

INTEGRATED CO-TEACHING¹ IN THE ENGLISH AS A NEW LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Topic Brief #2:

Co-Teaching in an Integrated English as a New Language (ENL) Classroom

What it is. Co-teaching in an Integrated ENL class consists of a certified English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher and a certified K-5 classroom teacher or 6-12 content area teacher (English language arts, math, science, or social studies) co-delivering instruction with the intention of meeting both content and English language and literacy development goals simultaneously. The co-teachers select language and content goals, align appropriate standards, develop whole class and small group learning activities, plan for appropriate scaffolds and supports to be in place, and assess both language and content goals for all students collaboratively (See more on this in *Topic Brief #3: The Collaborative Instructional Cycle*).

What it is not. Co-teaching is not an opportunity for a grade-level or content-area teacher to have a teaching assistant or helper in the class. It is not one teacher providing instruction while the other teacher roams around the room. Co-teaching is not each teacher taking turns with one teaching while the other looks on. It is not the job of the ESOL teacher to be a one-on-one tutor, translate core content materials, push-in and pull aside only the Multilingual Learners (MLs) and English Language Learners (ELLs), or instruct MLs and ELLs in any other form of skill-based or content-based learning that is not fully aligned to grade-appropriate core content standards and curricula. There is no co-teaching unless lessons are collaboratively planned and implemented, and student learning is jointly assessed.

In sum, co-teaching is a collaborative delivery of co-planned instruction also utilizing collaboratively reviewed assessment data. Table 1 summarizes what co-teaching is and what it is not.

Table 1: What Co-Teaching Is and What Co-Teaching Is Not

Co-teaching is . . .	Co-teaching is not . . .
Both teachers planning for the lesson that is co-delivered	One teacher planning the lesson, the other walking in and attempting to co-deliver the lesson One teacher planning, the other teacher assisting
Both teachers teaching all the students in the room	My students vs. your students My job vs. your job My responsibility vs. your responsibility

¹For the purposes of this document, the term “co-teaching” refers to team-taught Integrated English as a New Language (ENL) classes and should not be confused with other co-teaching models except where otherwise indicated.

Co-teaching is . . .	Co-teaching is not . . .
Both teachers actively participating in the entire lesson	One teacher teaching, while the other performs routine non-instructional tasks (e.g., making copies, planning the next lesson, marking papers)
Co-teachers varying their co-teaching approaches based on student needs and the nature of the curriculum (See Topic Brief #4: Seven Models of Co-Teaching)	Co-teachers locking themselves into one model of instruction without the flexibility to respond to emerging and varying student needs
Both teachers participating in formative and summative assessment practices	The content area teacher maintaining all responsibility for student progress monitoring and assessment
Both teachers regularly engaging in professional reflections on their impact on student learning and on their own growth as co-teachers	Teachers limiting their communication time to class sessions

It is important to keep in mind the lesson well-captured by a 2015 National Education Association publication, *How educators can advocate for English learners: All in!*: “ELLs desperately need educators who believe in them, who recognize their assets, and who have the support and training they need to do their best by all of their students” (p19). Co-teaching for MLs and ELLs offers opportunity for ongoing, job-embedded capacity building between content area and ESOL teachers. Collaborative practices between teachers provide a clear path for sharing strategies to support new-language acquisition in the classroom, regardless of content area. Additionally, collaborative co-teaching creates opportunities for students to have access to core content standards and learning opportunities and to apply their language and content learning in authentic ways.

Building on a Framework of Inclusivity and Equity

When we consider how to best create inclusive learning environments for MLs and ELLs, we must determine how to build teacher capacity to recalibrate instructional practices within the co-taught class. Although it has been asserted that “the long-standing culture of teacher isolation and individualism, together with teachers’ preference to preserve their individual autonomy, may hinder deep-level collaboration to occur” (Vangrieken et al., 2015, p. 36), teacher collaboration is not only an integral practice in many K-12 schools, but it is also the key to successful co-teaching.

Inclusive pedagogy, a major theoretical framework and evidence-based practice, is based on the premise that teachers recognize and respond to all students’ needs and extend what is available to some students in order to make lessons accessible to all. While the notion of inclusive pedagogy is closely tied to instructional practices in the PreK-12 special education context, it also provides a helpful framework for working with MLs and ELLs in the co-taught Integrated ENL classroom. At the core of successful inclusive pedagogy is teacher collaboration and equitable learning opportunities for all students. This collaboration often includes or centers around co-teaching practices that allow two or more educators

to plan, deliver, and assess instruction for the sake of special populations while also setting challenging educational goals and delivering differentiated instruction for all students.

Co-Teaching in Integrated ENL vs. Special Education Inclusion

Co-teaching in special education inclusion may be traced back to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a federal law providing rights and protections for students with disabilities (SWDs) and ensuring that all SWDs have access to a free and public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). For many SWDs, co-teaching in an inclusion classroom is defined as the least restrictive environment within their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), since this model allows teachers to provide their students with full access to the core curriculum, deliver instructional adaptations and modifications, and support their social-emotional development. Co-teaching within the context of special education inclusion frequently takes place for the entire school day or a significant portion of the day. The class is configured using various whole-class and small-group strategies to deliver instruction with two or more teachers in the room. The main focus of co-teaching for SWDs is to provide students with the appropriate strategies, supports, and remediation to address the challenges associated with students' specific learning disabilities so that they are able to access the core curriculum.

The purpose of co-teaching for MLs and ELLs, within the context of an Integrated ENL class, is quite different. First and foremost, Integrated ENL is not a remedial program. The support for MLs and ELLs is particular to students learning a new language, based on their level of English-language proficiency. In addition to learning English, however, they also need access points to learn the general education curriculum. Therefore, instead of offering in-the-moment lesson support, coping strategies, or remediation, Integrated ENL co-teaching is intended to fully integrate academic language and literacy instruction within content-area classes that are co-planned and co-assessed through the two lenses of academic and linguistic demands and opportunities:



Research Support for Collaboration and Co-Teaching for ELLs and MLs

Collaboration and co-teaching have been researched and practiced to support English as a New Language learners for over 20 years (See for example, Dove & Honigsfeld 2020; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2012; Nagle, 2013; Yoon, 2021; Special Theme Issue of the *TESOL Journal* in Fall 2012 dedicated to collaboration and co-teaching). A considerable volume of research has focused on collaboration between general and special education teachers, and similar attention to collaboration for the sake

of MLs and ELLs is also expanding. Three decades ago, Fradd (1992) discussed the potential outcomes of teacher collaboration implemented to serve all students with special needs, including MLs and ELLs. Among others, Davison (2006) extensively researched collaboration among ESOL and content-area teachers with a special emphasis on the nature and challenges of developing collaborative and co-teaching relationships. She used the term *partnership teaching* (also commonly used in research and publications originating in the UK and emphasized, “[i]t builds on the concept of cooperative teaching by linking the work of two teachers, or indeed a whole department/year team or other partners, with plans for curriculum development and staff development across the school” (pp. 454–455).

York-Barr, Ghere, and Sommerness (2007) investigated the process and outcomes of a three-year implementation of a collaborative inclusive program model for MLs and ELLs and reported that teachers shared “a strong and nearly unanimous sense that students were highly advantaged by the inclusive and collaborative instructional models—academically, socially, and in terms of classroom participation,” and he noted positive achievement gains due to the collaborative practices (p. 321).

Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis (2008) also found significantly increased reading achievement scores over a three-year period in a Madison, Wisconsin school that moved to a full inclusion model—eliminating all pull-out services for all students including special education students, MLs, and ELLs. Through an extensive restructuring, the school was able to use existing human resources to make collaboration and co-teaching practices the dominant service delivery format, which yielded impressive achievement results and required no extra cost.

There is growing research-based evidence (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2014; Greenberg Motamedi et al., 2019; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2017; Peercy et al., 2017), practitioner-documentation (Foltos, 2018; Norton, 2016), and state and local policy initiatives (NYSED, 2018; DESE, 2019) to support teacher collaboration and integrated co-teaching services for MLs and ELLs. Four major themes emerging from the research indicate a positive impact on:

1. Teacher learning and capacity building (Martin-Beltrán & Madigan Peercy, 2014);
2. Teacher relationship and trust building (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2017; Pawan & Ortloff, 2011);
3. Shifts in instructional practices and role definition due to collaborative and co-teaching approaches to serving MLs and ELLs (Davison, 2006; Martin-Beltrán & Madigan Peercy, 2012; Peercy et al., 2017); and
4. Equity in education and culturally responsive teaching (Compton, 2018; Scanlan et al., 2012; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011).

Advantages of a Co-Teaching Approach to Integrated ENL

For decades, stand-alone (also called “pullout”) instruction has been a mainstay approach for the development of English language skills in many school districts for MLs and ELLs. In most of these situations, ENL programs had their own curricula apart from general education curricula, and were created to improve fluency and facility with English by typically focusing on the four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

An integrated co-teaching approach to content and academic language and literacy development goes beyond addressing the four domains. In doing so, it creates the following:

- A culture in which co-teachers focus on academic language, literacy practices, and rigorous content while *simultaneously* also building on and expanding MLs’ and ELLs’ multiliteracies.

- A collaborative learning space where MLs and ELLs interact with English-learning and English-fluent peers to co-construct meaning and engage in authentic, inquiry-based content exploration.
- A text-rich environment with a variety of text formats available including digital video and audio recordings, print, nonprint, and web-based reading materials.
- Multiple meaningful opportunities for close reading, authentic writing, and purposeful interactions that promote speaking and comprehension skills.

Components for a Successful Co-Teaching Model Implementation

The co-teaching approach to the Integrated ENL program model established in New York State in 2015 does not exist in a vacuum. Instead, a range of collaborative practices needs to be established and sustained to underscore the importance of a shared means to serving MLs and ELLs. According to one conceptual framework, formal collaborative practices to support MLs’ and ELLs’ linguistic and academic development may have either a direct instructional or non-instructional focus and be infused throughout MLs’ and ELLs’ education in a substantive way.

Instructional activities for collaborative teacher teams include: (1) joint lesson and unit planning, (2) curriculum development, mapping, and alignment, (3) co-developing instructional materials, (4) collaborative assessment of student work, and (5) co-teaching. At the same time, teachers are encouraged to create the space and opportunity for non-instructional collaborative activities that may include (1) joint professional development, (2) engaging in teacher research, (3) preparing for and conducting parent-teacher conferences in tandem, and (4) participating in extracurricular activities together.

See Table 2 for a summary of the types of opportunities for instructional collaborations teachers should be provided with to engage in along with the goal and anticipated outcome of each.

Table 2: Opportunities for Instructional Collaborations

Collaborative Practices Aligned to Instruction	Goals	Outcomes
Joint Lesson and Unit Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish attainable yet rigorous learning targets • Share instructional routines and strategies • Align instructional content • Design appropriate formative and summative assessment measures 	Shorter and longer term plans (daily lesson plans or unit plans) reflective of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and content objectives • Strategically selected instructional accommodations and accelerations • Differentiated instruction according to students’ academic and linguistic abilities.

Collaborative Practices Aligned to Instruction	Goals	Outcomes
Curriculum Development, Mapping, and Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plan and align instruction for a longer period of time ● Create an overall guide for joint planning, parallel teaching, and co-instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rigor, relevance, and research-informed approaches infused into the curriculum ● Instructional intensity in the planned and taught curriculum for MLs and ELLs
Co-developing Instructional Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scaffold instructional materials ● Select essential materials that support accelerated learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Differentiated, tiered, teacher-made resources ● Chunking of complex materials or tasks into manageable segments ● Selection of essential learning tools
Collaborative Assessment of Student Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jointly examine ELLs' language and academic performance ● Analyze student data and identify areas that need improvement or targeted intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shared formative and summative assessment measures ● Co-developed assessment tasks ● Joint goal setting for ELLs using assessment data
Co-Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Co-deliver instruction through differentiated instruction ● Use various models of instruction to establish equity between co-teaching partners and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Co-equal partnerships ● Shared ownership for learning ● Engagement in the entire collaborative instructional cycle

To ensure a successful, systemic approach to implementing co-teaching within the Integrated ENL classroom, consider the following recommendations:

1. Offer opportunities for sustained professional learning in instructional strategies, collaboration and co-teaching practices and culturally responsive and sustaining schooling for all teachers.
2. Strategically partner up teachers (allowing for volunteers) for co-teaching and place students to maximize teacher impact of MLs and ELLs learning.
3. Engage in collaborative curriculum planning and alignment work that ensures co-teachers' mutual understanding of the content-based and language development goals MLs and ELLs must meet.
4. Design a master schedule that allows for ample weekly collaborative planning time for grade-level teams, or subject matter teams, as well as individual co-planning time for co-teaching partners.

5. Establish clear expectations and set short-term and long-term goals for developing, implementing, and sustaining an integrated, co-taught ENL program.
6. Offer training and secure technology resources for co-teachers to co-plan using technology platforms.
7. Have instructional, facilitative, and/or collaborative coaching support in place prior to the beginning of the year; consider employing peers or coaching consultants for in-class visits and debriefing about co-teaching practices with co-teaching teams to ensure co-planning, co-assessment, and reflection all take place.

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