

Co-teaching: Myths and Realities



What are some myths about co-teaching?

Myth: *Co-teaching means having two teacher candidates in a classroom.*

Reality: Only one teacher candidate is in the classroom with a cooperating teacher. The co-teaching occurs between the cooperating teacher and the teacher candidate.

Myth: *Teacher candidates must be left on their own to sink or swim.*

Reality: Teacher candidates in co-teaching settings are supported in their efforts to become a licensed professional. The cooperating teacher models and assists as the teacher candidate acquires the knowledge and skills of teaching. This is in sharp contrast to the sink or swim model that assumes the teacher candidates must learn how to become a teacher on their own.

Myth: *Co-teaching inhibits a teacher candidate's ability to develop classroom management skills.*

Reality: Rather than having to manage a classroom on their own, a teacher candidate has the support necessary to implement effective classroom management strategies. As the skills are gained, the teacher candidate takes the lead to make sure s/he can manage the classroom all by her/himself.

Myth: *Teacher candidates don't get enough solo teaching time with co-teaching.*

Reality: Teacher candidates must have opportunities to teach alone. The amount of time a candidate is left totally alone varies and is based on his/her skills in managing a classroom. It is important that the teacher candidate demonstrates that they can handle a classroom all by themselves.

Myth: *It takes too much time to co-plan.*

Reality: It may take more time to co-plan in the early stages of co-teaching. In order to co-teach effectively, the cooperating teacher and teacher candidate must have shared planning time. However, the benefits of co-planning are exciting. Teacher candidates get a much deeper understanding of the entire curriculum through co-planning and co-taught lessons lead to increased academic performance of P-12 students making the time spent in planning beneficial to all.

Myth: *Teacher candidates will never have full responsibility of the classroom.*

Reality: For a period of time, each teacher candidate will lead the planning, organization, delivery, and assessment of instruction in a co-taught classroom. Candidates will also be responsible for directing other adults, including the cooperating teacher, thus learning the skills necessary for effectively managing the human resources in a classroom. the classroom is a necessity in our schools.

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Myth: *Co-teaching is not the “real world.” When a teacher candidate becomes certified they will be alone in the classroom.*

Reality: To accommodate large class sizes, students with special needs, English Language Learners, and the push in model of Title 1 and special education, today's classrooms will often have special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and volunteers working alongside the classroom teacher. It is rare to find a classroom where the assigned teacher is always working solo. The need to collaborate with other adults in the classroom is a necessity in our schools.

Myth: *Co-teaching doesn't work at the secondary level.*

Reality: Co-teaching strategies have been used successfully at all grade levels and in every content area. Co-teaching can be especially effective at the secondary level as teachers are dealing with larger class sizes and greater diversity of students.

Myth: *Teacher candidates don't have to write lesson plans for co-teaching because they co-plan.*

Reality: Co-planning takes place before the formal lesson plans are written. Once a cooperating teacher and a teacher candidate co-plan, the candidate takes the information and writes up lesson plans, which will be reviewed by the cooperating teacher.

Myth: *Co-teaching can only work in the teacher candidate and the cooperating teacher have the same learning or teaching style.*

Reality: No two people have the same style because we are all uniquely different. Teacher candidates entering the workplace must be able to work with a variety of learning and teaching styles. Through workshops, teacher candidates and cooperating teachers are made aware of many different types of learning and teaching styles, how they work, and how to work together with individuals who have different styles.

Myth: *The university supervisor should only observe a teacher candidate when they are teaching solo.*

Reality: When a supervisor observes a teacher candidate co-teaching with a cooperating teacher, they focus the observation on what the candidate is doing. If the candidate is leading a small group, it may be helpful to move closer to that group to observe him/her. If the teacher candidate is teaming with his/her cooperating teacher, focus the observation on the candidate's teaching skills, ability to collaborate with the cooperating teacher, management skills, organizations, etc.

Myth: *The professional development workshops I will need to attend to participate as a cooperating teacher, university supervisor, or teacher candidate will require that I miss several days of work or part of my summer.*

Reality: All involved in co-teaching are required to attend a 3½-hour professional development session. The co-teaching professional development workshop is only required once for cooperating teachers and university supervisors. When a teacher candidate is placed with a cooperating teacher, a second 3-hour “pair's workshop” is provided so that both can begin the co-teaching collaboration with shared expectations. The pair's workshop needs to be repeated each time a cooperating teacher accepts a new teacher candidate as a co-teacher. The University of Minnesota- Twin Cities will make every effort to partner with school districts to offer these co-teaching professional development opportunities at a time that is convenient and informative for all involved.

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