

# Co-Teaching: Program Essentials, Development and Implementation

## Basics of Co-Teaching

- Co-teaching is a service delivery option. Students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) receive some or all of their specialized instruction and related services in the context of the general education classroom.
- Both professionals participate fully, although differently, in the instructional process. General educators maintain primary responsibility for the content of the instruction; special educators hold primary responsibility for facilitating the learning process.
- Instruction employs evidence-based practices.
- The students are heterogeneously grouped as a class, and both teachers work with all students.
- Various combinations of students and group sizes are used.
- Each student's educational potential is realized.
- Co-teachers are firmly committed to "our" students, not "yours" and "mine."
- It is NOT a general education classroom with one "real" teacher and one who serves as "the help" or "an extra set of hands."
- It is NOT a pullout special education program that has been relocated to the corner of a general education classroom.

## Program Essentials

### Types of Co-Teaching:

- Supportive Co-teaching – One member of the team takes the lead role and the other member rotates among students to provide support.
- Parallel Co-teaching - Both teachers instruct different heterogeneous groups of students.
- Complementary Co-teaching – A member of the co-teaching team does something to supplement or complement the instruction provided by the other member of the team (e.g., models note taking on a transparency, paraphrases the other co-teacher's statements).
- Team Teaching - The members of the team co-teach alongside one another and share responsibility for planning, teaching, and assessing the progress of all students in the class.

*Two or more professionals with equivalent licensure are co-teachers:*

- One general educator
- One special educator or specialist
- Paraprofessionals are NOT considered a co-teacher

### Types of Common Planning Time:

Shared: daily or weekly mutual time

Macro: periodic high quality meetings to plan 2-3 weeks at a time

Comp time: after hours

Collaboration: working as a staff to build common time

Schedules: example may be common specials schedules (including music, art, PE)

Use of substitute teachers

## Teacher Responsibilities:

General Education Teacher comes prepared with themes, projects, student expectations and ideas about division of duties and co-teaching approaches:

- Starts with instruction then begin assessments (begin teaching and then test for knowledge)
- Learning strategist
- Content knowledge
- Curriculum alignment
- Content development

Special Education Teacher is responsible for collaborating about teaching responsibilities, completing significant adaptations and/or accommodations to the assignments for student success and discussing student expectations and desired outcomes.

- Begin with assessment than instruction (test for knowledge and then instruct based on need)
- Learning strategist
- Has different techniques to motivate children
- Curriculum adaptation for diverse learners
- Knowledge of disabilities

## Accommodations and Modifications

- Accommodations are changes in materials or procedures that enable students to meaningfully access instruction and assessment.
- Assessment Accommodations do not change the construct that is being measured.
- Accommodations mediate the effects of a student's disability and do not reduce learning expectations.
- Assessment Modifications, in contrast, do change the construct that is being measured, creating challenges for assessment validity.
- Modifications fundamentally decrease learning expectations and prevent students from accessing the general education curriculum in a meaningful way.

## Differentiation

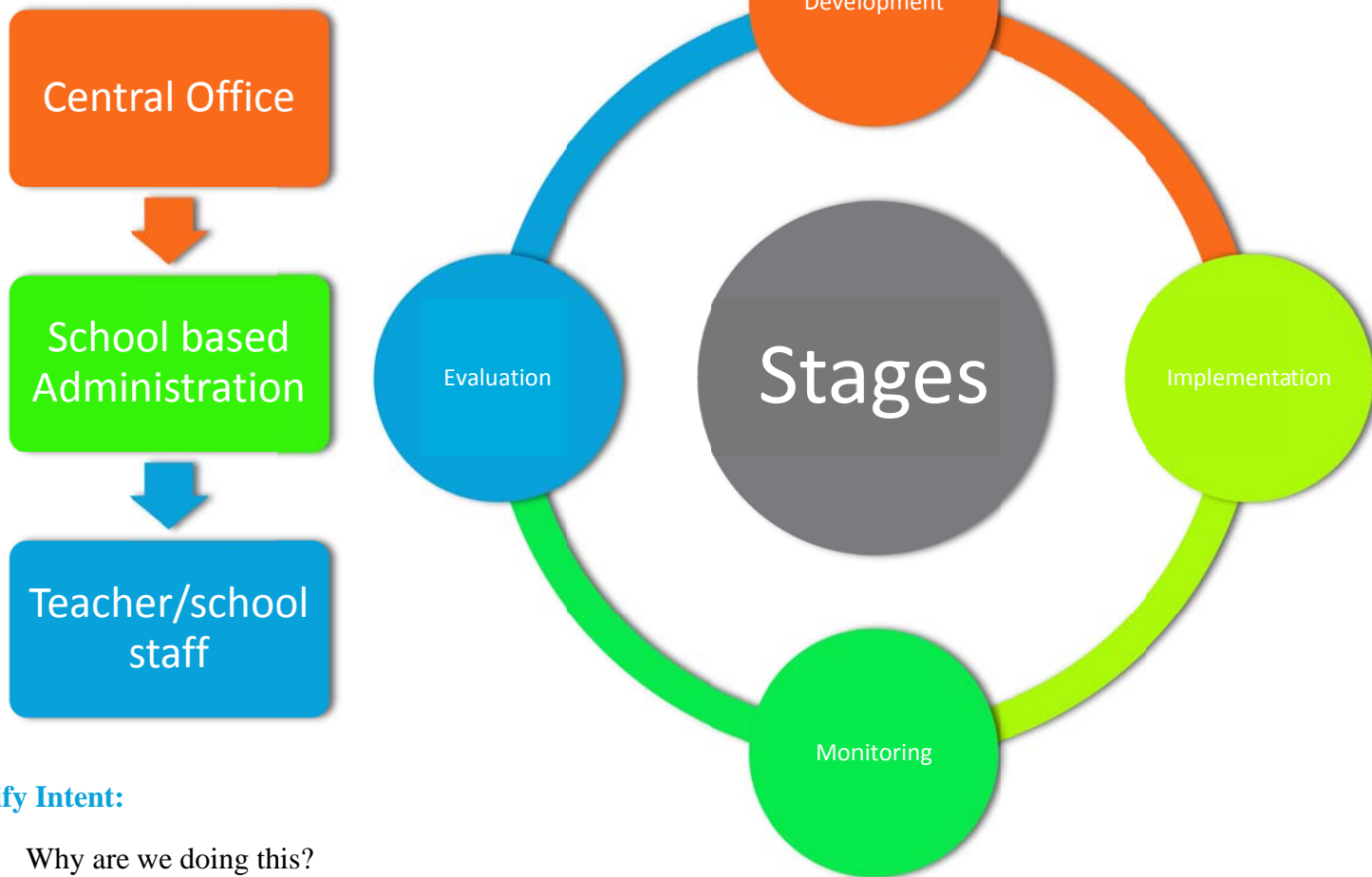
Differentiation: Term used to capture the innumerable tools and strategies teachers proactively use to ensure that ALL students – regardless of their unique needs – learn the curriculum.

*What is it?* Consistently using a variety of instructional approaches to modify content, process, and/or products in response to learning readiness and interest of academically diverse students.

*Why is it important?* Regardless of ability level, the majority of students are spending more and more time within a general education setting. With this trend comes a vast level of student interests, readiness and learning styles; therefore, teachers need to accommodate their curriculum to meet the needs of ALL students.

## Program Development and Implementation

Refer to the Oklahoma Co-Teaching Framework



### **Clarify Intent:**

- Why are we doing this?
- What will it look like and who will this affect?
- Establish a planning structure: Identify the team members and their responsibilities.

### **Assess:**

- Account for needs to be addressed and set goals and expectations for the team and the students.
- Describe ideal outcome: What is the ultimate goal?

### **Specify Components:**

- Subject areas, curriculum, planning time, professional development.
- Match context and resources: Balance between what is ideal and what can be done and supported now.
- Establish Timelines: Start small and build timelines that are reasonable and attainable.

### **Awareness:**

- Discuss student's needs.
- Expectations for both teachers and students.
- Types of support.

**Select Co-Teachers:** Effective teams need to have mutual respect for each other personally and professionally.

**Preparation of Personnel:** Professional development opportunities

**Program Effectiveness:** An instrument of evaluation to measure checks and balances of whether intended goals are being reached; if not, addressing what needs to be done to make this happen.

- Continue with professional development
- Share information with all staff so the program can grow

**Evaluate:**

- How are we doing?
- What can we do better?
- What can we do more of?
- What should we do less of?

**Potential Roadblocks:**

- Ages or grade levels of the student
- Content being taught
- Instructional strategies
- Teachers' knowledge and skills as professional educators
- Teachers' commitment to co-teaching and "chemistry" as a partnership
- Amount of shared teaching time each day
- Length of time the partnership has existed
- Class schedules
- Extent of administrative support

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- Friend, M. (2008). Co-Teach! A handbook for creating and sustaining effective classroom partnerships in inclusive schools. Friend: Greensboro, NC
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