PREPARED TO TEACH

Co-Planning & Reflection for Pairs

Essential Elements of Successful Pre-Service Co-Teaching

Establishing co-teaching as a main tenet of the clinical practice experience provides immense benefits for P-12 students, teacher candidates, and mentor teachers alike. Effective pre-service co-teaching prepares a teacher candidate to lead their own classroom by allowing them to refine their skills alongside an experienced mentor. Co-teaching, however, is only as effective as the mentor and candidate's co-planning and reflection time together. Pre-service co-planning is dedicated and scheduled time for a teacher candidate and mentor, a co-teaching pair, to work together on shared responsibilities, brainstorm lessons, and strategize around classroom goals. When this time is intentional, co-planning and reflection create space for pairs to engage deeply in their practice, driving stronger outcomes for both students and developing teachers.

Review the co-planning and reflection suggestions below from experienced co-teaching pairs and consider how they could be adapted to your teaching context.

Intentional Time to Co-Plan & Reflect

Successful co-teaching requires intentional time to collaborate, plan, and reflect. School leaders play an important role in creating dedicated co-planning time through schedules and staffing structures. Mentor-candidate pairs also play an important role in making the most of both formal planning time and informal opportunities throughout the week to stay aligned, problem solve, and strengthen their partnership.

As a pair, discuss what types of collaboration time are most useful. Consider whether longer or shorter planning blocks, in-person or virtual meetings, and different times of day best support your work together. Brief check-ins during or after lessons can also help with real-time adjustments and shared reflection.

- Use dedicated planning time for unit goals, lesson design, student needs, and co-teaching roles.
- Share & clarify responsibilities such as materials preparation, grading, classroom set-up & break down. Sharing these tasks not only provides teacher candidates with hands-on learning but also creates extra time that can be used for co-planning.
- Come prepared with materials, questions, and priorities so time is focused and efficient.
- Use quick check-ins during the week to stay aligned and address immediate needs.
- Debrief after lessons to discuss what worked and what to adjust next time.
- Reflect both during scheduled times and in the moment.
- Speak to your school leadership about what supports or structures would strengthen your co-planning. Share our resource, How School Administration Can Support Co-Planning & Reflection Time.

"**We dedicate time each week.** By dedicating that time each week, we sit down, we go through the content, we think through, 'what are potential problems, what are potential successes.'"

- Jill Gillen, *Mentor Teacher*

Tips for Co-Planning & Reflection

Successful pre-service co-teaching is built on a strong foundation of mutual respect, relational trust, effective communication, deep collaboration, and intentional planning. Some suggestions for collaboration are:

- Foster a shared space where both teacher candidate and mentor perspectives are consistently valued and shape the conversation, helping to build trust over time.
- Plan lessons together at a high level first, including lesson goals, student groupings, instructional roles, and key responsibilities. Then divide tasks as needed and reconnect for a final review before teaching.
- Mentors can make their thinking visible by talking through instructional decisions, classroom moves, and problem-solving in real time so teacher candidates gain insight into the expertise developed through experience.
- Take advantage of collaborative technology to help you organize and map out your ideas in a space that allows for both synchronous and asynchronous collaboration, such as Google Docs, Miro, Notion, etc.

When we are co-planning, we both sit down together. We have our curriculum, our novel, and we dive in pretty extensively. [My resident] suggests some ideas. I suggest some ideas. We come to an understanding on what we both would like to see. And **we are both just as involved in the planning.**

- Bernice Quiroz, *Mentor Teacher*

Use a Variety of Co-Teaching Strategies

Pre-service co-teaching goes beyond the candidate observing their mentor or occasionally offering help to students. Take advantage of the learning possibilities inherent in pre-service co-teaching by maximizing your use of different strategies. Consider which co-teaching strategies fit your lesson best. What strategies might benefit students most right now? How might either of you as teachers, in particular the teacher candidate, benefit from engaging in a particular strategy? Read here for more information about the following strategies:

- One Teach, One Observe
- One Teach, One Assist
- Station Teaching
- Parallel Teaching
- Supplemental Teaching

- Alternative Teaching
- Team Teaching

In Parallel Teaching, we split the class in half and **you can really make sure that you're reaching everyone** and everyone has an opportunity to participate. You can really see each student and they have more of a voice.

- Baili Herring, *Teacher Resident*

Reflection & Feedback

Feedback is a valuable tool for both mentors and teacher candidates to grow their skills. When giving feedback, keep it specific and actionable. When receiving feedback, remain open to your pair's perspective.

- Stay grounded in your shared goals of student success and the preparation experiences of the teacher candidate.
- Discuss how well a particular strategy went for the lesson and how the strategy could be implemented differently or improved.
- Examine what is the best approach for upcoming learning goals and student needs.
- Share teaching goals with one another and how the pair can work together to help each other achieve those goals.
- Stay curious and ask questions about teaching approaches or choices.
- Reflection is an ongoing process and not reserved just for a prep period. Reflecting in real time and pivoting a lesson when needed is fundamental to teaching so mentors can guide their teacher candidate in this process.

"We plan every day, **we reflect every day, then we take those reflections into our classrooms.** We teach a lesson and sometimes we can't wait until the end of the day and we reflect that minute. We will reflect on something and the next day she's applied it. Every day she has grown so much. I tell her, you're ready for your own classroom."

- Eldadiana Arzate, *Mentor Teacher*

Quotes are edited lightly for clarity and grammar.

To explore more resources on Pre-Service Co-Teaching, visit Prepared To Teach's Guided Toolkit, Co-Teaching: Enriching the Clinical Practice Experience.