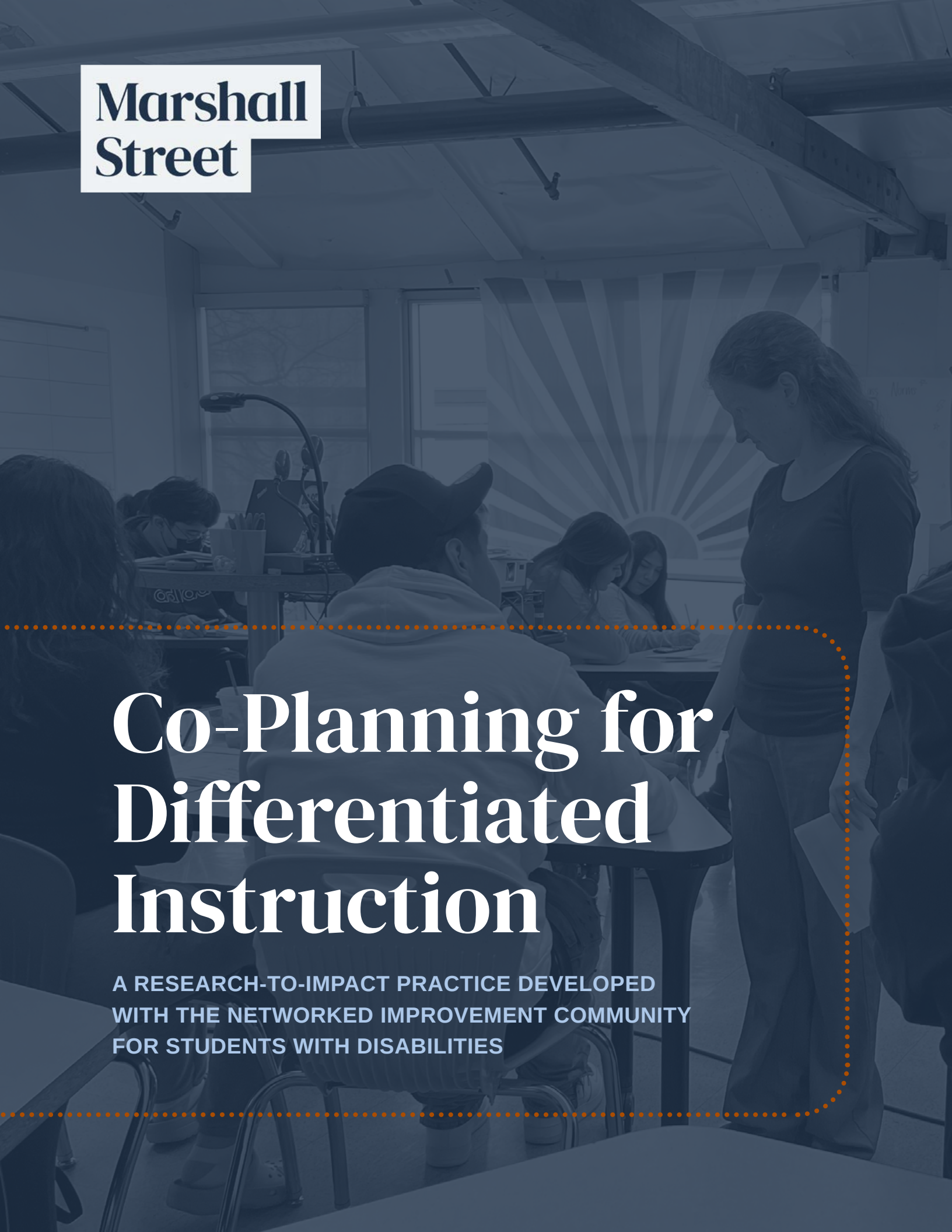


Marshall Street

Co-Planning for Differentiated Instruction

A RESEARCH-TO-IMPACT PRACTICE DEVELOPED WITH THE NETWORKED IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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Co-Planning for Differentiated Instruction

Implementation Level

- [ ] District/Central Office
- [x] School
- [ ] Program/Department
- [x] Classroom

Who Implements

- [x] Teacher(s)
- [x] Instructional Coach
- [x] Principal
- [ ] Central Office Leadership
- [ ] Specialist

Practice Overview

What is the Practice?

General and special education teachers meet regularly to align on content, reflect on student needs, remove barriers, and select instructional approaches to plan lessons that meet the needs of all students, particularly those with disabilities.



How do collaborating teachers and co-teachers compare? For whom is co-planning useful?

Collaborating teachers are one general educator and one special educator who share their expertise with one another in order to support all students, particularly those with disabilities.

Co-teachers are collaborating teachers who plan and teach a course together. They are equally responsible for the class, whereas other collaborating teachers may support from separate spaces.

Co-planning is relevant and important whether instructional support is delivered via co-teaching, push-in, pull-out, consultant teacher support, or a combination of these services.

Why is Co-Planning Important?

When co-planning is done effectively, teachers work in alignment to ensure their instructional approaches meet the unique and specific needs of all students they teach to provide students with learning designed for them.

FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, EFFECTIVE CO-PLANNING:

- provides both rigor and accessibility for all students to close preexisting learning and achievement gaps, particularly for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty;[1]
- drives alignment in instruction across all settings, accelerating learning and minimizing confusion to positively impact student experience;[2] and
- ensures that all students are fully included in the classroom and not "othered."[3]

CO-PLANNING ALSO BENEFITS TEACHERS:

- Strong co-planning builds knowledge, skill, and capacity among educators, especially benefiting those new to the field.[4]
- The structures of co-planning allow for the development of a strong, trusting, and collaborative relationship between educators.
- Co-planning reorients educators to break down silos and adopt an "All Means All" approach to service "our students."[5]

School Spotlight

At **Collegiate Academies,** data-driven co-planning cycles became a renewed priority to meet the diverse needs of all students following the passage of the April Dunn policy. In Louisiana, a portion of students with disabilities qualify for an **April Dunn plan**, an alternative means of demonstrating mastery for graduation requirements. In 2021, 44% of students with these plans at Collegiate Academies' Rosenwald High School successfully completed them. Two years later, after an intentional focus on co-planning using data at the campus, that number increased to 92%.



English co-planning in action at Collegiate Academies

Components of a Strong Co-Planning Meeting

The goal of co-planning is to ensure that collaborating teachers develop high-impact, data-driven adaptations to lessons that meet the needs of all students by drawing on the expertise of both the general and special education teachers. Effective co-planning leverages four key components — alignment, reflection, removal, and selection — to meet this goal.

The table below outlines these components at a high level for a strong, 45-minute co-planning meeting. For additional information, see the detailed version of this table in the **Appendix**.

COMPONENTS OF A STRONG CO-PLANNING MEETING Strong co-planning meetings that result in effective collaborative teaching leverage four key components: ***alignment, reflection, removal,*** and ***selection.***	
Pre-Work 30–60 min.	Complete role-specific pre-work to ensure efficient co-planning.
Connect and Set 5 min.	Review norms, reconnect on progress since last meeting, and set intentions.
Align 10 min.	Discuss the upcoming week's lesson content, including objectives, end-of-lesson assessments, criteria for success, and major lesson activities.
Reflect 10 min.	Review recent student data, identifying key strengths and needs. Set goals for student outcomes tied to this meeting's planning, particularly for students with disabilities.
Remove 10 min.	Adapt and plan new instructional approaches that address and remove key barriers identified through student data, including specially designed instruction and accommodations.
Select 7 min.	Determine how each teacher will work with students in order to most effectively deliver the planned adaptations and accommodations. For co-teachers, this specifically refers to utilizing high-impact co-teaching models.
Commit 3 min.	Clearly log next steps for planning and implementation in a centralized location where both teachers can access them equally.

Implementation at a Glance

The information in this section provides a high-level view of what to consider when implementing this practice. **Enabling Conditions** describes the minimum conditions needed for successful implementation, including resources, mindsets, staffing, and time allocations. **Steps to Implement** presents a concise checklist of action items, which are explained in detail in the following section.

Enabling Conditions

Prerequisites	★ School leaders communicate their belief that every educator is responsible for meeting the needs of *all* students and that general and special education collaboration is critical to this happening. ★ School-wide schedule has specific, dedicated time for co-planning by teaching teams (at least 45 minutes). – At least weekly for co-teachers – At least biweekly for other collaborating teachers High-level plans for the coming week are prepared and shared in advance of co-planning. ★ School leaders define explicit co-planning roles and responsibilities for each teacher.
Recommended Materials	★ An outcomes-aligned **agenda** for co-planning with a common protocol for student work and data analysis. ★ **High quality instructional materials:** – culturally relevant – resources to differentiate instruction, such as tools, professional development books, and access to expert educators. ★ Classroom level materials for planning: – student progress data – student learning profiles and accommodations
Staff Commitment	★ Required staffing for co-planning: – Collaborating teachers or co-teachers – Instructional coach(s)
Recommended Time Allocation	★ A **partnership launch meeting** during summer training: – 3 hours per teaching pair ★ **Regular planning meetings** for teachers: – 45 minutes weekly for co-teachers – 45 minutes biweekly for collaborating teachers ★ **Coaching** focused on collaboration: – 45-minute coaching session weekly (co-teachers) or biweekly (collaborating teachers)

Steps to Implement

At the start of each school year, **school and network leaders complete the following steps:**

- ☐ Create a co-planning **schedule**
- ☐ Enable **teacher investment**
- ☐ Support **team formation**
- ☐ Prioritize a **campus culture of collaboration**
- ☐ Determine **outcomes, aligned agendas, and pre-work** for co-planning meetings
- ☐ Define **strong data sources and a data analysis protocol** for the "reflect" component
- ☐ Structure **coaching support** to enhance educator capacity for co-planning
- ☐ **Get started!**



Collaboration with Special Education Leaders

In order for school leaders to create highly effective co-planning structures, it is imperative that they are setting up and supporting this work with their school's special education and academic leadership. Doing so ensures that the unique perspectives and needs of special educators are being reflected in decision making. At **Rosenwald Collegiate**, for example, the director of scholar support plays an integral role, along with the senior director of curriculum and instruction and the school's principal, in creating the agenda for and determining the cadence of weekly co-planning coaching sessions. Her input helps to ensure that meetings are occurring at a time when the special education teacher will be free from case management and other teaching responsibilities, and that specific agenda questions focus co-planners on students with disabilities from the outset of the conversation.



Bringing this Practice to Life

CO-PLANNING FOR DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AT SUMMIT ATLAS

Planning for the most vulnerable subgroups of students positively impacts all students. At ***Summit Atlas,*** *co-planning with a focus on students with disabilities has led to improvements in academic outcomes for students without IEPs, too. Strong co-planning that focuses on meeting the needs of students who struggle supports mindsets and skills that adapt lessons to improve comprehension for all learners.*

At Summit Atlas in Seattle, WA, Hannah, a special education teacher, and Jess, a general education history teacher, meet biweekly to co-plan. Each week, they focus on a new subset of Jess's 21 students with IEPs. As a result of their collaboration in the spring of 2023, the percentage of students demonstrating mastery of the course's focal cognitive skills nearly doubled, increasing from 36% to 67%.

The following case study demonstrates how their use of four key co-planning components — alignment, reflection, removal, and selection — leads to strategic and aligned instructional planning that meaningfully improves outcomes for students with disabilities.

Reconnect and Set Intentions

Hannah and Jess begin their meeting by reviewing the data across Jess's two history classes, 11th grade US History and 12th grade AP Government. Based on proficiency levels, they agree to focus on 12th grade students with disabilities. More students are struggling in that class, and they are approaching critical, end-of-high school assessments.

The collaborating teachers reflect on the success of Brian and Calvin, focal students from their last co-planning meeting. Jess shares that she has been connecting a challenging project about legislation to the students' interests. Brian is writing a book on cryptids in another class, and Jess allowed him to focus his legislation on their protection. Calvin focused his legislation on resources for teens struggling with bipolar disorder, a topic of personal importance to him. Jess shares that connecting her course's work to that from other classes or to personal interests is proving particularly supportive for these students. Additionally, based on Hannah's feedback about Calvin's challenges with written processing, Jess had him work on his legislation aloud since writing was not a component of the standard being assessed.

Hannah and Jess shift their focus to Darren and Khadijah, their other focal students from the last meeting. They discuss how both students have been struggling with attendance, but agree to keep their co-planning focused on instructional strategies for when Darren and Khadijah are in class, knowing that others are providing additional support to address absenteeism.

They continue to review students' mastery data for the course and notice that two other students with IEPs, Riley and Omar, are struggling with the legislative content as well as civil rights and liberties. They decide to focus their co-planning on these students and to continue to focus on Darren and Kadijah.

Component 1: ALIGN on Instructional Content

Hannah and Jess shift into a discussion about the upcoming weeks' content. Anchored in civil rights and liberties, the next set of lessons will require students to continue crafting mock legislation. In doing so, students will need to define the purpose and population of focus for the legislation, as well as resources needed to pass it, and create an accessible definition for constituents.

Hannah further inquires about the cognitive skills that this focal group of students are focusing on — that is, the broader skills that apply beyond the immediate content. They confirm, through his mastery data, that Darren needs to focus on the selection of strong evidence to support a claim. The entire group of four needs to focus on verbally presenting their legislation to classmates.

Components 2 and 3: REFLECT on Students' Needs and **REMOVE** Barriers

Hannah and Jess turn to each student's specific needs and the anticipated barriers for their access to and mastery of upcoming content. For all four of their focal students, verbal articulation of ideas is a challenge denoted on their IEPs and observed by teachers.

First, Jess shares that Omar recently worked with her during a class activity, and after direct coaching in a lower stakes environment, he successfully presented his thoughts to his classmates. Hannah asks whether Omar demonstrated mastery of the criteria for this cognitive skill, which he did. Hannah explains that Jess can use this work as the basis for evaluating the skill, accommodating for his disability by lowering the stakes but not the content rigor.

For the other three, Jess is struggling with how to support them with this skill of verbal presentation, since a written version of their work would not adequately demonstrate mastery. Hannah suggests that for Darren, Khadijah, and Riley, given their difficulty with verbal output, filming their presentations is an appropriate accommodation. It allows the students to redo their work, affording them opportunities to self edit without lowering the bar for the skill.

Finally, Hannah and Jess discuss Darren's difficulty organizing thoughts and ideas when creating something new. They discuss how a template for his legislation — with a clear outline structure and sentence starters included — would be a huge support.

Component 4: SELECT High-Impact Instruction that Leverages Both Teachers

Jess and Hannah shift to discussing the best ways in which they can use instructional time with focal students to help them meet their goals. Jess sees students every other day for class, and Hannah provides daily services through the Learning Center — Atlas's pull-out support structure.

Both teachers agree that for Khadijah, Riley, and Omar, Jess is best poised to implement the planned supports. She will work with all three students in a small group on Friday during a particularly tricky civil rights and liberties discussion to allow them more time and attention for questions on the topic. She will also work with Khadijah and Riley on filming their legislation presentations. Jess also shares that she will assess Omar's presentation skills through his in-class work, which she anticipates will demonstrate mastery.

Nearing the end of their collaborative planning time, the two teachers discuss how frequent prompts and individualized support will be necessary for Darren as he plans his mock legislation. They agree that Hannah's close working relationship with Darren, along with her ability to break down the prompts on his new template in a one-on-one setting, will be hugely beneficial. Jess shares that she wants to create the template so that she can ensure that the demands of the standards are reflected in the questions being asked of Darren. Hannah suggests that she then use that template during her work with Darren in the Learning Center. They decide to use Google Docs so that all three of them have access to the same planning tool, which Jess will continue to check on to ensure that Darren's work reflects the expectations of the course.

CONFIRM Next Steps

Hannah and Jess reiterate their next steps from the meeting. They agree to touch base at the end of the coming week to discuss how next steps are progressing in the event that they need to make small adjustments before their next co-planning meeting.

How to Implement this Practice

This section provides step-by-step guidance for implementation of co-planning specific to a school and community's context, along with accompanying resources to get started.

Step 1: Create a Co-Planning Schedule

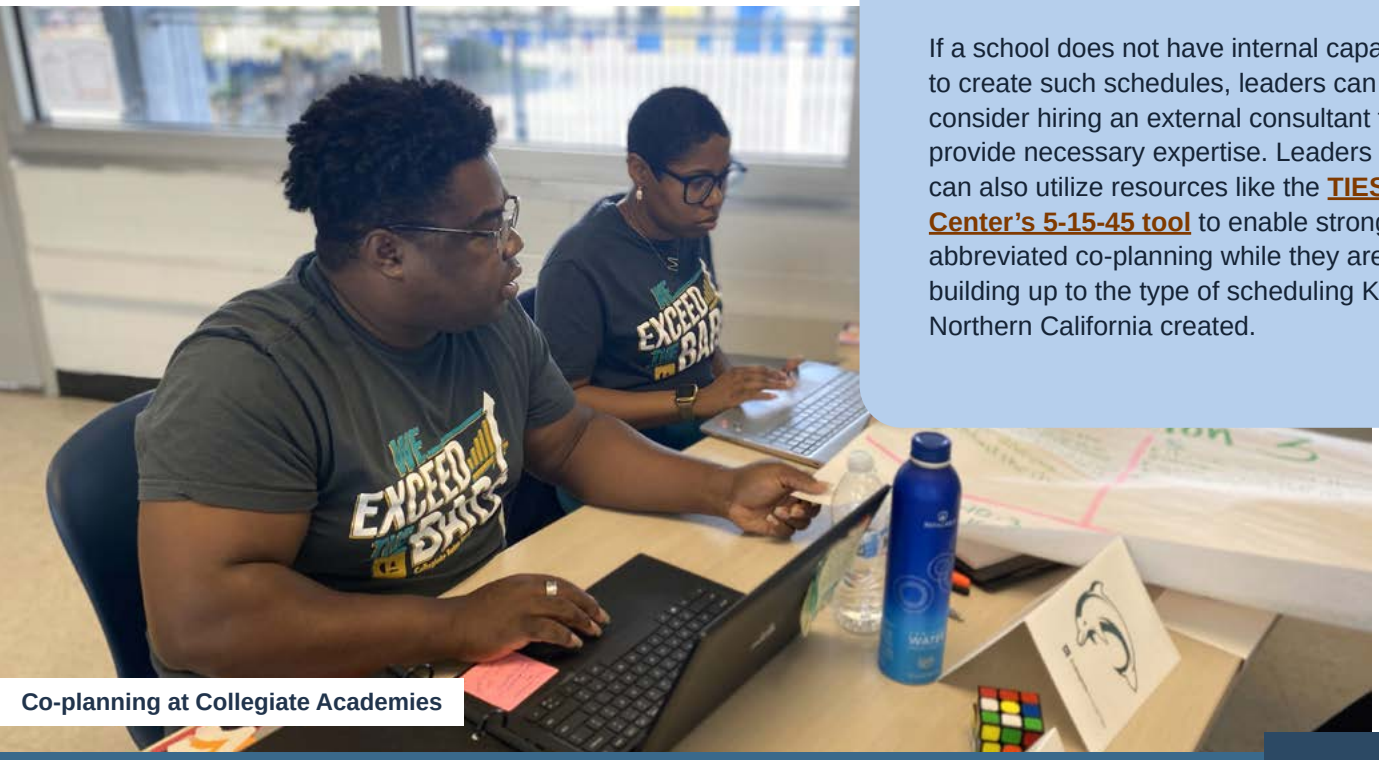
A minimum block of 45 minutes weekly (for co-teachers) or *biweekly* (for other collaborating teachers) is necessary for effective co-planning. Increased amounts of time may be ideal in some situations, such as the following:

- **Longer planning blocks at the beginning of a collaborative relationship** as collaborators get to know each other as people and as professionals
- **60–120 minute weekly/biweekly blocks** if collaborative lesson creation is necessary or for delving more deeply into lesson adaptations
- **10–15 minute daily common prep times** on days without co-planning blocks to allow for adjustments as the week progresses

School Spotlight

To prioritize co-planning, networks and schools need to craft school schedules that ensure regular co-planning blocks can occur. Through a collaboration between network operations, site-based special education leadership and the school leader, the **KIPP Northern California** team committed to making protected co-planning a reality. They created a tool and process that builds the schoolwide schedule around the needs of students with IEPs, one component of which is creating protected co-planning blocks for general and special educators. By doing so, teachers are guaranteed the weekly blocks necessary to plan.

If a school does not have internal capacity to create such schedules, leaders can consider hiring an external consultant to provide necessary expertise. Leaders can also utilize resources like the **TIES Center's 5-15-45 tool** to enable strong, abbreviated co-planning while they are building up to the type of scheduling KIPP Northern California created.



Co-planning at Collegiate Academies

Step 2: Enable Teacher Investment

Co-planning requires teachers to learn many new skills, from strong collaboration to co-construction of aligned plans that address a wide variety of students' needs. A crucial component of leveraging co-planning as a viable practice is being realistic about and attentive to teachers' other responsibilities, making sure that they have the time to dedicate to this practice.

At Summit Atlas, the team approached co-planning with a deep commitment to change for both students and educators. School leaders recognized evidence of a lack of shared ownership for supporting students with disabilities and saw that special educators, in particular, were stretched too thin to have maximum impact on their students' experiences and outcomes. At the root of the problem, they realized, was a lack of clear roles and responsibilities for general and special educators.

Leaders knew that in order to invest teachers in the work of cross-team collaboration they needed to ensure that each person understood their role within the partnership. By doing that work, teachers were able to reprioritize how they worked together and to delve deeply into co-planning. By leveraging the expertise of special educators, the team was able to build general educators' capacity to better serve students with disabilities in courses where they spend most of their time. Subsequently, Atlas saw significant improvements in outcomes for all students.

At Ednovate, network and school leaders invited collaborating teachers to engage in a nine-week cycle of coaching focused on co-planning. By focusing on a cohort of three pairs who were highly invested in the practice, the experience was well received, led to notable student improvements, and is now being expanded to more teacher pairs in the network.

Step 3: Support Team Formation

Effective co-planning is reliant on teachers feeling comfortable openly sharing ideas and questions and effectively navigating different working styles and inevitable conflicts.

- School leaders can support collaborating teachers as they develop their professional relationship by providing them with time and **resources** to intentionally focus on that dynamic.
- **Explicitly discussing norms for how teachers will co-plan** will accelerate this work. Topics to discuss and commitments to make can include the following:

Pre-Work: How will we support each other with completing pre-work?

- How will we share relevant documents (e.g., lesson plans)?
- How and where will we log our pre-work notes? (Google Doc comments? A separate Google Doc? An email?)
- How will we approach each other when, inevitably, someone does not complete a week's pre-work?

Meeting Notes: How will we log notes about lessons during conversations?



- Who will take notes?
- How will we ensure that we are both actively logging and keeping track of what we discuss?

Meeting Participation: How will we ensure equal engagement?



- What do we want co-planning meetings to feel and sound like?
- What does equal participation mean to each of us? What does that look like and entail?
- How will we ensure that students in our priority population are at the forefront of our discussions and work? How will we keep conversation focused on upcoming instruction?
- How will we work through inevitable disagreements and conflict within our planning process?
- What expertise do we each have regarding planning (this content, for students with disabilities, with others)? How can we best leverage that expertise?

Meeting Follow Up: How will identify and complete action items?



- Where and how will we log action items?
- How will we support each other with completing action items?

  How will we approach each other when, inevitably, someone does not complete one of their action items?

Step 4: Prioritize a Campus Culture of Collaboration

The most common barrier to successful co-planning is that time alloted for co-planning is not held sacred and used exclusively for that purpose. School leaders can remove this barrier by building a campus culture and commitment to collaboration time. Training all staff in the vision and purpose of collaboration time at the start of the year can help team members understand its intended use and prioritization. It may also be helpful to establish accountability measures to ensure co-planning blocks are used as intended.

Strong accountability measures may include the following:

- Co-planning times are held sacred. In other words, other required meetings that collaborating teachers must attend, such as department or IEP meetings, are not scheduled during co-planning times.
- Collaborating teachers are assigned substitute coverage only during free prep periods, not during co-planning blocks.
- Teachers' workloads are regularly evaluated so that non-essential commitments may be eliminated, freeing up time to adequately prepare for co-planning meetings.
- Routines exist to check that co-planning time is focused on lessons.
- Teachers use the block and protocol as intended for instructional planning.

Step 5: Determine Outcomes, Aligned Agendas, and Pre-Work for Co-Planning Meetings

School leaders can use their knowledge of collaborating teachers' needs and dynamics to determine the outcomes and agenda for each pair's co-planning. Note that co-planning outcomes for a given pair can and should change as the year goes on and as teachers grow and develop as a team.

	Plan the Week's Lessons	Plan for a Focal Group	Plan an Exemplar Lesson
Description	Collaborating teachers focus on a week's worth of lessons, incorporating a handful of highest-leverage accommodations and adaptations into each one.	Collaborating teachers focus on setting goals for and adapting instruction to meet the needs of students with IEPs in a given class.	Collaborating teachers focus on one lesson, identifying transferable adaptations that the general educator then applies to remaining lessons for the week.
Agenda	Rosenwald Collegiate Academy's (RCA) Co-Planning Agenda	Summit Atlas's Consultation Meeting Agenda	Blue Engine's Co-Planning Agenda
Best For	**Experienced teachers and collaborators:** This type of planning needs to be done extremely efficiently. It is best suited for collaborating teachers who have a solid foundation in content, accessibility, and co-planning as a skill, as well as 45 minutes to meet.	**Collaborating teachers who have limited time together:** Collaborating teachers focus on transferability, identifying supports that the general education teacher can apply routinely, including mandated accommodations.	**Teachers who are new to content and/or co-planning:** Collaborating teachers work together to create an exemplary plan that is then used as the model for subsequent lessons. Remaining lessons are adapted asynchronously.
Adaptations	**For teachers who are new(er) to the content, collaboration, or teaching in general:** Before adding in new components, collaborating teachers focus on 1–2 components of the co-teaching process deeply (e.g., align and reflect), then build toward the full process.	This model can either focus on a subset of students with IEPs, as happens at Summit Atlas, or on the entire cohort of students with IEPs, as happens at RCA.	

Prior to every co-planning meeting, collaborating teachers each complete role-specific pre-work to maximize their time together. School leaders define and uphold the expectations for this work.

For General Education Teachers

Prerequisites:

1. **Share the high-level plans for the coming week's lessons with the collaborating teacher** at least 48 hours ahead of the meeting.
2. **Complete the exit tickets for all lessons as a student would,** noting anything that could be challenging or confusing for students.
3. **Bring recent student data and work from class** to inform planning.

Accelerants:

4. **Note specific support needs** of students with disabilities to plan for.
5. **Articulate the criteria for success** that indicate student mastery.

For Special Education Teachers

Prerequisites:

1. **Read and annotate the lesson plans before the planning meeting,** including:
   - content questions; and
   - anticipated barriers to access for students with disabilities.
2. **Complete the exit tickets for all lessons as a student would,** noting anything that could be challenging or confusing for students.
3. **Bring recent student data and work from specially designed instruction** to inform planning.

Accelerants:

4. **Articulate the criteria for success** that indicate student mastery.

The Need for High-Level Plans

Co-planning is strongest when it is focused on the coming one to two weeks' lessons. This allows collaborating teachers to discuss and make adaptations that meet specific student needs rather than speaking in generalities. This is only possible when both teachers are clear, in advance of the meeting, on what is coming next for students. When this is not the case, co-planning meetings frequently devolve into lesson creation meetings (which, because of limited time, do not involve detailed accommodations and adaptations for students based on needs) or generic discussions about strategies that are theoretically useful but not practical.

As the instructional leaders of school buildings, school leaders play a critical role in the effectiveness of co-planning. It is important that both collaborating teachers have access to course curriculum and scope and sequences, whether through the procurement of high-quality instructional materials or via the provision of time and coaching support to teachers who are crafting course plans. Co-planning leans on these materials for smaller chunks of instructional planning and is best executed when high-level lesson plans are internalized and shared between co-planning teachers at least 48 hours in advance of co-planning meetings. For the purposes of co-planning, shared plans should, at minimum, consist of each lesson's **objective, end-of-lesson assessment task,** and **lesson activities.**

Step 6: Define Strong Data Sources and a Data Analysis Protocol

Effective co-planned lessons are deeply rooted in students' needs. Thus, it is important that collaborating teachers come to their meetings with recent, relevant student data, such as:

- a data tracking system for exit tickets;
- **student learner profiles**;
- a student data dashboard where student data can be disaggregated by subgroup; and
- **information on student needs**, such as students' accommodations and specialized learning needs documented in IEPs.

Collaborating teachers also need a protocol for analyzing students' work. Green Dot's **student work analysis protocol** has been used effectively by collaborating teachers to drive planning.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Planning

In order to meet the specific needs of our priority population, collaborating teachers have the opportunity and responsibility to plan for and use culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices in addition to leveraging their content and accessibility expertise. By digging into students' data, particularly through **learner profiles**, collaborating teachers are able to use their own diverse perspectives to identify ways to build on students' interests and current funds of knowledge and language to craft inclusive, responsive instruction.



Summit Public Schools

Step 7: Structure Coaching Support

Collaborating teachers benefit tremendously from coaching support and professional development focused specifically on co-planning. Strong examples of this include:

Support for Co-Planning

Ideally, co-planning is observed or facilitated at least once a month to ensure high-quality implementation, followed by a co-planned lesson observation to identify further development needs.

For schools in which direct coach facilitation is either unnecessary (as teachers are more experienced) or not yet feasible given time constraints, coaches can utilize an observation tool aligned to co-planning when they observe meetings:

- **KIPP Northern California's Co-Planning Observation Tool**
- **Blue Engine's Co-Planning Look For Checklist**

Lesson-Planning Support for General Educators

For less experienced general educators, creating the initial lesson plans necessary for strong co-planning can be challenging. Providing lesson planning support in advance of meetings helps ensure that co-planning is focused on student-specific adaptations.

Content Support for Special Educators

For special educators who are unfamiliar with a co-planned course, meeting in advance to bolster their content knowledge or providing additional professional development (e.g., curriculum training) allows for deeper understanding of the lessons and for connections between IEP goals and course content to be more easily made.

School Spotlight

In order for co-planning to truly take root, it is critical that school leaders prioritize building the school culture, team routines and habits, and skill development needed to yield desired outcomes. At school organizations in the NIC experiencing the most success with co-planning, the collaborating partnership is highly prioritized by school leaders, particularly through the provision of ample coaching.

At **Rosenwald Collegiate Academies,** the school's on-site director of scholar support (DSS) and the network's senior director of curriculum (SDC) each prioritized weekly co-planning coaching for pairs new to teaching and/or co-planning. During the Spring 2023 semester, protected support prep blocks were created for the coaches and teaching teams to engage in ongoing professional learning focused on co-planning **agendas**. For example, the DSS met with one math co-teaching pair weekly, while the SDC engaged in similar coaching work with other co-teaching pairs new to teaching or co-planning.

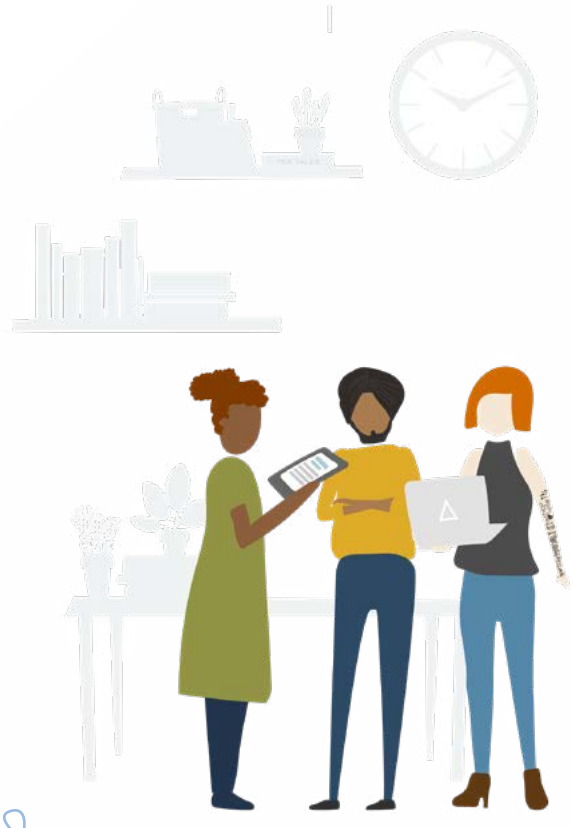
Summary

Lesson-focused collaboration between the general and special educators supporting all students, especially those who are Black and/or Latinx, have a disability, and are experiencing poverty, is key to providing the support they need.[6] No single educator can meet the needs of every student. By aligning on upcoming content, collaborating teachers create a shared understanding of what grade-level mastery looks like so that they hold a shared, high bar for students that is critical to students' success.[7] When co-teachers collectively leverage their expertise to reflect on students' needs and remove barriers to access, students experience increasingly tailored lessons that move them closer to their individualized and course goals. And by strategically selecting the ways in which they will optimize their time with students in pursuit of the latters' goals, co-planning teams acknowledge the power of breaking down the silos that exist in our schools and creating a holistic team that has the ability to do more for students together than alone.

FURTHER LEARNING

"Co-Teaching at Revere High School"
EDUCATION RESOURCE STRATEGIES

"10 Tips for Using Co-Planning Time More Efficiently"
WENDY MURAWSKI





Get Started!

Ultimately, the most important action educators can take is to start co-planning. Launching the process will uncover what works, and what doesn't, in a school's context, which can lead to revisions and adaptations to the co-planning protocol, agenda, and routine.

What Does Co-Planning Look Like for Co-Teachers?

Co-planning is critical to the learning of students with disabilities regardless of how their specialized services are provided. It can and should be used for all collaborating teachers. Co-planning for co-teachers requires a unique focus on which model(s) of co-teaching they will select, based on their students' data, to best support learning.

The following example illustrates what a co-planning meeting can look like for co-teachers.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Maria is a ninth grade English Language Arts (ELA) teacher and Samuel is a special education teacher supporting a caseload of ninth graders in our priority population. Together, they share a section of co-taught ELA 9. They meet every Tuesday for 45 minutes during second period in their classroom.

PRE-WORK (48–72 hours prior)

On Friday morning, two business days before their Tuesday meeting, Maria sends Samuel a draft of the plans for the coming week so that Samuel can review, annotate, and internalize the content. Samuel begins to think about ways in which students on his caseload might need support based on the lessons' content.

Both teachers complete the exit tickets students will take after the next lesson. This ensures that they are aligned on what content mastery looks like, have exemplars to use for grading, and can ask any questions on content they don't completely understand.

Both teachers asynchronously collaborate on adding details to their co-planning agenda, which is based on a standard protocol their school uses for co-planning meetings.

THE MEETING

ALIGN on the lessons' content.

After exchanging pleasantries, Maria and Samuel begin their co-planning meeting by discussing the upcoming week's lessons. Samuel surfaces his confusion about whether or not students must cite evidence directly to show mastery of the standard, to which Maria explains they must. Maria clarifies that the students will be working on one piece of writing from Monday through Friday, revising as the week goes on.

The teachers then review the five upcoming end-of-lesson assessments, discussing the key knowledge and skills students will need in order to demonstrate content mastery.

REFLECT on student data.

Maria and Samuel look at last week's exit tickets. They discuss the trends they notice in terms of which students are struggling with each concept. They identify how these trends will affect future lessons and which areas may need re-teaching or intervention for certain students who need the content taught differently.

Maria shares what she is thinking about in terms of accommodations needed based on previous lessons and experiences. Samuel shares additional, relevant accommodations and shares how different students' disabilities may need additional support and attention based on this week's content.

The co-teachers then reference their **learner profile data** to ensure they're accounting for their students' strengths and interests.

REMOVE barriers to access.

Maria and Samuel look back at each day's lesson plan and adjust new content delivery and practice based on the needs that they saw students demonstrate through their data.

This week, students will be developing arguments and organizing evidence for their thesis statements. Maria and Samuel determine that a group of students will need additional support and feedback to revise their claims, while other students begin the next step. They also agree that a scaffolded organizer will help students who struggle getting started. Maria pulls a scaffold from a previous project, and Samuel agrees to revise it for this project.

Finally, the co-teachers identify students who are prepared to advance more quickly and agree that these students should also be working on finding counterevidence for their thesis statements.

SELECT high-impact, optimized co-teaching models.

After reviewing each day's final plans, Maria and Samuel determine that a **stations-model** of co-teaching will work best for the first three days of instruction, allowing them to create highly targeted, small groups that each teacher monitors. Maria will work with a small group to help them revise their claims while Samuel monitors and supports another station focused on developing topic sentences and organizing evidence in body paragraphs.

Additional stations will provide opportunities for the students with more advanced work to develop counterarguments and for other students to engage in peer feedback.

The co-teachers reflect on their conversation, agree on next steps, and close out their meeting.

CO-PLANNING FOR
DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

Appendix

How to Measure

When content and accessibility experts work together to implement co-planning, monitoring how useful, usable, and utilized the practice is by team members and across the school system can accelerate learning to improve outcomes for students. At a minimum, these measures are most essential:

PRIMARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process (utilization)	Calendar audit Meeting notes audit	Are teachers meeting for their co-planning meetings? Yes / No	Percent of co-teaching pairs who are meeting at their designated times	Increasing percent of co-teaching pairs meeting to co-plan until reaching 100%	Evidence includes: adapted lessons, agendas with notes, observations
Process (utilization)	Fidelity to agenda	Are teachers using the co-planning agenda? Yes / No If yes, how many of the components are they using? (out of 4)	Percent of teams engaging in all components of strong co-planning	Increasing percent of collaborating teachers engaging in all four key components of co-planning until reaching 100%	Example: **Blue Engine Co-Planning Look For Checklist**
Outcome*	Student outcomes data	Are students' grades and/or scores on interim assessments improving in classes implementing co-planning?	Percent of students (overall and as a subset with disabilities) whose grades and/or scores on interim assessments are improving	Quarterly, students experience continuous growth on interim assessments (overall and as a subset with disabilities)	Success should be measured quarterly, as it acknowledges the time necessary for collaborative teams to develop this practice. Teams can also monitor the extent to which achievement gaps may close between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers.

**It is important to note that student outcomes are a lagging measure; it can take significant time for progress to be observed.*

Additional measures can guide a team to know whether collaborative planning is leading to the desired improvements for students:

SECONDARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process (utilization)	Strength of collaboration	Are collaborating teachers improving their planning quality? Yes / No	Percent of collaborating teachers demonstrating quality progress in their planning	100% of teams make a column or more of progress on a subset of focal rows	**Blue Engine Team Collaboration Approaches Rubric**
Process (utilization)	Lesson plan audit Coaching notes	What is the quality of the plans once implemented?	Percent of teachers at each rubric level (1–4)	Increasing percent over time of lesson plans with a 3 or 4 on the rubric until 100%	**Collegiate Academies' Co-Teaching Rubric** (Note: Observations of lesson impact apply for *all* collaborating teachers.)
Perception (usefulness)	Survey	How valuable do teachers find co-planning?	Average of scores (1–5) on survey	Increasing average of survey scores over time	Multidimensional Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (MATIES)
Outcome	Survey	Do students feel confident they can be successful in their class?	Average of scores (1–5) on student survey	Increasing average of student survey scores over time	

PRACTICE TOOL

Protocol for a High Impact Co-Planning Meeting

The goal of co-planning is to ensure that collaborating teachers develop high-impact data-driven adaptations to lessons that meet the needs of all students by drawing on the expertise of both the general and special education teachers.

The table below details the components and guiding questions of a strong, 45-minute co-planning meeting. The guidance in this document is expansive. Teachers and coaches can focus on specific sections in more or less depth based on their current **prioritized outcomes** for co-planning, incorporating more as they build capacity.

COMPONENTS OF A STRONG CO-PLANNING MEETING	
Pre-work 30–60 min.	• Each teacher completes role-specific pre-work, enabling their co-planning time to be efficient and impactful.
Connect and Set 5 min.	• Review (and refresh, as necessary) norms for co-planning. • Reconnect about what has happened since the last co-planning session. – What changes or progress for students resulted from our last co-planning meeting? – What lesson adaptations were most impactful? Why? • Set intentions for this meeting. – What lesson(s) will we work on and what do we need to complete by the end of our time together? – Determine which students will be the focus of planning.
Align 10 min.	• Discuss the objective(s). – What does it mean? – What is being asked of students? What prerequisite skills, including language and vocabulary, does it demand? – What content confusions exist for either teacher that need to be clarified? • Align on end-of-class assessments. – What does exemplary work look like? – What confusions or challenges are visible that instruction needs to address? • Review or create criteria for success (CFS). • Review the most challenging portions of lesson activities. – At what points in the lesson(s) do we anticipate (subsets of) students will struggle most? – How will we use checks for understanding to identify and address misconceptions?

Reflect 10 min.	• Review students' data since the last co-planning meeting, focusing on trends at a class level and by key subgroups, including students with disabilities. – What does each person notice? – What trends are emerging? Is there a discrepancy between classwide data and that for students with disabilities? – What is the root cause of each trend? – Who needs additional support? With what? Why? • Collaborating teachers set goals for student outcomes for the coming 1–2 weeks. These are micro goals that will collectively lead to broader impact, for example: – At the end of two weeks, students A, B, C & D will achieve >80% on their re-assessment of standard X. – The class average on the end-of-week assessment for standard Y will be >70% with less than 10% (average) difference between students with and without disabilities. *Note: Ideally, this section includes engaging in or calling in the findings from a recent **student work analysis**.*
Remove 10 min.	• Lean on each teacher's expertise to preserve rigor while attending to accessibility. • Use knowledge of students' accommodations to ensure that required supports are woven in where necessary and craft specially designed instruction as appropriate. • Adapt instruction to address skill, knowledge, or content gaps that are necessary to achieve the lesson's objective(s).
Select 7 min.	**For co-teachers,** **select high-impact co-teaching models** that align with lessons' content and students' needs. **For other collaborating teachers,** identify opportunities for the: • *special educator* to leverage direct service times to support students with IEPs on skills aligned to course content, and • *general educator* to strategically use small groups or other instructional delivery methods to meet the needs of various subgroups and individual students.
Commit 3 min.	• Clearly log next steps for planning and implementation in a centralized location where both teachers can access them equally.

Overcoming Barriers to Implementation: Key Leader Moves and Mindsets

The need to expedite growth for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty is significant. At the same time, school leaders are often faced with difficult choices about where and how to allocate resources to support educators to enable that progress. Given co-planning's efficacy for all students, particularly those with disabilities, we encourage leaders to reflect on which of the following barriers may impact their implementation of co-planning and to seek out the aligned resources to support next steps forward.

SPECIAL EDUCATION IS VIEWED AS A "SEPARATE" STREAM OF WORK WITHIN A SCHOOL RATHER THAN A PRIORITY FOR GENERAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS OR TEACHERS.

- Provide staff with literature focused on the value of all educators supporting students with special needs; create time and space for the school community to discuss implications for their school community; and give examples of proof points from the same or similar contexts.[8]
- Intentionally create and invest the entire school team in a **vision** for inclusive co-planning that places responsibility for the success of all students, including those with disabilities, on all educators.
- Generate explicit **roles and responsibilities** for general and special education teachers outlining how each is responsible for contributing to instruction that supports the learning of students with disabilities, recognizing the specific expertise of special educators.

COMPLIANCE IS PRIORITIZED OVER INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AS A FOCUS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATORS.

Create alternative models of staffing for case management, such as the following:

- Dispersing case management responsibilities across a broader set of staff, including members of the school support team (assistant principals, instructional coaches, special education department chairs, etc.). This might include balancing timing needs, recognizing that not all cases require the same amount of dedicated time.
- Strategically aligning special education teachers' IEP caseloads to include only students for whom they co-plan and/or co-teach, thus minimizing the amount of relationships and specialized knowledge they are responsible for.
- Creating a school schedule in which all case managers have consolidated, dedicated time for case management. For example, scheduling such that on Fridays, case managers have the full morning to focus on IEP work and meetings. Remaining prep time during the week is then allocated to instructional work such as co-planning.

CO-PLANNING REQUIRES GUIDANCE AND COACHING FOR ADULTS TO WORK EFFECTIVELY TOGETHER.

- Incorporate **team formation activities** into the preservice schedule for any teachers who will co-plan, enabling them to begin building a trusting relationship early on.
- Prioritize coaching focused on co-planning for a subset of collaborating teachers. Consider building the practice within their partnership to ensure strong capacity and confidence before moving on to other teachers. For additional guidance, see ***How-To: Establish Coaching for Collaborative Teams***.

Notes

1 National Center for Learning Disabilities and Understood, *Forward Together*

2 California County Superintendents Education Services Association, *Improving Performance of Students With Disabilities*

3 Center on Reinventing Public Education, *Seizing the Opportunity*

4 Education Resource Strategies, *A Vision for a Reimagined Teaching Job*

5 Center on Reinventing Public Education, *Seizing the Opportunity*

6 National Center for Learning Disabilities and Understood, *Forward Together*

7 TNTP, *The Opportunity Myth*

8 National Center for Learning Disabilities and Understood, *Forward Together*; Hehir, et al., *A Summary of the Evidence*

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