PREPARED TO TEACH

How School Administration Can Support Pre-Service Co-Teaching with Co-Planning & Reflection Time

The process of pre-service co-teaching relies on meaningful collaboration through co-planning and reflection, where mentor and teacher candidate pairs can review student data and needs, determine effective co-teaching strategies for each lesson, reflect on teacher candidate growth, and more. Co-teaching also greatly hinges on the relationship between the two teachers, and the mentor-candidate pairs benefit from time before the school year begins to build rapport, align expectations, and plan how they will work together. While there are steps a pair can take to support sufficient time for co-planning and reflection, the pre-service co-teaching model can be more effective if the school as a whole ensures pairs have dedicated time to collaborate intentionally together both before and during the school year. Below are creative approaches schools have taken to ensure pairs are able to co-plan and reflect.

Dedicating Professional Learning Time

Co-teaching is a valuable instructional model that merits dedicated professional learning time throughout the school year. Schools can integrate co-teaching into existing professional learning structures to benefit instruction in these ways:

- Start creating co-planning routines in the summer before students arrive so co-teaching pairs can strengthen their relationship and set up a solid foundation for the year to come.
- Dedicate a number of full or partial days to co-planning throughout the school year, tapping into existing staff development days or staff in-service days.
- Provide pairs with intentional professional learning on effective pre-service co-teaching practices.

School Community Supporting Co-Planning & Reflection Time

Schools often find ways to support teachers' co-planning time by asking supervisors, paraprofessionals, volunteers, or other staff to cover tasks outside of the classroom, so that mentors have time to co-plan with their candidates. Common duties the school community can cover for co-teaching pairs are:

- Bus duty
- Lunch & recess supervision
- Hall monitoring
- After-school programming

> "Schools are communities that come together to support the learning of future educators."
>
> - Karen DeMoss, *Former Executive Director of Prepared To Teach*

Intentional Use of Substitute Coverage

Schools can utilize substitute teachers to free up time for co-teaching pairs to co-plan. Here are some approaches to providing intentional coverage for co-planning:

- When schools have floating substitutes or additional on-site instructional supports, substitute teacher schedules can be designed to regularly fill in for mentor and teacher candidate pairs for a period of co-planning.
- For lessons and situations applicable, candidates can stay in their home classrooms to lead pre-planned lessons while the teacher-of-record covers for another pair while they co-plan, allowing candidates to practice solo teaching in a familiar context that sets them up for success.

"We have two resident teachers with two of our more experienced teachers in the classroom every day. They're co-teaching. They're not one teaching and one sitting to the side. So I really like that they're both feeding off each other and they can collaborate that way. We also make time for that collaboration for those teachers, even providing extra time by sending folks to the classroom to cover at opportune times so they can collaborate on their next lesson for the next day.

- Casey Joshlin, *Assistant Principal*

Creating Rotating Enrichment Windows

In addition to using class periods such as PE, art, and music for co-planning time, some schools have found ways to build rotating enrichment windows into the curriculum. Here are some sample ideas:

- Coordinate with partnering colleges & universities to have their faculty teach lessons, provide demonstrations, or host campus visits with students while co-teachers plan.
- In sites with multiple teacher candidates, designate one period a week where candidates lead enrichment windows they have expertise in (e.g., guitar, foreign language, history, collage) so other candidates can co-plan.
- Reach out to parents and community members to facilitate exploratory lessons or experiences (e.g., cooking, photography, construction, gardening) to create more time for co-teachers to plan.

"[A teacher candidate in my school] has just been a wealth of knowledge. Never once did we feel like she couldn't take on classroom responsibilities. We respected her role."

- Sara Hodson, *Assistant Principal*

Conclusion

When schools intentionally protect time for co-planning and reflection, they strengthen instruction for students while also supporting mentor development and teacher candidate preparation. Thoughtful scheduling and shared responsibility across the school community can make high-quality co-teaching more sustainable and impactful.

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

Quotes are edited lightly for clarity and grammar.