson and the other teacher creates a product with students (e.g., mini-movie, screenplay, sculpture, DNA model); groups then switch.

15. One teacher teaches a lesson and the other conducts a review session; groups then switch.

16. One teacher teaches a lesson and the other engages in a demonstration; groups then switch.

17. One teacher teaches a lesson and the other conducts a formal or informal assessment (e.g., focus group); groups then switch.

18. One teacher teaches a lesson and the other takes students on an in-school "field trip" (e.g., library, school garden); groups then switch.

19. Two teachers conduct the same experiment, demonstration or skit.

20. Two teachers conduct related experiments, demonstrations or skits; groups then switch.
What an embarrassment of riches! You are now familiar with five different co-teaching structures and have a range of lesson planning options for your co-taught classroom. You'd think we would be satisfied providing you with such a wealth of ideas, but we like to take things to the extreme and are, therefore, adding one more powerful structure to the mix: station teaching.

In station teaching, teachers “divide instructional content into two, three or more segments and present the content at separate locations within the classroom” (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 6). These stations do not need to be activity-based or even teacher-led, but they often are. Similarly, two or more adults are not needed to effectively run a station teaching lesson, but this model is ideal for using the skills and expertise of two or more educators.

Setting Up Your Stations

Designing new stations is actually a very helpful exercise for teachers as it requires an understanding and a clarification of what is important for students “to know and be able to do.” It’s easy to
generate interesting activities for stations, but it takes a bit more work to create learning experiences that target important skills and competencies and allow students to learn in varied ways.

To get started, look at your lesson objectives to determine which tasks, activities and exercises will be most appropriate to assign to individual stations. Depending on what you are teaching, you may want to provide students with opportunities for skills practice, discussion, problem solving, review of new material, partner reading, product creation or tech tool exploration. These are not the only possibilities, of course, but the structure makes any of these choices easy to implement. See Table 16.1 for an even longer list of station teaching activity ideas.

| TABLE 16.1 |
| Station Teaching Mini-Lesson/Activity Ideas |

Students at stations could be asked to:

- write poems, letters or short responses
- develop a collaborative PowerPoint presentation with all visitors to that station
- create a blog entry
- design a card or board game
- generate charts, graphs or diagrams
- write a jingle or song
- write a script and act out a scene
- compile a booklet or pamphlet
- generate a petition or survey
- design a simulation or role play
- compile a newspaper or newsletter
- create a model or diorama
- develop a set of guided notes
- make a sketch, collage, painting, cartoon or drawing
- audio record a speech, conversation or interview
- create a video commercial related to content
- shoot an e-tutorial (teach a skill or solve a problem on video)
- complete a worksheet or problems in a textbook
- collaboratively solve a problem
- create a test or quiz for a segment of content
- write a news report/bulletin
- create an advertisement, PSA or poster
- watch a video clip on an educational website (e.g., www.nationalgeographic.com/video/)
- participate in a teacher-led mini-lesson
- participate in a student-led mini-lesson
- engage in a small-group discussion
- brainstorm a list of ideas or solutions
- collect data/interpret data
- analyze documents or artifacts
- listen to a piece of music
- play or compose a piece of music
- snap and edit photos
- create a learning station
- facilitate an activity, game or group discussion
IMPLEMENTATION TIP

When you start using stations, use the same types of activities every time you use the structure to make planning easier. For example, a math team might consistently have a work-with-the-teacher station, an app practice station, a video "watch and learn" station and a peer review station.

The next step is to decide how many stations you will set up for a given lesson. Do you have several skills that you want students to address in a short period of time? If so, you might set up five or six stations that students will visit for just ten minutes apiece. This might be appropriate when you want to acquaint students with new materials or have them engage in drill and practice exercises. Conversely, if you need students to dive a little deeper into learning and want to carve out more time for them to work, you might create just three stations that they access for twenty minutes at a time. There is no amount of time that is necessarily best for station teaching rotations. Instead, the amount of time that students spend at each station should be determined by the objectives of your lesson and the needs of your students.

Finally, consider how you will direct the flow and assignment of your stations. You can allow students to choose stations, to repeat stations or to work on stations one at a time with every learner starting at Station #1 and advancing only when they complete the assigned task there. The most common type of station teaching lesson, however, involves the creation of a handful of stations that all students visit at some point during the lesson. A group of students begins working at each station and when a cue is given, all of them rotate. If the stations are numbered, students move in order (e.g., those at Station #4 move to Station #5; those at Station #5 move to Station #1).

See Table 16.2 for examples of several station teaching lessons.

Conducting A Station Teaching Lesson

When you design a station teaching lesson for the first time, there are a few issues of logistics to address. As with parallel teaching, some teaching teams we have coached have given up on station teaching almost as soon as they started due to problems with implementation. Therefore, we have provided a snazzy compilation of common objections to station teaching and wise and well-crafted responses to those objections (see Table 16.3). Although we do agree that the logistics involved in
this model can be challenging at times, station teaching is so unique and effective for diverse groups of students, we believe it is well worth the effort.

If you are one of those seeing more challenges than benefits in this model, remember that a little planning goes a long way. We suspect that if you spend a bit of time setting up your work space, deciding on a process for transitions and creating necessary learning materials, you will quickly see the advantages of using this dynamic model. It might even become your favorite way to collaborate!

Work Space

Plan your work space. If students will be engaged in an activity that does not require a lot of materials, such as a group discussion or work on one-to-one devices, it may be best to shove desks aside and create stations from clusters of chairs. In other cases, it may work best to use classroom tables or to assemble desks into work stations by pushing a few of them together.

Each station should be marked with a sign that outlines the task directions. Provide directions that are short and simple but clear. Keep in mind that you may need to add illustrated or audio directions for young children or learners with disabilities. One team we coached used recordable birthday cards for this purpose. They covered them with paper, wrote the directions for each station on the front of the card and used the recording function to create the accompanying audio. When students arrived at each station, they could both read and listen to the multi-step directions.

Transitions

Let students know when they will transition during the lesson, how long the transitions will be and where they need to go after they finish work at each station. We suggest using the following tools to aid with transitions:

» number signs posted at each station to help students understand the order of the station rotations
» a timer, buzzer or set of chimes to indicate that it is time to move to a new station
» a poster or short video illustrating what the transitions should look like (include information about the length of the transition and what students should do with any materials they are collecting or using at each individual station)
Materials

Some teachers ask students to complete products at various stations as evidence of their participation and learning. Students might be asked to write a quick reflection, add to a collaborative list or shoot a video detailing something they learned. These products are easy to incorporate into a station teaching lesson but do not need to be used at any or all of them. Again, the activities will depend on your lesson objectives and student needs.

If you are asking students to create products during your lessons, be sure to design a way to collect them. You might, for instance, ask for electronic submissions or leave wire baskets at each station.

Differentiating Stations

There may be countless ways to personalize learning by using stations, but we suggest paying special attention to how co-teaching can help you serve and support your diverse learners. For example, you can vary the personal supports you provide at stations. Sometimes you may both want to teach mini-lessons at different stations. On another day, you may both want to facilitate the station teaching lesson so you can engage in observations of learning. On yet other days, you may vary roles so that one of you is working with individual students during the lesson and the other is primarily facilitating the entire activity.

Of course, there are many more ways you can differentiate using a stations teaching model. We offer a few ideas here:

» Allow students to choose which stations to visit or offer choices within stations (e.g. read a passage or watch a video).
» Provide a range of materials at some or all stations so students have a variety of ways to learn and show what they know.
» Label one station as the enrichment/discovery station and let all students who finish their work visit this station or assign some students to skip certain stations and move to that station early.
» Ask students with exceptional skills or abilities in certain areas to design their own stations and facilitate activities at those stations.
» Ask students for ideas on how to make the station lessons more challenging, relevant or interesting.
» Give some students opportunities to spend all of their time at one station working on a specific independent project.
» Assign one teacher the role of enrichment specialist. This person should check in with various students and provide them with discussion opportunities or more challenging content.
» Assign one teacher the role of support specialist. This person should check in with struggling students and provide them with any necessary cues, materials or strategies.
» Have some students take on leadership roles within some of the stations. These individuals can offer support to those needing it, demonstrate a skill or show off products they have created.

TO DO LIST

☐ Get on the “station wagon”! Develop a lesson plan for a station teaching model and teach the lesson.
☐ Discuss the lesson. How did it go? What would you have to tweak to use this model again?
☐ Consider the ideas offered for differentiating instruction in a station teaching model. Try one of these ideas to support students with unique learning profiles in your classroom.
### TABLE 16.2

#### Station Teaching Examples

**Reading/Literacy: Kindergarten**

A Kindergarten teacher and a speech pathologist regularly co-teach during language arts lessons. During a lesson on "how things grow," three stations were used. The speech pathologist read two books about gardening at station one.

At station two, students independently wrote in their journals about what they learned about growing food at a trip to a farm. At station three, students engaged in a scientific exploration of seeds and recorded observations in journals.

**Math: Middle School**

Four stations are used regularly by a middle school math team. One of the stations changes throughout the year, but the three constants are the teacher-led station where the general education teacher introduces new content to a small group of students, the tech table where students practice a recently learned concept using a game on a popular math website and the group challenge station where students work together to solve a complex problem. The special education teacher in this classroom is the station facilitator; his job is to check with students at all stations, to answer questions and to keep the rotations moving smoothly and on time. Some students rotate through all of the stations, but others visit only one or two, repeating some stations for purposes of reinforcement or enrichment.

**Music: Middle School**

Four stations are occasionally used in a middle school music class. One is designed for listening to recordings of music (e.g., African drumming, jazz solos), one for collaboratively composing music, one for learning a new skill and one for researching artists, events and other related material on the web. Sometimes the music teacher facilitates the stations and students participate in each activity independently. Other times, however, the lessons are co-taught and the music teacher works with students on their compositions while a special educator acts as a facilitator, engages in observations or takes data on student IEP objectives.

**Social Studies: High School**

Stations are often used by one co-taught social studies team to introduce new units. At one teacher-led station, students are required to engage in close readings of primary documents related to the new content. The other teacher leads a second station where students look at artifacts or take a virtual fieldtrip to a location related to upcoming lessons. At a third station, students typically have to engage in some type of informal research. This is usually an independent learning station, but it is sometimes led by the school’s library assistant.

**French: High School**

Five stations are used each Friday in a high school French class. The themes of the stations stay constant throughout the year. One station is a conversation station where students talk to their French teacher and a few peers in French. Another station is a kiddle lite station where students work alone or with partners to translate picture books into English. At a third station, students work on their writing with an interactive software program. At the fourth station, students practice vocabulary words using any one of three different methods. At the fifth station, students complete workbook exercises. Since there are several stations on the autism spectrum in this classroom, a special educator occasionally co-teaches with the French teacher. He typically spends time supporting students as they play the vocabulary games and access the software program.
One of the co-teaching structures that often gets forgotten in the bustle of the busy school year is one teach/one observe. Teachers may not see the need for observation when they have so much going on in terms of planning curriculum, delivering instruction and assessing learners, but it is hard for teams to grow in skill and ability if they don't take time to look around the classroom, “kidwatch” and evaluate their practices. Therefore, we are going to use every inch of the next few pages to help you focus on the importance of this underutilized co-teaching structure.

**Does My Pumpkin-Scarecrow-Candycorn Sweater Clash With My New Leopard-Print Clipboard?**

In most aspects of life, we can all profit from an honest assessment every once in a while. If you have ever unknowingly dry-erased the whiteboard with your backside, you know what we mean. Whether you want help collaborating more effectively with the therapists on your team, figuring out whether or not you need more navy-blue Sharpies in your desktop collection or determining if the fluorescent lights cast you in a flattering hue, you should be able to turn to your co-teacher for support.
If you have developed a strong partnership, your co-teacher should be able to play various roles in your professional life and vice versa. Sometimes, you will need your partner to serve as a coach of sorts. Other times, you will just need a sounding board. Still other times, you will need to turn to your co-teacher to evaluate your work. Observer may be one of the most important roles you adopt, but it can also be one of the most challenging. Evaluation can feel intimidating—kind of like stepping under or behind a giant magnifying glass—but it can also be an incredibly useful way to help improve classroom practice.

**Who Am I Watching & What Should I See?**

Most co-teachers who utilize one teach/one observe do so routinely as a way to reach a targeted goal. Therefore, observation is not usually done for an entire day or even an entire lesson. Instead this structure will likely result in the best outcomes when used (a) on a weekly or monthly basis for short segments of time (five to fifteen minutes), and (b) to focus on particular aspects of your practice or of student behavior.

What to observe will vary from team to team as the feedback you seek will likely be connected to personal goals, student goals or district and state goals. We suggest that all teams consider using at least two kinds of observations across the school year—student observation and teacher observation.

**Student Observation**

At times, it will be useful for one teacher in your partnership to take a step out of the instructional role and simply observe learners in the classroom. This can help both of you attend to student behaviors that are hard to study in any meaningful way when you are in the midst of creating *Romeo and Juliet* puppet shows with twenty-six teenagers. You can either target the behaviors of all students (appropriate when a particular group of students seem to be struggling or when a group is challenging to both of you in any way) or just one or two students who may have needs and goals that require ongoing assessment. When engaged in student-focused observations, it can be helpful to give both in the partnership a chance to serve in this role for a period of time so that the dynamic between students and each individual teacher can be taken into account. For instance, if one of you seems to be more effective at supporting a student with emotional needs, you can explore why that might be happening and use that knowledge to better support not only that student, but potentially others in the classroom as well.
One teach/one observe is particularly useful when you have students with disabilities in your classroom who require regular assessment of individual social, communication, behavior or academic skills. However, we feel this practice can be helpful to every teacher, no matter the needs of his or her students, so keep in mind that there are many different behaviors that you may want to take time to observe. See Table 17.1 for student observation ideas.

**TABLE 17.1**

One Teach/One Observe: Student Behaviors

- communication skills (e.g., making on-target contributions to discussions)
- social skills (e.g., turn taking, using appropriate voice volume)
- academic skills (e.g., reading fluently)
- use of learning tools (e.g., completing a graphic organizer, working with manipulatives)
- use of curricular adaptations (e.g., following a visual checklist, using note-taking software)

**Teacher Observation**

The second application for one teach/one observe is using it to provide feedback for your partner. For instance, a team might set a goal of increasing student involvement during whole-class discussion and lecture. Co-teaching partners might then observe one another to (a) ensure that each teacher is meeting the goal, and (b) informally evaluate the impact of any teaching changes that have been made (e.g., pausing to allow students to “turn and talk”). Observation can also be used to address certain course and content goals. For example, one team we know set a goal to improve their Socratic questioning techniques. They use the following questions as guidelines in observation:

- Was the goal for the discussion made clear?
- Did the teacher respond to most/many answers with a question?
- Did the teacher question inferences, interpretations and conclusions where appropriate? (e.g., “What did you mean by that?”)
- Did the teacher stay focused on key ideas and concepts?
- Did the teacher examine point of view?
- Did the teacher call for more precision or greater detail when needed?
- Were adaptations for Rachel and Harrison in place (e.g., cue cards)? Did Harrison seem to have a way to participate in the discussion? Did Rachel and Harrison participate in the discussion?
See Table 17.2 for teacher observation ideas.

**TABLE 17.2**

**One Teach/One Observe: Teacher Behaviors**

- emphasizing/reinforcing key lesson objectives
- calling on boys & girls equally
- providing clear directions
- giving clear demonstrations
- pacing lessons appropriately
- modeling learning strategies (e.g., questioning, annotating)
- integrating assistive technology (AT) into the lesson
- using total physical response (TPR) strategies
- providing wait time before asking students to respond
- encouraging student exploration/questioning
- creating opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in lesson/discussion
- providing feedback
- avoiding the use of nuisance words (e.g., *like, uh, um*)
- providing direct or indirect support to certain students
- encouraging peer interaction and support
- addressing IEP objectives during lesson/providing enrichment opportunities during lesson
- using more than one mode of output during lesson
- teaching to more than one or two of the multiple intelligences

**Two Teach/Two Observe**

Do you like the idea of observing, but hate the notion of being apart from your co-teaching partner for even one lesson? We have you covered. We feel that one teach/one observe is invaluable to the professional development of co-teachers, but we acknowledge that sometimes it may actually be most appropriate to engage in observations as you teach: together.

When we started our teaching careers, it was a challenge to video record in the classroom. You had to go to the AV department, check out a camera, learn how to use it by reading a seventy-eight-page manual, find a space to plug it in and hope the lesson was still going on by the time you were ready to press “record.” Have times ever changed! Today, most of us have video cameras on our phones and carry our recording devices in our book bags, backpacks and back pockets. Now, two teach/two observe is almost as easy as its solo counterpart. You simply set up your camera and shoot a...
lesson. Then, edit your video to highlight the pieces you want to target in your observation. Now you can use the footage not only to evaluate your work, but potentially to demonstrate to others (e.g., administrators, parents) the awesomeness of your co-teaching partnership.

**How Can These Observations Change Your Life (Or At Least Positively Influence Your Teaching)?**

Getting data about how you are doing is very much like stepping on a scale for the purpose of weight loss. The number you see in the window can be helpful, but only if you do something with the information. If the news is positive, you can take steps to continue to see positive outcomes and possibly even work toward a loftier goal. If the news is not so great, that's okay. You have taken an important step by just participating in the observation. Now you can take that data and make improvements based on what you have learned. Start by talking to your partner about your findings. Then revisit the goals of the observation. Address the specific behaviors you targeted. Finally, you can expand the discussion and touch on other related issues.

Consider the following questions to get you started:

» **How did I do on the specific behaviors (e.g., eliciting responses, pacing the lesson)**
   I asked you to observe?
» **What struck you about the behavior/performance of specific students in this lesson?**
» **How did the students do on any specific behaviors we targeted in this observation?**
» **What evidence of student learning did you observe?**
» **What went well?**
» **What did you notice?**
» **What surprised you?**
» **Have you noticed improvement in any skills/competencies we have targeted?**
» **What changes do we need to make?**
» **What questions do you have?**