# Preparing to Co-Teach

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| **Actions** |  | **Questions to ask yourself or others** |
| Assess the current environment | •  • | What type of collaboration currently exists between general and special education?  Has there been any discussion of inclusion, collaboration, or coteaching? |
|  | • | How do teachers react when they hear about students with special needs in general education classes? Who reacts favorably? |
| Move in slowly | • | What is our joint understanding of co-teaching as a service delivery model? |
|  | • | May I co-teach a lesson with you? |
|  | • | Are there any areas that you feel less strongly about, in which I might be able to assist? |
| Involve the administration | • | How is the district addressing the LRE mandate and the inclusive movement? |
|  | • | Would our school site be willing to be proactive by including coteaching? |
|  | • | What discipline areas will we target first? |
|  | • | How will we ensure that support is provided across all content areas, including electives? |
|  | • | Would we be able to count on administrative support, especially with co-planning time and scheduling assistance? |
| Get to know your partner | • | Could we complete a co-teaching checklist to help guide us in discussing our personal and professional preferences? |
|  | • | Are there any pet peeves or issues that I should know prior to our working together? |
|  | • | Do we both have similar levels of expertise about the curriculum and instructing students with disabilities? |
|  | • | How shall we ensure that we are both actively involved and neither feels over- or under-utilized? |
|  | • | What feedback structure can we create to assist in our regular communications? |
| Create a workable schedule | •  • | How often will co-teaching occur (daily, a few times a week, for a specific unit, etc)?  What schedule would best meet the needs of the class and both teachers? |
|  | • | How can we ensure that this schedule will be maintained consistently so that both co-teachers can trust it? |
|  | • | How will we maintain communication between co-taught sessions? |
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# Preliminary Discussion Questions

It is helpful for potential co-teachers to discuss their teaching philosophies, routines, and student expectations before making the commitment to co-teach. The questions below are designed to serve as a starting point for co-teaching discussion. Depending on previous experiences working together, some questions may not be relevant. Review the questions in advance and plan to spend about an hour together discussing these items. Remember that differences of opinion are inevitable; *differences are OK and perfectly normal*. Effective co-teachers learn and grow professionally from their work together. Competent professional skills, openness, and interest in working together are more important than perfect agreement on classroom rules.

1. What are your expectations for students regarding:
   1. Participation?
   2. Daily preparation?
   3. Written assignments and/or homework completion?

1. What are your basic classroom rules? What are the consequences?

1. Typically, how are students grouped for instruction in your classroom?

1. What instructional methods do you like to use (e.g. lectures, class discussions)?

1. What practice activities do you like to use (e.g. cooperative learning groups, labs)?

1. How do you monitor and evaluate student progress?

1. Describe your typical tests and quizzes.

1. Describe other typical projects and assignments.

1. Do you differentiate instruction for students with special needs? If so, how?

1. Is any special assistance given to students with disabilities during class? On written assignments? On tests and quizzes?

1. How and when do you communicate with families?

1. What are you strengths as a teacher? What are your areas of challenge? How about your pet peeves?

1. What do you see as our potential roles and responsibilities as co-teachers?

1. If we decide to co-teach together, what are your biggest hopes for our work as a team? What are your biggest concerns?

Walter-Thomas, C. & Bryant, M. (1996). Planning for effective co-teaching. *Remedial and Special Education, 17*(4)

# Co-Teaching in the Classroom

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| **If one of you is doing this:** | **The other can be doing this:** |
| Lecturing | Modeling notetaking on the board or overhead, ensuring “brain breaks” so that students can process lecture information |
| Taking attendance | Collecting and reviewing last night’s  homework; introducing a social or study skill |
| Passing out papers | Reviewing directions; modeling the first problem on the assignment |
| Giving instructions orally | Writing down instructions on the board; repeating or clarifying any difficult content |
| Checking for understanding with large heterogeneous group of students | Checking for understanding with small heterogeneous group of students |
| Circulating, providing one-on-one support as needed | Providing direct instruction to whole class |
| Prepping half the class for one side of a debate | Prepping the other side of the class for the opposing side of the debate |
| Facilitating a silent activity | Circulating, checking for comprehension |
| Providing large group instruction | Circulating, using proximity control for behavior management |
| Running last minute copies or errands in the building | Reviewing homework, previewing a study skill or test-taking strategy |
| Re-teaching or pre-teaching with a small group | Monitoring the large group as they work independently |
| Facilitating sustained silent reading | Reading aloud quietly with a small group; previewing upcoming information |
| Reading a test aloud to a group of students | Proctoring a test silently with a group of students |
| Creating basic lesson plans for standards, objectives, and content curriculum | Providing suggestions for modifications, accommodations, and activities for diverse learners |
| Facilitating stations or groups | Also facilitating stations or groups |
| Explaining a new concept | Conducting roleplay or modeling the concept, asking clarifying questions |
| Considering modification needs | Considering enrichment opportunities |

Material from “Tips and Strategies for Co-Teaching at the Secondary Level” by Wendy Murawski and Lisa Dieker, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, May/June 2004, p. 57.

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