

*Co-Teaching is defined as two teachers working together with groups of students, sharing the planning, organization, delivery of instruction, assessment of student learning, and physical space.*

There are many differences between a traditional model of student teaching and co-teaching. These include:

- *Involvement.* One clear distinction between a traditional and a co-taught student teaching experience is the level of involvement of the participants. In a traditional model, often one teacher is passive while the other is leading instruction. In co-teaching, both teachers are actively involved and engaged.
- *Preparation.* In a traditional model of student teaching, while there might be some initial training provided to cooperating teachers, there is rarely preparation of the cooperating teacher/teacher candidate dyad. In co-teaching, we not only prepare cooperating teachers to host a teacher candidate, we recommend that the pair come to a workshop where they begin to practice the communication and collaboration skills that are necessary for the co-teaching partnership to be effective.
- *Leading & Full-Time Instruction.* Almost all teacher education programs have identified minimum requirements for both the length of the student teaching experience and the number of days or weeks the candidate should take over the entire classroom. In a co-teaching experience, however, the cooperating teacher and teacher candidate share the role of lead teacher. All candidates are allowed opportunities to solo teach, but through the combination of solo and co-teaching, candidates prepared using this model often teach far more than candidates prepared using the traditional model of student teaching.
- *Introductions & Welcoming.* A critical element in the success of any student teaching experience is how the teacher candidate is viewed by the students. In co-teaching cooperating teachers are instructed to introduce their candidate as a teacher candidate or co-teacher, so the first word the students hear is teacher. Cooperating teachers are encouraged and expected to incorporate the teacher candidate into the classroom routines and instruction from the very first day.
- *Planning.* In a traditional student teaching experience, teacher candidates generally plan lessons in isolation, presenting them to their cooperating teacher in advance of delivering the lesson. In co-teaching, however, the pair is expected to identify a specific planning time where the primary focus includes the details of how, when, and which co-teaching strategies will be used for upcoming lessons. Teacher candidates will spend additional time planning for their part in each lesson. In the early stages of the experience the cooperating teacher leads the planning. As the term progresses the teacher candidate assumes more responsibility, ultimately taking the lead in planning. Pairs of cooperating teachers and teacher candidates are not expected to use co-teaching for every lesson, but determine when and which strategies would be most useful in assisting student learning.
- *Modeling and Coaching.* Often in traditional student teaching, cooperating teachers expect teacher candidates to be skilled in various instructional strategies, lesson planning, and classroom management techniques; possessing the ability to take over all aspects of the teaching day after weeks of observation. In the co-teaching experience, cooperating teachers are taught to provide modeling and coaching, making invisible skills visible to the teacher candidate. Co-teaching allows teacher candidates the time to practice instructional and management strategies with the help and support of their cooperating teacher.