

# INTEGRATED CO-TEACHING<sup>1</sup> IN THE ENGLISH AS A NEW LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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## Topic Brief #4

### Seven Models of Co-Teaching

#### Instructional Delivery Through Co-Teaching

Implementing an integrated service delivery for the instruction of Multilingual Learners (MLs) and English Language Learners (ELLs)—through co-teaching (two teachers, same room) or by a dually certified teacher—requires fidelity to the instructional cycle as well as effective integration of the grade-level/content curricula with language instruction. The main goal of this type of instructional delivery is to develop the language and literacy competencies of MLs and ELLs while building their content-area knowledge and skills. With co-teaching, teaching partners assume multiple, changing roles within the co-taught classroom in order to deliver instruction that meets the needs of all students within the same classroom. At times, one teacher undertakes a leading role while the other teacher supports the lead teacher’s instruction in various ways. At other times, both teachers may take on similar roles and responsibilities.

#### Co-Teaching Models

This brief presents seven basic co-teaching configurations, also referred to as models, which co-teachers use to co-plan and co-deliver instruction. These models also serve as springboards for teachers’ ideas on how to set up classes and arrange their students for co-taught lessons. A description of each of these models identifies in a broad sense the particular roles and responsibilities of each teacher as well as the grouping of students in the class for instruction. For the most part, none of these models should be used for an entire class period. Each of these class configurations needs to be carefully selected based on the nature of the lesson objectives and the needs of the students.

These seven co-teaching models are:

1. One Group: One Leads, One “Teaches on Purpose”
2. One Group: Two Teach the Same Content
3. One Group: One Teaches, One Assesses
4. Two Groups: Two Teach the Same Content
5. Two Groups: One Pre-teaches, One Teaches Alternative Information
6. Two Groups: One Reteaches, One Teaches Alternative Information
7. Multiple Groups: Two Monitor and Teach

In the first three models, the students remain as one large group while each teacher’s purpose is varied. In the next three models, the students are divided into two groups (although they may not be divided equally) while each teacher assumes a different role. Finally, in the last model, students are divided into

<sup>1</sup>For 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.

multiple groups—from three to eight student clusters depending upon the size of the class, the lesson’s purpose, and the tasks to be completed—while both teachers facilitate.

Determining and selecting co-teaching models for instruction can be compared with recognizing different styles of dancing. Each style—be it ballet, ballroom, disco, hip-hop, jazz, modern, tap, etc.—has a series of dance steps and techniques that identify each of them by name. Yet, no two people dance any selected style in exactly the same way. Such is the case when deciding on and implementing various co-teaching models. Each of the models has its basic framework. However, based on the grade level or content area being addressed, variations of the way students are grouped as well as the roles and responsibilities of each teacher will become apparent in order to accommodate students’ needs, the instructional activities devised, and each co-teacher’s particular style of teaching. In addition, each co-teaching model will present its own set of advantages and challenges. Many of these will be addressed as each model is described in more detail as follows.

### Model 1: One Group: One Leads, One “Teaches On Purpose”



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With this model, one teacher leads the lesson while the other supports the learning of students in various ways. The role of the lead teacher is often to introduce new information, demonstrate a skill, or model the use of a new strategy. The teacher in the supporting role frequently circulates the classroom to help students by checking their understanding, clarifying instructions, scaffolding or repeating the information shared by the lead teacher, providing immediate feedback during guided practice, etc. The lead teacher’s role in this model should be shared so that both teachers have the opportunity to lead lessons from time to time. In this way, the students will view each teacher as equals in both ability, authority, and support.

**Advantages:** Teaching partners who select this model are better able to make the content of the lesson comprehensible for MLs and ELLs by providing on-the-spot verbal and procedural scaffolds for support as well as critical feedback. Consistent monitoring of students is also made possible through this configuration leading to adjustments in instruction for greater student success.

**Challenges:** This model might be considered as the “go-to” one when there is no time to plan. If this is the case, one teacher will typically bear the responsibility for all the planning and lesson preparation while the other teacher will be relegated as the “helper”. Consistent use of this model may not allow for adequately developing English language skills in any systematic way or be useful for co-teachers who aim to have equal leadership and a partnership in carrying out the responsibility of teaching all students in the classroom. In order to maintain a co-teaching partnership, it is important that while one teacher

assumes a leading role in a lesson, the other teacher should be actively providing support (e.g., teaching mini lessons to individuals or small groups in order to introduce or reinforce a concept or skill).

**Common uses:** This model is often used at the beginning of a lesson when one teacher leads in order to share new content via direct instruction, to activate students' prior knowledge through a short question-and-answer period, or to demonstrate a reading strategy such as making predictions or text annotation. Most co-teaching teams limit the use of this model to 5-10 minutes per lesson. One variation of this model is where one teacher leads for a short time and then switches roles with their co-teacher, who takes a turn at leading while the original lead teacher supports students.

## Model 2: One Group: Two Teach the Same Content

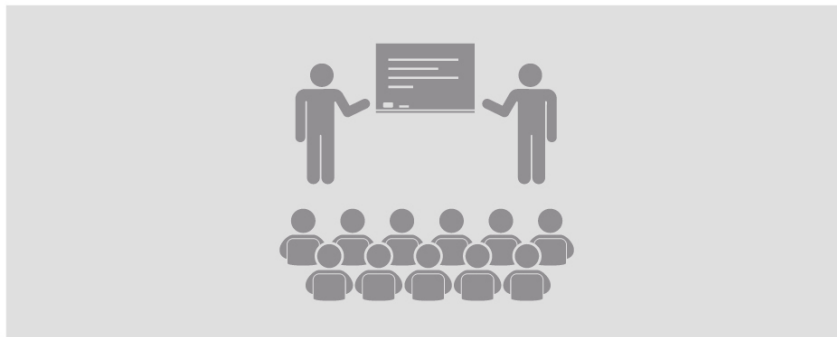


Image Credit: New America

With this instructional arrangement, both teachers lead the lesson together although they may take on different roles and responsibilities. Co-teachers using this model to freely “pass the chalk” (so to speak) from one to the other and provide students with rich, varied information, and opportunities to meet their different learning styles and needs. One teacher may be sharing new information while the other clarifies content material through note-taking, illustrations, and use of multi-media technology or offers home language support. One may suggest how to solve a problem or identify how to use a particular comprehension strategy while the other will demonstrate a different way to solve the same problem or suggest an alternative strategy to improve student understanding. In this way, each teacher brings his or her strengths to the instruction to support the learning of all students.

**Advantages:** Students can benefit from more detailed information, extensive demonstration, and the varied materials that can be presented when co-teachers use this model. With this team approach, the two teachers can model a dialogue and better help students explore the statements and questions necessary to communicate various ideas and to use language functions (e.g., analyzing, predicting, comparing, etc.). This model allows each teacher to assume different responsibilities—one might focus on the content while the other concentrates on the necessary academic language and literacy practices associated with the content—to focus more clearly and fully on lesson objectives.

**Challenges:** Planning is key with all co-teaching approaches, but detailed planning is far more crucial with this model. Teaching partners must well understand the basic format of the lesson in addition to being fluent in the standards, skills, strategies, and learning tasks to be addressed. Co-teachers using this model must develop the ability to make smooth transitions from one teacher to the next, establish hand signals or facial expressions to communicate clearly, and understand that neither person should be “stealing the show.” It will also take time for the ESOL teacher to become familiar with the content being

taught as well as for the grade-level/content teacher to become comfortable with the many ESOL strategies that need to be in place.

**Common uses:** Co-teachers generally use this model in two ways. One way is through direct instruction in which both teachers:

- share different pieces of new information,
- engage in a dialogue with one another,
- express opposing viewpoints or results of text analysis, or
- demonstrate separate problem-solving or comprehension strategies to meet students' learning preferences.

Another way to use this model is for each teacher to take on a different role or responsibility in teaching the lesson, such as:

- one person reads aloud while the other thinks aloud, comprehends aloud, or writes aloud capturing key notes;
- one teacher recites a poem while the other jots down vocabulary or pertinent information, and questions students about each item being noted, or
- when one teacher shares new information while the other teacher sketches, creates diagrams or timelines, or uses other nonverbal cues to increase student comprehension.

### Model 3: One Teaches, One Assesses



Image Credit: New America

With this co-teaching approach, one teacher will lead the lesson while the other circulates the room for the purpose of assessing students. This assessment may take place over a brief amount of time during the class period, or it may extend far into the lesson depending on the purpose of the assessment and which students are being targeted. The teacher in charge of the assessment often takes notes on the linguistic behavior of particular students or uses a checklist or rubric to evaluate student performance. At times, the observing teacher may also gather data on a technique or strategy that the lead teacher is employing to gain better insight into the instruction of the MLs and ELLs in the class.

**Advantages:** There is no better way to collect authentic assessment data than for one teacher to carefully observe students completing a task. This type of assessment is often difficult to accomplish with one teacher in the room, and so having a co-teacher allows for the collection of useful student information. This data gathering can assist in the development of future lessons that hone in on various language practices and literacy skills that are needed by the MLs and ELLs in the class. In addition, the teacher observing the lesson may offer feedback to the lead teacher on which parts of the lesson were most successful and which parts may need adjusting or differentiating for individual students.

**Challenges:** It may appear as if one teacher is responsible for planning the entire lesson, whereas it is important for both teachers to collaborate on lesson plans and procedures. Although one teacher is leading and mostly responsible for instruction, it is possible for the observing teacher to work with students during the lesson, as well. This model may not be effective if it is applied too frequently; however, regular intervals for planning data gathering and implementing it purposefully will best lead to its successful use.

**Common uses:** This model is typically used to capture students' progress that generally cannot be determined by other means. It lends itself to taking anecdotal notes on the oral language use of MLs and ELLs or observing students working in pairs or in teams to determine their language practice, cooperation, participation, and performance in completing tasks. Checklists or rubrics are frequently used to record information data. This model can quickly assess students' prior learning, and in turn, use the assessment data to group students for instruction, or implemented as an in-depth assessment practice, observing one or more students for an entire class period.

#### Model 4: Two Groups: Two Teach the Same Content

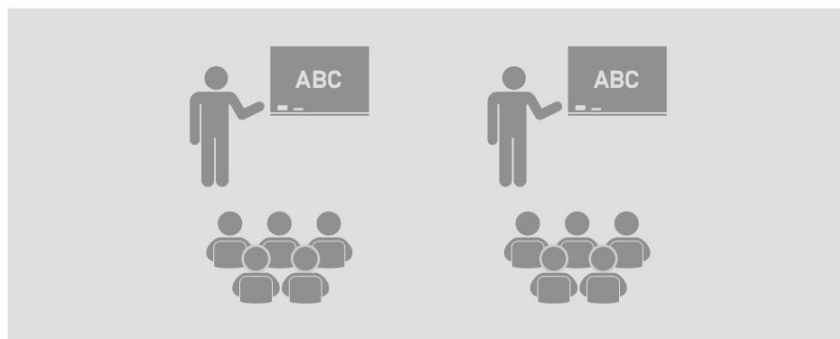


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With this approach, the class is divided into two groups that are fairly equal in size. The purpose for the division is to decrease the student-teacher ratio and thereby create instructional groups that have more contact time with one of the teachers for direct instruction, discussion, language and literacy practice, and guidance. Groups are either divided heterogeneously or homogeneously according to their ability in the content area or their language proficiency; it all depends on the lesson purpose and learning tasks planned. Co-teaching partners teach the same content to each group but may use different resources, texts, materials, and so on. At some time during the lesson, it is beneficial for the two teachers to exchange groups. In this way, all students will benefit from being instructed by both teachers and have the opportunity to use the varied and unique materials offered by each group experience.

**Advantages:** The decrease in the student-teacher ratio allows for an increase in the personal attention individual students obtain. This model can also create an environment where interaction is more frequent, and students may feel more at ease to communicate and take risks. Student groups can be devised to meet various learning preferences as well as enhance each teacher's ability to differentiate instruction.

**Challenges:** Adequate planning time and good class management are essential to make this approach run smoothly. There must be a willingness on the part of both teachers to share their resources and materials as well as an established trust so that each teacher will be able to execute the content

instruction and language development aspects of the lesson well. In addition, the level of sound in the room might also be distracting either to the students or the teachers.

**Common uses:** This model is frequently used to differentiate instruction for students in order to meet their unique needs. One group might work with one of the teachers at the interactive whiteboard to review the steps in a process or to be guided step by step and have extra practice time to solve similar problems. Meanwhile, the other group of students is working on the same concepts with the other teacher who is using hands-on materials or manipulatives to support student learning. Most often, the students swap places and have the opportunity to be with each teacher and to use different resources and materials even though the lesson presented to each group might be different in intensity, amount of support given, or the pace of instruction.

### Model 5: Two Groups: One Pre-Teaches, One Teaches Alternative Information

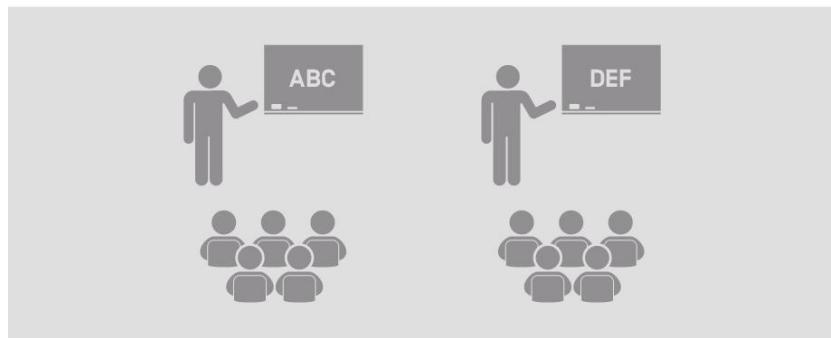


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MLs and ELLs often benefit from group instruction that focuses on building background knowledge, front-loading vocabulary, or previewing essential lesson concepts. With these purposes in mind, co-teaching partners can decide which students should be selected for pre-teaching based on their levels of preparedness and skill in the content to be taught. One teacher will work with these selected students to build their background knowledge and thereby enrich their experience with the topic to be studied. The other will delve into exceptional aspects of the lesson content—sharing a story, an article, or extraneous bits of information—with the remainder of the students to enhance their interest and expand their understanding. After a designated time, both groups are joined together to further explore what all students need to know about the lesson topic.

**Advantages:** Careful attention to the needs of individual students can be provided with this model along with opportunities to differentiate the content and process for their learning. Lessons devised in this way can help to build the basic vocabulary of one group while enhancing the vocabulary of the other. Students who need additional support can develop their self-confidence and increase their success due to the pre-taught sessions.

**Challenges:** Students who are frequently grouped for pre-teaching may feel stigmatized as subpar learners. It is important not only to group students by their levels of language proficiency; facility with the content should also be a factor to consider. By and large, flexible groupings can make this model more effective. In addition, consider the time set aside for pre-teaching and how it may affect some students' access to rigorous curricula and instruction.

**Common uses:** A frequent use of this model is to pre-teach vocabulary or build background knowledge that is critical to understanding new material. Other applications include conducting picture walks or

text tours with students to preview planned readings for the main lesson. In this way, pre-teaching allows students the time and opportunity to be exposed to new material and ask questions in the small group. Students can also be supported to map out pre-taught information via a graphic organizer for use as a reference during the main lesson. It is important to note that students should be grouped for pre-teaching according to their performance in class and not based on their English language proficiency labels.

### Model 6: Two Groups: One Reteaches, One Teaches Alternative Information

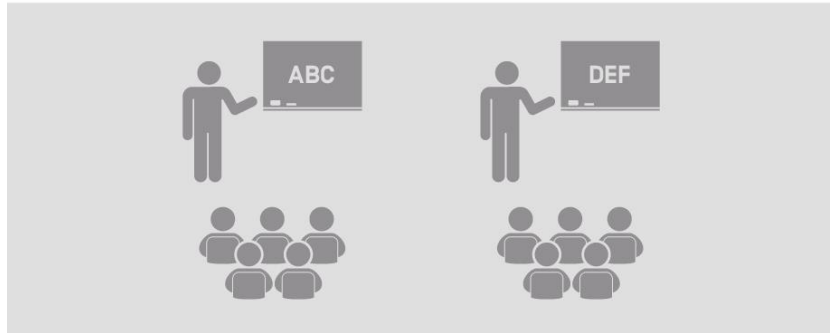


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The configuration for this model is the same as for Model 5; students are divided into two groups based on their knowledge and skills. Yet, the purpose for one of the groups is to review and practice previously taught content. This approach may be planned for the beginning of a lesson or used at any time during the lesson when monitoring students' progress reveals a need for additional support or an immediate intervention. In this situation, co-teaching partners must plan ahead and have prepared an alternative activity—often in the form of enrichment activities, additional readings, discussions, and writing—for the group of students who do not need a lesson review. This model allows MLs and ELLs the needed time to master essential information and skills to heighten their overall learning.

**Advantages:** The advantages of this model parallel those of the previous one. Individual students can be better supported to review content through scaffolded material and differentiated instruction. Small-group lessons can hone in on specific aspects of the topic that need to be addressed. This model allows for greater flexibility in that only a select number of students will be designated for reteaching.

**Challenge:** Depending on the individual needs of students and the types of interventions necessary, more than two groups might be required to adequately address learning issues. It may also be difficult to parallel review time with enrichment activities for some students in that they each may require different timeframes to complete. Again, caution must be exercised so that certain students are not labeled as low-performing.

**Common uses:** The primary use of this model is to offer immediate support and intervention. This model is often used provisionally and short-term when required. Co-teachers frequently anticipate the need for individualized instruction or interventions and incorporate this model when formative assessment during the lesson indicates the requisite review of certain core content concepts, disciplinary, language or literacy skills, and/or strategies with certain students before proceeding.



## Model 7: Multiple Groups: Two Monitor and Teach

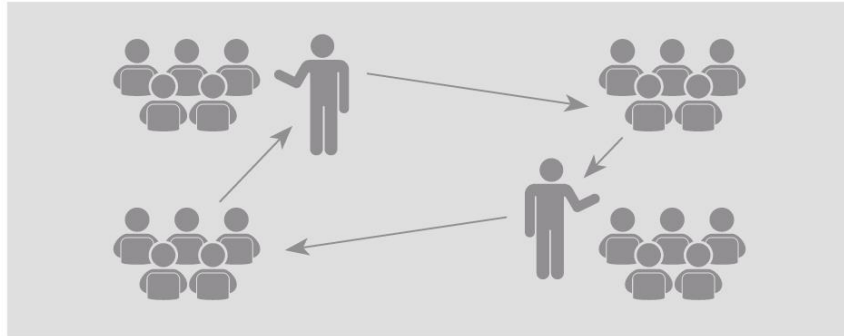


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The various arrangements of students and the array of flexible groupings this model provides allow teachers the ability to differentiate the content, process, and product of instruction and learning tasks. With this approach, both teachers either circulate the room to oversee student learning and offer support—clarify information, review instructions, explain critical concepts, assess student learning, and so on—or remain stationary to conduct mini-lessons with small groups that rotate from teacher to teacher to independent learning stations. When this model is used in combination with others, it can truly enhance and individualize students’ learning experience.

**Advantages:** This model favors high levels of student engagement due to the variety of activities presented and the ability to tier lessons according to students’ levels of language or expertise. It promotes the use of all four language domains—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—as students have an increased opportunity to interact with one another and learn from their peers.

**Challenges:** Some students may be overwhelmed or confused by the need to complete tasks within a certain time frame in order to shift to the next learning station. Younger students in particular may get distracted when they are not being directly monitored. If homogeneous grouping is used exclusively, it might lead to the segregation or labeling of some students. This model also requires careful planning, organization, and material development.

**Common uses:** Learning stations and learning centers as well as guided reading and writing are some of the most common applications of this model. Other examples of frequent uses include hands-on, collaborative practices among students using manipulatives to problem-solve in math, conducting experiments in science, examining and commenting on short pieces of text in English language arts, following the steps in a process to create something new—putting together a recipe, creating a model building with straws, developing a group story or response to a question in round-robin fashion, participating in guided discussions, and so on. The possibilities for this model’s use are endless, and that is why it is a frequent go-to model for co-teachers.

## Selecting Models for Instruction

Co-teaching partners often strategically select two or more models to employ during each class period. Selection of different approaches and the assignment of various roles and responsibilities for each teacher often depend on the lesson objectives, the learning tasks to be completed, individual student needs, the expertise of each teacher, and the desired outcomes. It is important to note that no single model of co-teaching instruction should be used exclusively, and many teachers develop their own variations or combinations of co-teaching approaches over time.



## Additional Examples

These seven co-teaching models should only serve as the starting point for configuring classes for co-taught instruction. There are multiple ways to combine or modify the co-teaching models presented in this document to meet MLs and ELLs needs. For example, one variation that appears to be popular is the “Two Teach, Two Support” model in which both teachers begin by teaching the same content to one group of students, and then both teachers circulate the class to guide students in practice and application of concepts. Co-teaching teams need to experiment with various ways to group students and use classroom space to enhance learning through variations of co-teaching practices.