

Co-Teaching

Co-Teaching Effectively

As a service member, you will at times find yourself in a role of leading hands-on lessons with another educator. Co-teaching may happen with another service member or with a classroom teacher. (Refer to “Relationships With Teachers” on p. 46 for tips on working with teachers.) Either way, this provides an opportunity to learn from and observe another person’s teaching style. It can also be tricky to navigate how to align your approach to leading a lesson. Planning ahead and establishing good communication with your co-teacher is key. Here are some tips:

Teaching Styles and Classroom Management

1. Take time to discuss your individual teaching styles. To create a cohesive lesson and a sustainable working relationship, be aware of your teaching styles and needs.
2. Discuss and agree upon a classroom management system (certain phrases, hand signals to use with students, etc.) to help create a consistent environment for students. If you are co-teaching with a classroom teacher, prioritize their regular classroom management expectations.

Planning for the Lesson

1. If you are developing a lesson from scratch, determine how you’ll build the lesson together. Will you meet in person? Use a shared Google Doc? How far ahead of time will you finalize the plans?
2. Create specific, clear time allotments for each activity in your lesson, and determine ahead of time who will teach each part so that you and your co-teacher can create a smooth and seamless transition between activities.

3. A strong lesson often involves visuals, handouts, and supplies that need to be prepared. Determine which of you will prepare for the lesson and gather necessary materials.

Roles During the Lesson

1. Review roles. Who will lead which part of the lesson? Are you both comfortable with the other person interjecting and adding additional information while teaching? Or is the preference for the other person to fully take a back seat when it’s not his or her turn to lead? A good option to consider is to try to ask each other this throughout the lesson: Do you have anything to add?
2. Discuss timing. How long do you anticipate each part of the lesson will take? If part of the lesson goes longer than expected, what is the plan for making up time?

Following the Lesson

1. Ask your co-teacher for constructive feedback on the lesson. Take a little time to debrief together and record ideas for improving the lesson, ideally while they’re still fresh.
2. If you plan to work together in the future, discuss how you will continue to grow and strengthen your lessons and your work dynamic. Providing constructive feedback is a great way to create a sustainable work dynamic. A common format is to share with one another “pros” (specific things that worked well) and “grows” (specific ideas for improvement).