PREPARED TO TEACH

Pre-Service Co-Teaching Professional Development

The Foundation for Successful Implementation

Pre-service co-teaching can strengthen P-12 learning, provide rigorous training for teacher candidates and create new teaching and learning opportunities for mentor teachers. When partnerships between teacher preparation programs, districts, and schools work together to implement strong pre-service co-teaching, the model improves student learning, teacher candidate development, and mentor experiences.

Cultivating understanding of the pre-service co-teaching model across a partnership is pivotable for effective implementation. This resource offers an overview of types of pre-service co-teaching professional development opportunities that ensure clarity, quality, and consistency across a partnership.

For partnerships integrating a pre-service co-teaching model into their clinical practice experiences, it is beneficial to contract with a pre-service co-teaching expert to facilitate trainings, provide learning materials, and build local expertise.*

Types of Professional Development

There are several layers of professional development that can be helpful across a preparation program, district, and school partnership when implementing pre-service co-teaching. Below is an overview of what information is critical for each role in the system to learn before and during the school year.

Co-Teaching Overview

For Program Faculty, School Administrators, and District Leadership

Pre-service co-teaching works best when mentors and teacher candidates are supported at a structural level. Administration and other leaders benefit from training on the basics of co-teaching and the structures necessary to maximize its benefits. These trainings can cover:

- The definition of pre-service co-teaching, what the model looks like in your context, and how the model differs from other familiar forms of clinical practice such as student teaching.
- Why pre-service co-teaching is effective, including research behind the model.
- Responsibilities of each role within the pre-service co-teaching model (mentors, teacher candidates, supervisors, and leadership).
- Ways to support a teacher candidate during their clinical practice experience.
- An overview of the co-teaching strategies.
- Ways to evaluate effective co-teaching during classroom observations.
- The importance of scheduling dedicated time for mentors and teacher candidates to co-plan, reflect, and assess together.
- Logistics specific to your program such as contracts, licensure requirements, teacher candidate guidelines, etc.

In-Depth Co-Teaching Training

For Mentors, Teacher Candidates, and Supervisors

Before pre-service co-teaching in a classroom, it's important for mentors, teacher candidates, and their university supervisors to understand the basics of co-teaching, how to utilize the co-teaching strategies, and the importance of sharing all classroom responsibilities throughout the year. The following topics are key to understanding the basics of pre-service co-teaching:

- The definition of pre-service co-teaching and what the model looks like in your context.
- Why pre-service co-teaching is effective, including research behind the model.
- Responsibilities of each role within the pre-service co-teaching model (mentors, teacher candidates, supervisors, and leadership).
- The collaborative mindset behind co-teaching.
- An in-depth training on how to implement the co-teaching strategies in a classroom.
- An overview of how mentors and teacher candidates share the classroom space and all the responsibilities of teaching.
- The importance of using scheduled time to co-plan, assess students, and reflect on lessons and teacher candidate learning.

Teacher Candidate and Mentor Relationship Building

For Teacher Candidates and Mentors

Beyond learning how to co-teach, mentor and teacher candidate pairs need time before the school year starts to get to know one another and plan for the upcoming year together. Convening in advance sets co-teaching pairs up for success and gives them tools and techniques to build a collaborative partnership. This professional development opportunity can include:

- Ice-breaker and get-to-know-you activities.
- Conversations on working and teaching styles.
- Practice co-planning mock lessons.
- Discussions around sharing the classroom space and responsibilities.
- Approaches to giving and receiving feedback.
- Effective communication techniques to use to ensure you are on the same page as well as when disagreements or misunderstandings arise.
- How mentors can make a teacher candidate feel welcome in the school building.

Ongoing Professional Development

For Teacher Candidates and Mentors

One-time training alone is rarely sufficient to fully integrate a teaching model into practice. Therefore, recurring opportunities for continued professional learning and conversation are key to successful pre-service co-teaching. When participants are grouped by roles, these sessions also become a place to build community and share experiences with others on

similar journeys. Whether weekly, monthly, or quarterly, ongoing conversations benefit teacher candidates and mentors immensely. Topics for discussion may include:

- Refreshers on co-teaching and co-planning strategies.
- Discussions specific to the time of year such as starting off the school year strong, mid-year goal setting, and end-of-year reflections.
- Community building conversations and reflections among people in the same role.
- Conversations around problems of practice and space to offer advice to one another.

For an in-depth breakdown of ongoing conversations on co-teaching, check out this resource.

Logistics

Facilitators

- Facilitators of these trainings can be leaders within the partnership with deep knowledge of co-teaching and clinical practice experiences such as preparation program leaders, faculty, teacher leaders, instructional or curricular coaches, or administrators.
- Facilitators should go through an initial training from a licensed co-teaching professional on how to facilitate co-teaching professional development so that there is consistency across all sessions and fidelity in the model itself.

Requirements

- **Co-Teaching Overview**: When first incorporating pre-service co-teaching into clinical practice, program, school, and district leaders should receive a comprehensive training on the model from a licensed co-teaching professional.
- **In-Depth Co-Teaching Training**: Initial pre-service co-teaching professional development should be required for teacher candidates, mentors, and supervisors before the start of the school year. Mentors and supervisors may not need the same training every year on the basics of co-teaching, the partnership can decide how often they need to complete a refresher course.
- **Teacher Candidate and Mentor Relationship Building**: Each mentor and teacher candidate pair should participate in a relationship-building session before the school year to set them up for success.
- **Ongoing Professional Development**: Preparation program and district partnerships can consider together whether these ongoing sessions are required or optional. If they are required, consider make up options such as reviewing a session recording or participating in asynchronous discussion boards.

Compensation & Recognition

- Mentors and teacher candidates who receive stipends for their work in the clinical practice experience may have these trainings included in their contracts as part of the necessary components of the experience.

- Compensation may be provided to other staff who attend or facilitate the trainings, though this may vary across contexts.
- Certificates or other forms of professional acknowledgement can be offered to those who complete the trainings as recognition of their continued learning and service to the profession.

Pre-service co-teaching is an incredible model for impactful clinical practice. When high-quality training is a part of the process from the start at every layer of the partnership, teacher candidates can thrive alongside their mentor teachers and P-12 students can benefit from two educators collaborating in the classroom.

*Trainings and technical assistance that provide further details on co-teaching strategies and the pre-service co-teaching model are available for districts, preparation programs, and partnerships through TWH Consulting; visit www.twhcoteaching.com or contact Teresa Washut-Heck at twheck@stcloudstate.edu for more information.

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