



Marshall Street



Opening Doors to Collaboration

INTERDISCIPLINARY PRACTICES FOR BUILDING COLLABORATION BETWEEN GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEAMS









A Collection of Research-to-Impact Practices Developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

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Preface

In *Opening Doors to Collaboration: Interdisciplinary practices for building collaboration between general and special education teams*, we share a collection of best practices for improving learning outcomes in secondary students — particularly Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty — using collaborative teaming structures between general education and special education staff. The Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities (NIC), a group of 10 public charter school networks serving more than 75,000 students nationwide, identified the best practices through their work between 2019 and 2023.

Led by **Marshall Street** at Summit Public Schools, in partnership with technical assistance providers NIRN, RTI International, SRI International, and SWIFT Education Center, the purpose of the three-year NIC was to systematically improve the way our education system serves Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty and share these solutions with school systems everywhere. This report is funded by the Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the Gates Foundation.

The NIC used continuous improvement to translate existing research for improving learning outcomes into best practices and to iterate the practices to ensure they worked in a variety of school contexts.

In ***Opening Doors to Collaboration: Interdisciplinary practices for building collaboration between general and special education teams***, we share the results of this vital work:

- A **literature review**, summarizing the key research related to teacher collaboration
- Three **best practices** that schools used while in the NIC to successfully improve educator collaboration. Each best practice includes:
  - Case studies highlighting how schools in the NIC implemented the practices
  - Step-by-step implementation guidance
  - Key prerequisites and accelerants for successful implementation in any context
- One **case study** that details how one network utilized a best practice within their own unique context
- Two **guidance documents** that provide school and network leadership with recommendations for establishing and maintaining crucial structures that support collaboration

We share these best practices so that any school in the country can leverage the learning from the NIC to accelerate dramatic gains in learning outcomes for their students with disabilities. We hope that administrators and educators across the country can use the stories within this collection to build their school cultures of continuous improvement as well.

Acknowledgments

About Marshall Street

Marshall Street is a division of Summit Public Schools based in Redwood City, California. Marshall draws from more than 15 years of institutional knowledge and extensive experience in school improvement. Through our programs, we increase the capacity of our school partners to carry their work forward in the ways most meaningful to their communities.

Continuous Improvement is a set of principles and practices to help educators "get better at getting better." Marshall's Continuous Improvement team uses these tools to tackle intricate, systems-level problems in K–12 education. From 2019 to 2023, Marshall led a multi-year Networked Improvement Community (NIC) to make dramatic gains in the learning experiences, environments, and outcomes for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty.

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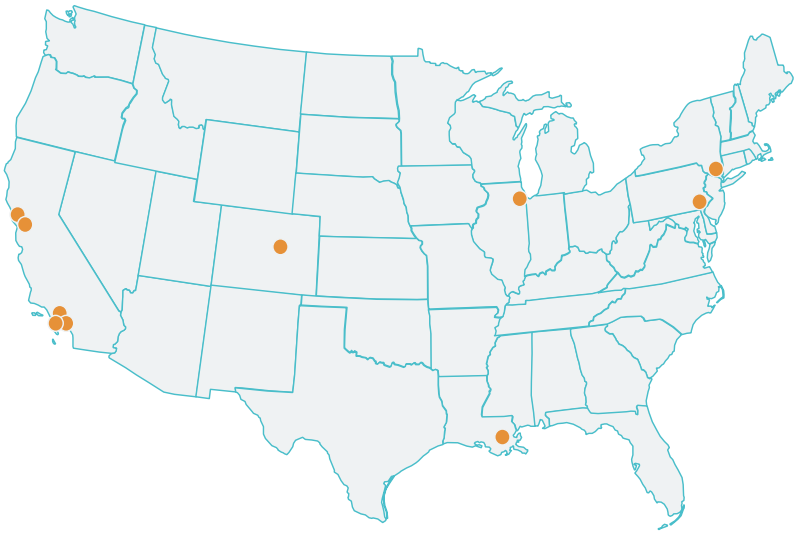
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Marshall Street

Overview

OPENING DOORS TO COLLABORATION

A collection of research-to-impact practices developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Opening Doors to Collaboration

Introduction

The Challenge

America's public schools fall short in meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

Schools across America struggle to meet the diverse needs of today's students, especially those furthest from opportunity. When marginalization intersects with disability, students often face low expectations, are systematically segregated, are denied access to college and career curricula, and do not receive sufficient support to obtain a high school diploma and pursue their dreams. In 2022, fourth and eighth grade students with disabilities were more than twice as likely as those without disabilities to score "below basic" in reading and math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress,[1] illustrating just how deeply schools are failing students with disabilities. For Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty, the challenges are even greater. Yet, **research shows that 85–90% of students with disabilities can achieve at grade level** when they receive high-quality instruction and appropriate accommodations.[2] Educators need better resources and more support to help students with disabilities achieve their full potential.

Siloed educator training and student services are root causes of the disparity.

Most teacher preparation programs continue to omit coursework focused on students with special needs,[3] leaving general educators feeling ill-equipped to support students with disabilities.[4] Further compounding the silo are schools' problematic placement structures for students with disabilities. Whereas 55% of white students with IEPs spend the majority[5] of class time in general education settings, only 33% of their Black peers do,[6] despite research that shows inclusive educational settings benefit all students.[7] The result for these students is two different tracks and approaches: one for students with disabilities and one for students without. This kind of segregation leaves all students at a

disadvantage. Students with IEPs lack access to grade-level content and peers, and students without IEPs lack an approach to instruction that enables accessibility. As a result, both groups miss crucial opportunities.

High turnover, particularly for special educators, leads to large numbers of inexperienced teachers.

The teacher staffing shortage in America's public schools further disadvantages students with disabilities.[8] Within the field of special education, shortages are even more pronounced. In the 10 years between 2006 and 2016, the number of special education teachers dropped by 17%.[9] In the 2017–18 school year, nearly 60% of first-year special education teachers in California were working without being fully credentialed.[10] As larger numbers of new teachers are filling roles, schools are presented with a special education workforce in need of tremendous support, both to ensure that they are equipped to meet students' needs and so that they feel effective and satisfied such that they continue to work in the field.[11] This support is not just related to how to support students best. Because special educators are asked to collaborate on a daily basis, specific training and support focused on effective collaboration, in addition to guidance on how to open access for all learners, is crucial to their success.

Exclusionary mindsets at all levels of a school inhibit collaboration.

While most educators enter the field with the desire or intention of supporting all students, the education system as a whole has been designed for students without disabilities. The siloing or "othering" of students with disabilities feeds into a pervasive teacher mindset that students with disabilities are "someone else's" responsibility, denying students access to general education content and teachers, which in turn limits students' educational opportunities.[12] At the highest levels of school leadership, special education is often set to the side, left out of key discussions and decisions. This same mentality negatively impacts general education teachers' perceptions of their special education colleagues, often causing them to view special education teachers as "assistants" or less qualified educators.[13] Together, these mindsets inhibit the collaboration between general and special educators and students that is necessary to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.[14]

Co-teaching is the gold standard of collaboration but can be difficult to do well.

Co-teaching is the practice of two certified teachers, traditionally a general educator and a special educator, sharing a classroom to open access to learning for diverse populations of students. Co-teaching is considered to be a best practice within the scope of collaboration between educators for a number of reasons, including that it halves the student-to-teacher ratio and that it allows teachers to share their different expertise with each other in the service of giving all students the support that they need. When done well, co-teaching includes a great deal of time outside of class dedicated to collaboration in the form of co-planning, data analysis, and receiving feedback through instructional coaching. Co-teaching also requires intentional staffing and scheduling to ensure that all special educators have time to meet their various compliance needs, in addition to teaching and collaborating. Because of this, many schools find themselves implementing less effective methods of co-teaching or looking for other ways to collaborate. For a thorough explanation of co-teaching and its challenges, see the ***Collaboration Literature Review***.

Our Approach

NIC participants embraced an "all means all" philosophy for their work to improve outcomes, experiences, and environments for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty. As they did so, they acknowledged that existing structures and ways of working didn't include all students — or all staff. In response, the NIC endeavored to retrain mindsets and beliefs that othered students with disabilities and special educators; to revise the systems, structures, and routines that limited inclusion; and to offer models of excellence so that members could see exemplars of what is possible for inclusive and collaborative educational systems. Central to this work was strengthening, or in some cases establishing for the first time, collaboration between general and special educators to break down the silos leading to exclusion for our priority population. This was a focus of efforts at all levels of the education system — from classrooms to school leadership teams to district office decision-making bodies. Several guiding principles became the foundation for these efforts.

When general and special education collaboration improves, so do learning outcomes.

For the NIC charter networks featured in *Opening Doors to Collaboration*, it became clear that until collaboration and alignment between general and special education teams dramatically improved, results for students would suffer, a perspective supported by research from the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD).[15] In the NIC, where collaboration improved, outcomes followed, and not only for students with disabilities. When teams became more aligned in their actions and decisions, they refined their operations and established teaching and coaching structures that centered on the needs of students with disabilities, for the benefit of all students. At every level, habits changed and mindsets shifted. These changes removed barriers that may have otherwise limited the achievement of students in vulnerable subgroups, particularly students with disabilities.

Indeed, in many cases, collaborative structures at both the school and district levels were revised to include special education expertise and perspectives on teams and in decision-making. Changes to routines, communication, and culture together built capacity at all levels of school organizations and reshaped how member schools met the diverse needs of all their students.

The value of a system-wide commitment to collaboration was further highlighted for NIC members during a March 2022 visit to **WISH Charter Schools** and **CHIME Institute** in California, two charter schools nationally renowned for their inclusive, collaborative approach to supporting students, particularly those with disabilities. School leaders described “micro and macro” systems that ensure that structures at every level of their schools — from prep schedules and case management loads, to co-planning agendas and curriculum sharing structures — are crafted in service of all educators and staff working together to meet all students’ needs. Following this NIC Learning Tour, participating organizations refined a diverse range of processes and routines to further develop educators and their support team members like coaches and school leaders to collaborate in service of meeting the needs of their most vulnerable students.

The quality of teacher collaboration determines learning outcome improvement.

Research on inclusive practices repeatedly cites collaboration time as the essential component of successful collaboration.[16] However, as they engaged in this work, NIC members came to realize that what happens *during* collaboration time is the deciding factor in the extent to which that collaboration will drive change. The key is not simply doing it, but the deeply challenging work of doing it well.[17] Consequently, NIC members examined models, designed tools, and implemented coaching structures to improve the quality of collaborative efforts — efforts that both protected time and adopted or adapted systems and routines to look at student data and plan aligned instruction across educators. Regardless of the specific collaborative teaming structure in place at each NIC school, NIC members worked toward more impactful forms of collaboration, building capacity for continued improvement.

Co-teaching with co-planning is the most direct approach to collaboration.

We considered co-teaching to be the gold standard for collaboration that improves outcomes for our priority population, and we aspired to establish or improve co-teaching wherever possible. Accordingly, some of the schools in the NIC implemented and refined co-teaching structures, focusing on effective co-planning time in order to optimize the presence of two adults sharing a classroom. For schools that choose to invest in co-teaching, intentional co-planning creates the conditions necessary for teachers to share their perspectives and ideas with each other, allowing all students greater access to the teachers' shared expertise.

For example, **KIPP Northern California** created protected co-planning blocks within their school schedule, giving teachers time to engage in effective collaboration. **Collegiate Academies** chose to implement data-driven co-planning cycles supported by intentional collaboration between special education leaders and school instructional leadership. Additionally, **Collegiate** and **Green Dot Public Schools** recognized that in order for their co-teachers to internalize and implement complicated co-teaching models effectively, they needed to use a gradual release model in their instructional coaching. By introducing a new co-teaching model only once the previous one was mastered, Collegiate and Green Dot coaches supported their teachers' success. Other schools supported co-teaching through instructional coaching as well. **STEM Preparatory Schools** introduced a tiered coaching model, varying levels of coaching support based on the needs of the team as opposed to the individual. They utilized a lead coach to support each collaborating pair. **Math and Science College Preparatory** doubled down on collaboration, with two coaches collaboratively coaching each co-teaching pair.

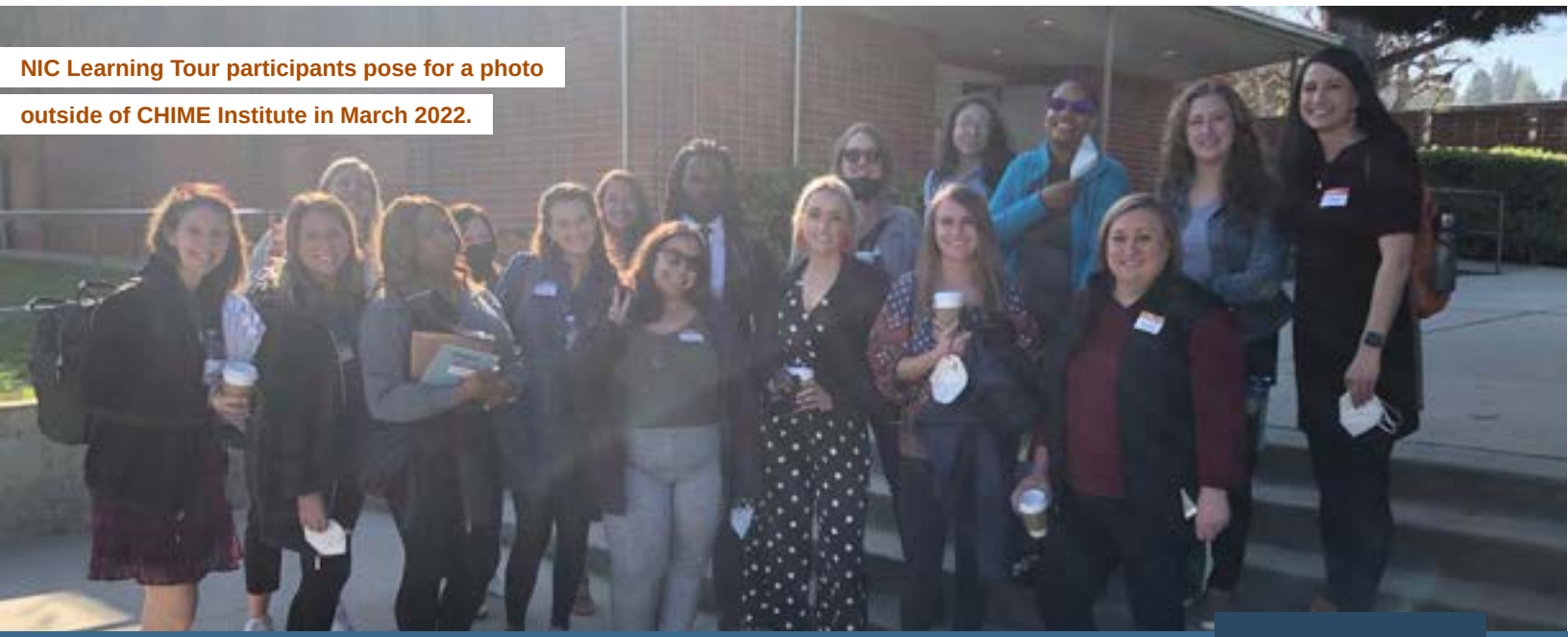


Schools must understand their own unique structures and needs and work to improve collaboration within those bounds.

NIC participants all joined the network with their own unique contexts. Some schools were determined to improve collaboration but recognized that given their context, current resources, or site readiness, co-teaching was either not feasible or not sustainable. Through the collaborative efforts of the NIC — including virtual professional learning communities, in-person learning tours, and the sharing of bright spots and related resources from partners across the community — these participants were able to identify best practices for collaboration and bring ideas back to their own contexts, where they looked for ways to adapt, refine, and apply the practices to existing systems. In other cases, teams piloted new ideas at a smaller scale. No matter their starting point, schools demonstrated a deep commitment to building and improving collaboration systems, routines, and mindsets, even when traditional co-teaching was not their model.

For example, at **Ednovate**, most special educators' caseloads make co-teaching full-time (for the entire class period, every time it meets) a challenge. To maximize their time spent supporting students with disabilities in their general education classes, special educators utilize a "partial co-teaching" model in which they either co-teach for a full period two to three days out of the week or co-teach for some portion of a course every day (e.g., the first 45 minutes for the introduction to new material and guided practice). At **Summit Atlas**, special educators primarily provide instruction in a separate classroom setting, yet they also regularly collaborate with their general education peers during co-planning sessions that are driven by the needs of a data-informed subset of students with IEPs. Focusing on that collaborative structure has dramatically improved the general education course outcomes for students with disabilities and built the capacity of general educators to design instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

Improving the ways in which general and special educators collaborate is *always* positively impactful for students.[18] Regardless of the service delivery models utilized within a school, there are myriad ways in which this work can occur, and each is worthy of time and resources.



NIC Learning Tour participants pose for a photo outside of CHIME Institute in March 2022.

Collaborative Teaming Structures

Schools within the NIC took various approaches to collaboration. Each approach defined specific structures and routines to allow educators to collaborate effectively, focusing intently on team membership, clear roles and responsibilities, and student-centered outcomes.

CO-TEACHING

Many of the NIC participants featured in this collection have heavily invested in co-teaching as a service delivery model for teachers to collaboratively plan for and execute instruction to meet the needs of all learners in a classroom. Co-teaching structures included regular time for planning, review of data, and instruction. The deep partnership that is possible for students and educators in a well-supported co-teaching model creates an exceptional environment for very high-level collaboration. If co-teaching is sustainable and appropriate for your school and students with disabilities, we encourage leaders to explore its implementation.

COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

This collection refers often to collaborating teachers, that is, general and special educators who share their expertise with one another to best support all students. Although not always in the same classroom, educators working together to improve the learning outcomes of a group of students can benefit from using the practices that have been tested and honed by the schools that participated in the NIC. If traditional co-teaching is not possible in your school's context, we encourage leaders to consider how these practices might be applied to collaborative teaching in some form across instructional settings where students are served.

SYSTEM-LEVEL COLLABORATION

Sometimes, especially at the early stages of collaboration efforts in a school or network, the most crucial adjustment happens when school leaders establish dedicated collaboration space between special education and general education curriculum leaders. Oftentimes, special education leaders are not included in decision-making processes but rather are informed of decisions after the fact. Improving collaboration at the leadership level sets an example for others while also strengthening the systems and structures required for system-wide collaboration.

When leaders and teachers invest in partnerships between their general and special education team members they often see students' experiences and academic results improve in exciting ways. Save for ***Chapter 3: Achieving High-Impact Co-Teaching: A Gradual Release Model***, every practice featured in this collection is applicable across a wide spectrum of collaborative partnerships. We encourage school leaders to engage expansively with the practices and guidance, identifying inroads for stronger collaboration that are manageable for them, in their contexts, at present, and building upon them as skills improve and relationships deepen.

Enabling Conditions

Each of the practices in this collection strengthens and leverages strong general and special education collaboration in service of improved experiences for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty. The effective implementation of these practices was made possible because of three core enabling conditions that were in place in NIC members' schools: **dedicated time, strategic coaching,** and **strong professional relationships between educators.** Without these three conditions, the practices' impact is dramatically reduced.

Dedicated Time

Research shows that when asked what makes their work feasible, special educators in particular cite time to collaborate with their general education peers.[19] Dedicated collaboration time within the school schedule communicates to teachers that school leaders deeply value and prioritize staff collaboration, and its protection ensures that collaboration can occur.

Schools in the NIC prioritized building school-wide schedules around meeting times for collaborating teachers and other supporting team members. They included dedicated time for team formation, team development, and team coaching, as well as regular, protected planning time that eliminates conflicts, ideally during the school day. Because such scheduling is so crucial and can get quite complicated, administrators may want to seek assistance from an outside organization or expert who can guide them through the process of building that dedicated time into the school schedule.

Strategic Coaching

Collaborating teachers, particularly new teachers, need explicit guidance and training in how to plan instruction, analyze student work and data, and plan together across their instructional areas of expertise. Instructional coaching is proven to be beneficial,[20] and in the context of collaboration between general and special educators, coaching takes on a particularly important role. It is essential for effective collaboration between teachers because it offers the guidance, training, feedback, and modeling necessary for teachers to build their capacity and skill when it comes to collaboration. Coaches also provide skill development and accountability that relieves the special education teacher of needing to be the primary driver of collaboration, reducing teacher burnout and a "your students, my students" mentality. Furthermore, when general education and special education coaches combine their efforts, they build their expertise in the other's area, thus increasing their collective capacity to support the diverse needs of all students. For more, see ***How-To: Establish Coaching for Collaborative Teams***.

Strong Professional Relationships

While all three enabling conditions are critical to successful collaboration, time and coaching are moot in the absence of well-established, trusting relationships between collaborating educators.

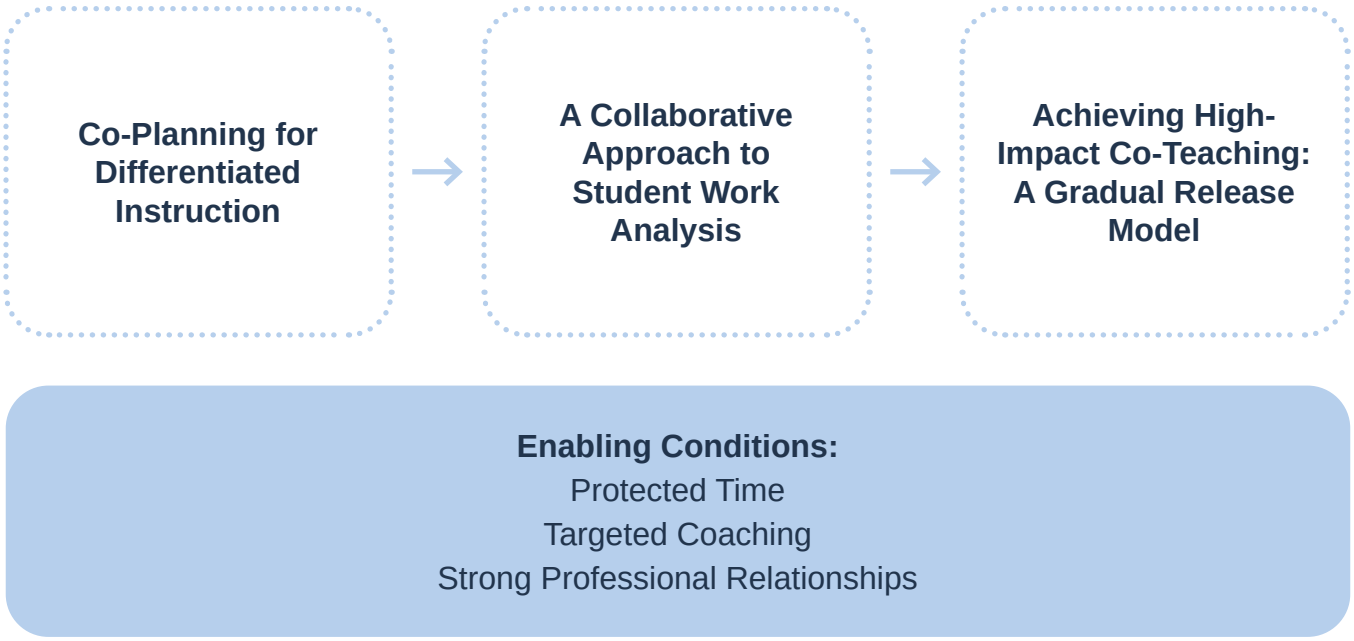
Trusting, productive relationships play a huge role in educators' ability to engage in the three layers of collaboration. Deep collaboration requires all collaborators to know each other and each other's ways

of working, to be open to exchanging ideas with one another, and to have an understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities. Trusting relationships do not simply happen but, rather, must be explicitly cultivated. Once developed, effective collaborating teachers in the NIC cited the relationship dynamic as one of the key contributors to their efficacy and satisfaction with their work. For more on building strong teams, see ***How-To: Launch Effective Collaborative Teams***.

The Collection

This Collection includes **three best practices** essential to the work of improving collaboration between general education and special education teachers to improve learning outcomes for all students, **a case study**, and **two guidance documents** on supporting collaborative teaming.

Each of the practices detailed in this book is an independently strong and valuable practice. However, when implemented layer by layer, each practice builds a foundation that enables the next to take root.



Chapter 1: Co-Planning for Differentiated Instruction

For collaborating teachers to have as much impact as possible, they must have dedicated co-planning time focused on ensuring that their upcoming lessons are both accessible and rigorous for all students, especially their students with disabilities. Teams at Summit Atlas and Collegiate Academies honed this work over time, identifying the core practices that make efficient and effective use of collaborating teachers' often limited time together. This chapter highlights the importance of each of the key components of co-planning, providing an understanding of the contributions from collaborating teachers that yield the strongest plans.

Chapter 2: A Collaborative Approach to Student Work Analysis

Once outcomes-driven co-planning is in place, teams are ready to analyze their students' work to identify strengths and make necessary instructional changes to benefit students. Collaborative student work analysis dramatically deepens both teachers' understanding of their students' performance and progress in course content. This second chapter walks readers through Green Dot's protocol, showing how both the generalist and the specialist contribute their unique vantage points and skills to deeply understand students' work and plan to proactively remove barriers to access, particularly for students with disabilities.

Chapter 3: Achieving High-Impact Co-Teaching: A Gradual Release Model

For schools utilizing co-teaching as a service delivery model, the final chapter focuses on how teachers can maximize their shared presence with students. Two educators can accomplish twice what one could on their own, but shifting to that level of practice is immensely challenging. For teachers to increasingly employ high-impact co-teaching models, they need targeted, supportive coaching that aids in their gradual adoption of new models based on students' needs. Collegiate and Green Dot's work provides a roadmap for how other schools and networks can enable their co-teachers to grow in similar role optimization.

Case Study: How Quarterly Professional Development Cycles Helped a Network Maximize Data-Driven Co-Planning for Co-Teachers: Green Dot Public Schools

In order to build the skill, mindset, and habits of collaborating teams, districts need to provide training and ongoing coaching in co-planning. This case study describes how Green Dot piloted and refined professional development days for co-teachers to step away from their classroom once a quarter for a day-long co-planning workshop. These sessions include a standardized student work analysis protocol for teachers to work through with their coach and choice-driven mini-professional development sessions on high-leverage models of co-teaching for ongoing capacity building.

Guidance Documents: Team Formation and Coaching

These guidance documents, written for school and network leadership, answer some of the most common questions leaders face when implementing collaborative practices. They draw on work done by the schools that participated in the NIC and elevate strong practices that can be used right away.

HOW-TO: LAUNCH EFFECTIVE COLLABORATIVE TEAMS

Pairing two teachers together in a classroom or in co-planning periods and assuming that their collaboration will be smooth has been shown to be ineffective.[21] This document addresses how to set collaborative teachers up for success.

HOW-TO: ESTABLISH COACHING FOR COLLABORATIVE TEAMS

Effective instructional coaching for collaborative teachers requires a different approach than coaching individual teachers. This document addresses the systems and strategies necessary to implement this coaching well.

How to Approach this Collection

We recommend readers begin with Chapter 1, as this chapter provides foundational guidance on how collaborating teacher teams can best use collaborative planning time to build accessible lesson plans. After Chapter 1, readers are encouraged to explore Chapters 2 and 3 for insights on building both the skill set of collaborating teachers to analyze student work to make data-informed decisions in their planning and the skill of teachers to effectively co-teach in one classroom.

Next, readers can explore an inspiring case study about how a network used a quarterly professional development structure to train educators and develop their skills for data analysis and instructional design.

Finally, readers looking to better support collaborative teaming structures can reference the two guidance documents that provide insights on coaching and team formation.

FURTHER READING

High Leverage Practices in Special Education, Collaboration: Research Syntheses from the Council for Exceptional Children & CEEDAR Center

Collaboration: Partnering With Colleagues, Families, and Caregivers to Promote Student Success from the National Center for Learning Disabilities and Understood

Supporting Co-Teaching Teams in High Schools: Twenty Research-Based Practices by Gerry Nierengarten in *American Secondary Education*



Appendix

Notes

1 US Department of Education, *National Assessment of Educational Progress*

2 Quenemoen and Thurlow, *Students with Disabilities in Educational Policy*

3 Mader, “How Teacher Training Hinders Special-Needs Students”

4 Blanton, Pugach, and Florian, *Preparing General Education Teachers*

5 More than 80% of the school day

6 National Center for Learning Disabilities, *Significant Disproportionality*

7 Hehir et al., *A Summary of the Evidence*

8 Schmitt and deCourcy, *The Pandemic Has Exacerbated a Long-Standing National Shortage*

9 Samuels and Harwin, “Shortage of Special Educators”

10 Hawkins, “Yes, There’s a Shortage”

11 Teach Plus, *A Million Paper Cuts*

12 TNTP, *The Opportunity Myth*

13 Stolz, “Time for Critical Reimagining”

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

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Jones and Winters, “Are Two Teachers Better Than One?”

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

19 Ronfeldt et al., “Teacher Collaboration”

20 Kraft, Blazer, and Hogan, “The Effect of Teacher Coaching”

21 Aldabas, “Co-teaching in Classrooms”

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Marshall Street

Literature Review

OPENING DOORS TO COLLABORATION

A collection of research-to-impact practices developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

OPENING DOORS TO COLLABORATION

Literature Review

ABSTRACT

Collaboration between general and special educators across all levels of the school system has long been seen as a best practice when considering how to serve students with disabilities effectively. There is evidence in the research base that stronger collaboration is correlated with better results for both educators and students. One particular form of collaboration, co-teaching, has emerged as a leading approach to collaboration at the classroom level. Co-teaching approaches are buoyed by a strong body of research and have the potential to serve students with learning and thinking differences. This literature review synthesizes the existing research on educator collaboration broadly as well as the specific practice of co-teaching, focusing on both defining the practices and explaining their various uses. Research selected for inclusion in this literature review includes seminal texts as well as literature published from 2008 to 2023. This review is designed for school district administrators considering adopting or improving collaborative practices in their districts.

Introduction

In this literature review, we share a concise overview of collaboration practices and methods with a particular focus on co-teaching, an emerging best practice and service delivery model grounded in the philosophy of inclusive education. Our purpose is to equip school district staff who are considering adopting or improving collaborative practices between general educators and special educators with a summary of the research on collaboration so that staff can make informed and thoughtful implementation decisions for their districts. The literature review was conducted by Marshall Street, a coalition of educators working to systematically improve opportunities for students across the United States.

This literature review is part of a larger collection of improvement tools for districts. The Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities (NIC), a group of 10 public charter school networks serving more than 75,000 students nationwide, launched in 2019 to make dramatic gains in

the learning experiences, environments, and outcomes for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty. Led by Marshall Street at Summit Public Schools in partnership with technical assistance providers NIRN, RTI International, SRI International, and SWIFT Education Center, NIC participants used continuous improvement methods, supported by this literature review of leading research and a corresponding toolkit of best practices, to improve implementation in these areas with the potential to increase academic outcomes for students with disabilities: Collaboration, Literacy, Multi-tiered Systems of Support, Transitions, and Emotional and Behavioral Supports.

This literature review provides a brief overview of the research regarding the following questions:

- **WHAT IS EDUCATOR COLLABORATION?**
- **WHY IS SPECIAL AND GENERAL EDUCATOR COLLABORATION IMPORTANT?**
- **WHAT IS CO-TEACHING?**
- **WHY IS CO-TEACHING IMPORTANT?**
- **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF CO-TEACHING?**
- **WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OF CO-TEACHING?**
- **WHAT IS THE MOST COMMON FRAMEWORK(S) OF CO-TEACHING?**
- **HOW EFFECTIVE IS CO-TEACHING, AND FOR WHOM?**
- **WHAT ARE THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION?**

There are several excellent existing literature reviews on collaboration and co-teaching, such as the 2008 literature review prepared for the Ministry of Education in Saskatchewan. This literature review builds upon earlier works by incorporating findings of earlier seminal texts with literature from 2008 to 2023.



What is educator collaboration?

Collaboration in education has been defined as a “mutual effort to plan, implement, and evaluate the educational program for a given student” (Correa et al. 2005 in Hernandez 2013) and as “individuals with diverse expertise working together to achieve mutually agreed upon objectives” (Snell and Janney 2000 in Hernandez 2013). When collaboration focuses on supporting students with disabilities, it takes on many forms, including both direct and indirect collaboration. In direct collaboration, a specialist works directly with a child. In contrast, in indirect collaboration, a specialist works directly with another teacher or teachers, taking on an advisory, consultative, inspirer, or sparring partner role (Hansen et al. 2020), including sometimes working in a co-teaching capacity.

Sometimes, collaboration in schools happens within larger teams, where general and special educators work together to make decisions about students (Friend et al. 2010; Blackwell and Rossetti 2014; Education Resource Strategies 2021) during dedicated collaboration times. Ripley (1997) describes how collaborative planning must happen at the district, building, and classroom levels for schools to achieve inclusive practices. However, much of the literature about collaboration in education eventually hones in on co-teaching as a best practice service-delivery model (Friend 2008; Villa et al. 2005; Ronfeldt et al. 2015; Scanlon and Baker 2012). As the most discussed service delivery model situated within collaboration, literature on co-teaching is covered in more detail later in this review.

Why is Special and General Educator Collaboration Important?

In the literature, the most discussed reason for educators to collaborate is that it leads to improved teacher practice and knowledge. As teachers collaborate, they can share specialist approaches, forms of knowledge, and various skills and strategies (Hansen et al. 2020; Winn and Blanton 2005). Additionally, as educators spend time working with one another, they begin to develop shared beliefs about students, teaching, and learning (Winn and Blanton 2005). In a study of over 8,000 teachers, Ronfeldt et al. (2015) found almost 90% of teachers surveyed viewed being on an instructional team as either helpful or very helpful and specifically saw collaborating on the development of instructional strategies to be the most useful. Teachers in another study reported that collaborative planning allowed them to include instructional accommodations in their lessons by balancing the content-area expertise of general educators with pedagogical knowledge and specialized supports from special educators (Scanlon and Baker 2012). There is even evidence that when teachers change schools, moving to a school with more collaborative practices, the rate at which their teaching skill improves increases (Ronfeldt et al. 2015).

There is also evidence that stronger educator collaboration leads to improved student outcomes. Ronfeldt et al. (2015) found that schools with instructional teams that engaged in better collaboration had higher achievement gains in both math and reading than schools that did not collaborate as well. This supports previous research showing that schools with higher levels of collaboration also have higher levels of student achievement (Goddard et al. 2007; Goddard et al. 2010 in Ronfeldt et al. 2015). Collaboration between educators often leads to greater inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Bausela 2003, Boavida and da Ponte 2011, and Lozano et al. 2010 in

Sanahuja-Gavalda et al. 2016), and learning outcomes for students on the autism spectrum are more positive in mainstream placements than in specialist placements (Sanahuja-Gavalda et al. 2016). Beyond specific gains in student achievement, collaboration can enhance the development of important life skills and abilities of students with disabilities (McWilliam and Young 1996 and Barnes and Turner 2001 in Hernandez 2012).

What is Co-Teaching?

A widely used form of collaboration, co-teaching is a service-delivery option that supports the philosophy of inclusive education (Alnasser 2020; Anderson 2008). The most commonly cited definition of co-teaching in the literature is that of Friend (2008, 9): "Co-teaching occurs when a general education teacher and a specialist — often a special education teacher, reading specialist, speech/language therapist, or bilingual teacher — work as partners to teach a diverse group of students." Further, co-teaching presumes:

- **Instruction for diverse learners primarily occurs concurrently and within the same classroom space.** (Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008; Friend 2008; Friend and Cook 2003 in Simmons and Magiera 2007; Gately and Gately 2001; Cook and Friend 1995 in Murawski and Swanson 2001).
- **Teaching partners are both two equally licensed adults.** One is a generalist with expertise in the grade band or content area and the other is a specialist who is licensed as a specialist education teacher, reading specialist, or the like, whose background is in adapting and modifying instruction for students with special needs and learning disabilities (Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008; Friend 2008; Friend and Cook 2003 in Simmons and Magiera 2007; Cook and Friend 1995 in Murawski and Swanson 2001).
- **Both teachers are jointly responsible for the academic outcomes of all the students in the classroom.** (Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008; Friend 2008; Gately and Gately 2001; Keefe and Moore 2004; Murawski and Swanson 2001).
- **Both teachers engage equitably in joint collaborative planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection.** (Dove and Honigsfeld 2018; Friend 2008; Gately and Gately 2001; Murawski and Lochner 2010).

Importantly, Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) and Anderson (2008) note that co-teaching is *NOT*:

- The simple placement of two teachers in a classroom such as:
  - one person teaching while another person has a prep period,
  - one teacher conducting a lesson while the other watches,
  - one teacher dictating over the other what is to be taught and how it is to be taught, or
  - one person being assigned as a tutor.
- The combining of two different content classrooms (e.g., ELA and History).

Co-teaching typically refers to the service-delivery model of collaboratively educating students with disabilities alongside their general education peers, though co-teaching is also being implemented for multilingual learners and gifted and talented students (Friend et al. 2010). Some students with

disabilities may have needs that cannot be serviced exclusively in the general education environment, and thus may receive instruction in special education settings in addition to the instruction provided in co-taught general education classrooms (King-Sears et al. 2021).

Why is Co-Teaching Important?

For decades, the public education system in the United States has failed to effectively serve students with a diverse set of needs, particularly students with disabilities. Inclusion classrooms — classrooms in which students with and without disabilities are served together — are both an educational requirement and a best practice for serving students with disabilities due to governmental mandates such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and research showing academic gains from inclusion classrooms (Alnasser 2020; Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Cole et al. n.d.; Cramer et al. 2010; Weiss, Glaser, and Lloyd 2020). Yet, too often, schools integrate students rather than fully including them. Integrated education places students with diverse needs in general education classrooms without providing them with additional support to open access to learning. Inclusive education, on the other hand, is the systemic change of an educational institution to provide an equitable and participatory learning experience for all students (Hehir, Pascucci, and Pascucci 2016).

According to a recent nationwide survey of education data, 67% of students in special education receive instruction in general education classrooms for at least 80% of the school day (National Center for Education Statistics 2023). The large number of students with special needs integrated in general education classrooms — who, due to the disproportionate rates of Black and Latinx students being referred for special education services, are often Black and Latinx (National Center for Learning Disabilities 2020) — leaves educators with the important question of how to implement inclusion classrooms well (Alnasser 2020; Soslau, Gallo-Fox, and Scantlebury 2019 in Alnasser 2020).

Co-teaching has emerged as a leading strategy for effectively meeting the needs of students with disabilities in an inclusive environment. While co-teaching is not required as a method of instruction by governmental mandates (Cramer et al. 2010; DeMartino and Specht 2018), schools across the United States have embraced co-teaching due to:

- **A wide research base on co-teaching implementation models** (Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Friend et al. 2010; Kim et al. 2006 in Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Kohler-Evans 2006; Mastropieri et al. 2005 in Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Murawski and Lochner 2010; Ploessl et al. 2010 in Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Thousand, Villa, and Nevin 2006 in Brendle 2017).
- **Co-teaching's potential to help teachers simultaneously meet accountability standards for students with disabilities, prepare students for postsecondary placement, and provide instruction to diverse students within the general education classroom** (Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008; Cramer et al. 2010).



Benefits of Co-Teaching

The literature notes numerous academic and non-academic benefits of well-implemented co-teaching. Some of the most commonly cited benefits of well-implemented co-teaching for students and teachers are presented in the tables below.

ACADEMIC BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS	
Enhanced academic performance for diverse learners, including students with disabilities	Bauler and Kang 2020; Fu et al. 2007 in Bauler and Kang 2020; Hang and Rabren 2009 in Alnasser 2020; Kirby 2017 in Anderson 2008; Magiera et al. 2005 in Anderson 2008; Murawski 2006 in Alnasser 2020; Strogilos and Avramidis 2016 in Alnasser 2020
Increased access to general education curriculum for diverse learners	Anderson 2008; Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008; Dove and Honigsfeld 2018; Howser 2015 in Alnasser 2020; Magiera et al. 2005 in Anderson 2008; Rice et al. 2007 in Anderson 2008
Increased teacher availability to diverse learners	Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008; Capp 2004 in Anderson 2008; Keefe and Moore 2004; Villa et al. 2004 in Anderson 2008; Wilson and Michaels 2006 in Friend et al. 2010
Access to two certified teachers with different perspectives on teaching	Bauler and Kang 2020; Kohler-Evans 2006; Mastropieri et al. 2005 in Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Wilson and Michaels 2006 in Friend et al. 2010

NON-ACADEMIC BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS	
Decreased stigmatization and increased empathy for diverse learners by general education students and teachers	Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008; Cook 2004 in Anderson 2008; Friend and Cook, in Friend and Pope 2005 in Anderson 2008; Howser 2015 in Alnasser 2020; Keefe and Moore 2004 in Friend et al. 2010
A supportive and engaging learning environment for all students	Ploessl et al. 2010 in Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017
Increased collaboration and relationships between all students	Bauler and Kang 2020; Dove and Honigsfeld 2018; Friend and Cook, in Friend and Pope 2005 in Anderson 2008
Increased social skills development for students with disabilities and multilingual learners	Murawski and Lochner 2010
Increased students' sense of belonging in the classroom and at school, particularly for diverse learners	Dove and Honigsfeld 2018
Reduced challenging behaviors by students with disabilities in the general education classroom	Hang and Rabren 2009 in Alnasser 2020; Kirby 2017 in Alnasser 2020; Murawski 2006 in Alnasser 2020; Strogilos and Avramidis 2016 in Alnasser 2020

BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS	
Increased job satisfaction	Anderson 2008; Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008; Friend and Reisling, in Tichenor 2004 in Anderson 2008
Ongoing job-embedded professional growth for both the general educator and the specialist through training and collaboration	Anderson 2008; Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008; Bauler and Kang 2020; Dove and Honigsfeld 2018; Friend et al. 2010 in Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Pancsofar and Petroff 2013 in King-Sears et al. 2021; Villa et al. 2004 in Anderson 2008
Increased peer support and input on an ongoing basis	Hang and Rabren 2009 in Alnasser 2020; Kirby 2017 in Alnasser 2020; Murawski 2006 in Alnasser 2020; Rea, McLaughlin, and Walther-Thomas 2002 in Alnasser 2020; Strogilos and Avramidis 2016 in Alnasser 2020
Increased capacity to implement a variety of instructional approaches	Bauler and Kang 2020; Friend et al. 2010; Kim et al. 2006 and Thousand et al. 2006 in Brendle 2017; Rice et al. 2007 in Anderson 2008
Equalized roles between general education teachers and specialists	Martin-Beltrán and Peercy 2012 in Bauler and Kang 2020

Finally, the literature noted benefits for schools, including **fewer referrals for special education services** (Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008; Pugach and Johnson, in Villa et al. 2004 in Anderson 2008) resulting in fewer disproportionate referrals for Black and Latinx students (National Center for Learning Disabilities 2020), and **increased parent satisfaction** (Afflect et al. in Popp 2000 in Anderson 2008; Cramer et al. 2006 in Anderson 2008).

As with many educational approaches, the benefits rely on the effectiveness of the implementation. All of the above benefits can be seen when co-teaching is well-implemented.

Limitations of Co-Teaching

Few mentions were made in the literature regarding limitations (limitations are defined as shortcomings or weaknesses of the approach) of co-teaching, or of collaborative practices in general. One such mention was that students with disabilities received less specially designed instruction (ASCD 2015). Additionally, anecdotally, schools transitioning to co-teaching noticed an increase in academic outcomes for students with disabilities after introducing co-teaching, and then experienced a leveling off of academic gains after a period of time (ASCD 2015). Notably, for multilingual co-teaching classrooms, ESOL teachers “felt restricted from using their greatest assets in the mainstream classroom. In particular, the use of native language and the ability to focus on the complexities of language development were not leveraged to the highest potential” (McClure and Cahnman-Taylor 2010 in Bauler and Kang 2020, 4).

While limitations were less frequently discussed in the literature, implementation challenges were frequently cited. The main challenges of co-teaching include a lack of co-planning time, lack of administrative support, need for ongoing training/lack of training support, relationship difficulties between co-teachers, and increased workload for general education and specialist teachers (Alnasser 2020; Anderson 2008; Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Winn and Blanton 2005). Importantly, these challenges are significant enough to prevent many schools from implementing co-teaching with fidelity.

Because these challenges to implementing co-teaching are significant, they are examined more thoroughly in the "Necessary Conditions for Successful Implementation" section of this literature review.

Common Implementation Frameworks

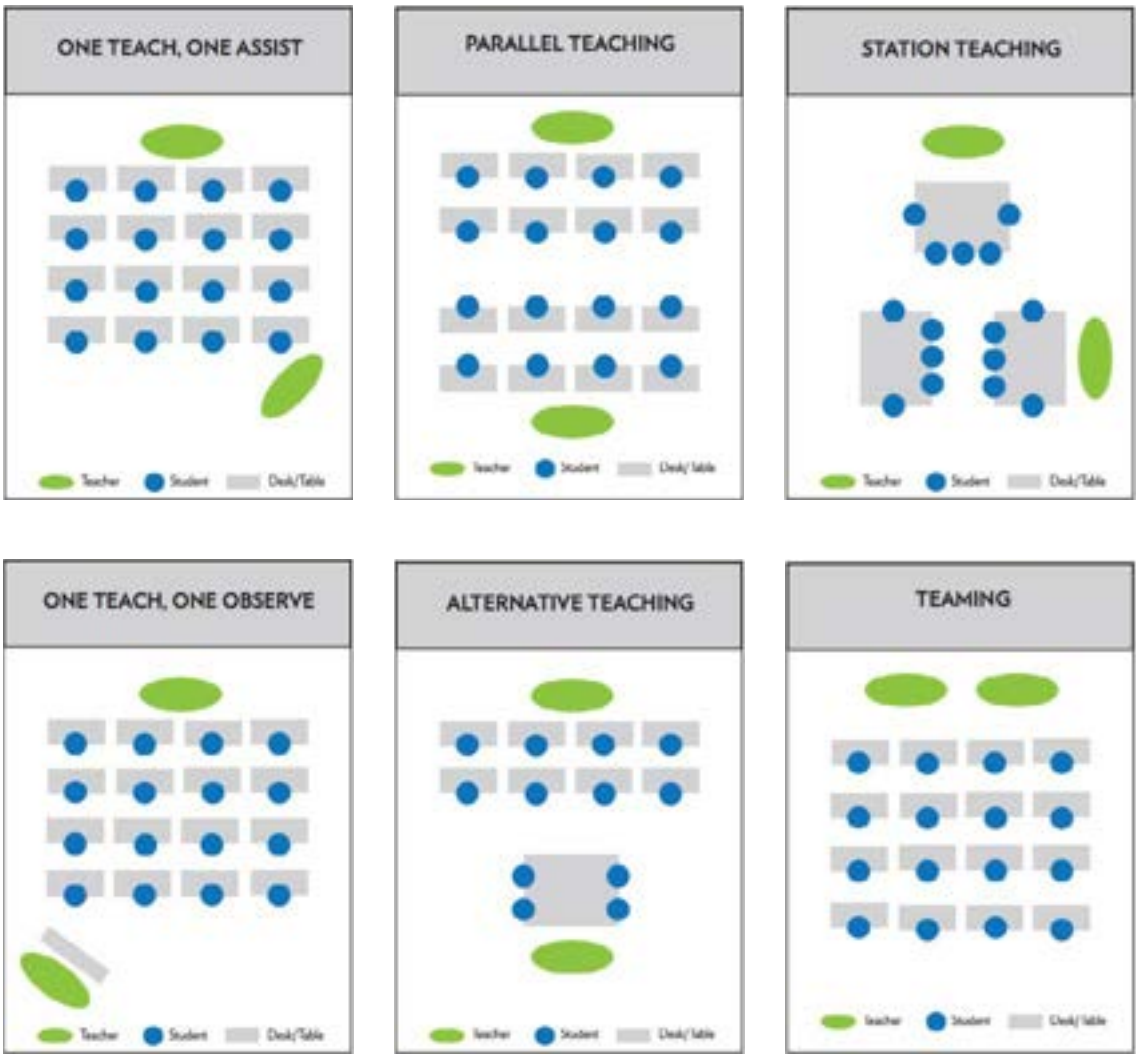
The six models of co-teaching as defined by Friend et al. (2010) is the most commonly cited framework for co-teaching in the literature. An additional framework is Dove and Honigsfeld's seven models of co-teaching for multilingual learners (2018).

Friend et al.'s (2010, 12) six models of co-teaching are listed below. Of the six models, Friend et al. (2010) notes that models 1, 2, and 3 are far more beneficial to students than models 4, 5, and 6:

- 1. **Station Teaching** involves dividing students into three groups and rotating the groups from station to station, where they are taught by the co-teachers at two stations and working independently at the third;
- 2. **Parallel Teaching** requires each of the co-teachers to instruct half of the students, presenting the same lesson to provide instructional differentiation and increased student participation;
- 3. **Alternative Teaching** involves one teacher providing instruction to the majority of students while the other teacher works with a small group for remediation, enrichment, or assessment;
- 4. **Teaming** requires that co-teachers lead large-group instruction, with both teachers lecturing, representing different viewpoints and multiple methods of solving problems;
- 5. **One Teach, One Assist**, also identified as **Supportive Teaching**, involves one co-teacher leading instruction, while the other teacher circulates among the students providing individual assistance;
- 6. **One Teach, One Observe** involves one of the co-teachers leading large-group instruction while the other teacher gathers academic, behavioral, or social data on specific students or the class group.

Dove and Honigsfeld's (2018) seven models of co-teaching for multilingual learners closely map to Friend et al.'s (2010) six models of co-teaching. The chart that follows is a crosswalk of the two frameworks, combined with corresponding benefits and challenges compiled by Anderson (2008, 39).

SIX APPROACHES TO CO-TEACHING



Source: [Teaching Tolerance Seamless Teaching Toolkit]

SIX MODELS OF CO-TEACHING	SEVEN MODELS OF CO-TEACHING FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS	BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
Supportive Teaching (One Teach, One Assist)	One Group: One Leads, One "Teaches on Purpose"	• Students receive additional assistance • Allows for specific observation of students	• Places one teacher in assistant role • Does not fully utilize the advantages of having multiple certified educators in the classroom
One Teach, One Observe	One Group: One Teach, One Assess		
Station Teaching	Multiple Groups: Two Monitor and Teach	• Increased student participation • Increased small group work • More individualized support • Leverages the diverse strengths of the two teachers • Students receive instruction from two teachers	• Higher noise levels • Students may become distracted • Potentially increased planning load
Parallel Teaching	Two Groups: Two Teach Same Content		
Alternative Teaching	Two Groups: One Pre-Teaches, One Teaches Alternative Content	• Leverages the diverse strengths of the two teachers • Students receive instruction from two teachers	• More co-planning time and flexibility are needed • Requires high level of trust between teachers
	Two Groups: One Re-Teaches, One Teaches Alternative Content		
Teaming	One Group: Two Teach Same Content	• Teachers model positive collaboration	• More co-planning time and flexibility are needed • Requires high level of trust between teachers • Requires complex interpersonal dynamics of trading off during instruction • Does not allow for more targeted, individualized instruction • Does not fully utilize the advantages of having multiple certified educators in the classroom

The literature notes that the best results for students occur when teaching teams use a variety of models (Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie 2007 in Alnasser 2020; Solis et al. 2012 in Alnasser 2020), in particular, station teaching, parallel teaching, and alternative teaching. Despite this guidance, supportive teaching is the most commonly used co-teaching model, followed by parallel teaching, because they require less co-planning time (Alnasser 2020; Friend et al. 2010; Keefe and Moore 2004; King-Sears and Strogilos 2020; Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie 2007 in Alnasser 2020; Solis et al. 2012 in Alnasser 2020).

Additionally, the literature notes that over-reliance on supportive teaching can have the disadvantage of placing one teacher in an assistant role, negatively affecting co-teaching efficacy and teacher morale (Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008; Dove and Honigsfeld 2018; Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie 2007 in Alnasser 2020) and can lead to student views that students with disabilities are a separate group and not an actual part of the general education classroom (Embury and Kroeger 2012).

Efficacy of Co-Teaching on Academic Outcomes and For Whom

There is definitive evidence that inclusion classrooms (either solo with pull-out and push-in services or co-taught) increase academic outcomes for students with disabilities (Cole et al. n.d.). Because of the wide variability of implementation, there is inconclusive data regarding the extent to which teacher practices, including co-teaching, cause or are correlated with the increase (King-Sears et al. 2021; Hanover Research 2012; Murawski and Swanson 2001). Primarily, this is due to datasets that do not lend themselves to large-scale standardized research. For example, large datasets reviewed in the Murawski and Swanson (2001) meta-analysis lacked disaggregated data for co-taught vs. non-co-taught classrooms as well as disaggregated data for students with disabilities compared to students without disabilities. In addition, the definitions of co-teaching, implementation structures, and fidelity of co-teaching vary wildly, not only from district to district, but also across individual classrooms within schools (Hanover Research 2012). Further, many studies lack specific descriptions of the types of co-teaching approaches used (King-Sears et al. 2021). These study limitations have so far precluded conclusive results about the efficacy of co-teaching.

In the most recent meta-analysis on co-teaching, King-Sears et al. (2021) compared the academic achievement of students with disabilities in co-taught classes to the achievement of students with disabilities in special education settings such as resource rooms or self-contained classrooms. The study authors conducted a comprehensive search of published and gray literature, which resulted in 26 eligible studies for a total of 3,714 students with disabilities. The analysis found a positive moderate effect size ($g = 0.47$) for students in co-taught settings compared to students in special education settings. Yet, crucially, the studies used for the meta-analysis lacked information about co-teaching instructional practices and equivalency of students assigned to co-taught or special education settings. Thus, it is unclear how much of the positive moderate effect size is due to co-teaching, as opposed to the positive effect inclusion classrooms have on academic outcomes. More research is needed that compares the academic performance of students with disabilities in solo-taught inclusion classrooms to those in co-taught inclusion classrooms.

The lack of conclusive evidence of efficacy means there is also a lack of evidence on sub-group performance, particularly for target populations of Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty. No literature surveyed had subgroup data for Black students, Black students experiencing poverty, or Black students with disabilities experiencing poverty. Similarly, no literature surveyed had subgroup data for Latinx students, Latinx students experiencing poverty, or Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty. However, a 2020 study on the effects of co-teaching for multilingual learners in K–4 classrooms in New York found that language proficiency scores increased over two years of co-teaching instruction (Bauler and Kang 2020). As 78% of the United States' multilingual learners are Hispanic (National Center for Education Statistics 2021), this study may be used as a partial proxy, though the study did not report on disability or income status.

Although the meta-analyses did not provide conclusive evidence of the efficacy of co-teaching, they also did not provide conclusive evidence that co-teaching, regardless of fidelity, has negative effects on academic outcomes (Murawski and Swanson 2001; King-Sears et al. 2021). Thus, co-teaching appears to be a strategy for effectively implementing inclusion classrooms with limited downsides and the potential for positive academic gains when executed with integrity, though more research is needed.

Given the limited downsides and **potential benefits** of co-teaching, it is important to note that Black and Latinx students in special education programs are more likely to be removed from inclusive general education classrooms than their white peers (de Valenzuela et al. 2006, Fierros and Conroy 2002, and Sullivan 2011 in Waitoller and Artiles 2013), leading to situations where Black and Latinx students with disabilities are less likely to see the benefits of collaboration and co-teaching. This is especially troubling because co-taught classrooms often implement aspects of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which helps to make them inclusive not just of students of varying abilities, but also of different races and socioeconomic statuses as well (Sullivan and Thorius 2010). By removing Black and Latinx students with disabilities from these co-taught classrooms, schools are pushing students of color further from opportunity.

Necessary Conditions for Successful Implementation

Successful collaboration requires a school- and district-level belief in the value of true inclusion. With this vision, districts and schools can create the policies, staffing, structures, schedules, professional development, and culture changes that undergird effective collaborative relationships and processes, including but not limited to co-teaching.

High-quality, high-impact co-teaching and other forms of collaboration can be achieved through thoughtful strategic planning on the part of districts, school administrators, and teachers (Ripley 1997). When time and intention are used to purposefully plan for the structure of multiple adults working together across a school community, excellence is possible. Yet implementing collaborative practices with fidelity can be difficult, especially because of the traditional siloing of general and special educators, particularly in teacher education (Winn and Blanton 2005). The literature specifically highlighted several challenges to implementing co-teaching effectively. When these challenges were not addressed,

co-teaching failed to happen in classrooms. Due to the significant impact of these challenges on implementation, the challenges are listed here as necessary conditions for successful implementation, both of co-teaching specifically and of collaboration more generally.

Necessary Conditions for Collaboration and Co-Teaching

Many of the implementation challenges to effective co-teaching and collaboration raised in the literature can be addressed by system-level changes. Thus, the following system-level changes are necessary conditions for the successful implementation of collaborative practices.

If the specific practice of co-teaching is the desired outcome, more specificity may be required. Necessary conditions specific to co-teaching are shown in gray boxes below.

ADEQUATE SCHEDULING FOR CO-TEACHING AND COLLABORATION

Student scheduling. Schools must practice inclusive education, assigning the majority of, if not all, students with disabilities to general education classrooms for 80% or more of the school day (Anderson 2008). Much of the literature recommends not more than 25–30% of an inclusion classroom be composed of students with disabilities (Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008; Mageria et al. 2008 in Alnasser 2020; Perez 2012 in Alnasser 2020).

> Education Resource Strategies (2021, 3) notes that scheduling slightly larger than average co-taught class sizes (for example, 26 or 27 students instead of 24 students on average) allows for smaller targeted group arrangements (for example, 13 students in a targeted group instead of 24 in the whole classroom).

Dedicated weekly co-planning preparation periods for all collaborating teachers (Alnasser 2020; Anderson 2008; Ashton 2003 in Alnasser 2020; Baecher and Bell 2017 in Bauler and Kang 2020; Bauler and Kang 2020; Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Dove and Honigsfeld 2018; Education Resource Strategies 2021; Howser 2015 in Alnasser 2020; Pappamihiel 2012 in Bauler and Kang 2020; Simmons and Magiera 2007; Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie 2007 in Alnasser 2020)

- Anderson (2008, 42) notes: "[Hawbaker, Balong, Buckwalkter, and Runyon (in Mitchell 2005)] These authors suggest that teachers require 60–90 minutes for each 3–4 week unit, in addition to individual teacher prep time. This time should be separate from special education teachers' IEP management and meetings.

> **Teacher scheduling.** Schools must schedule specialists to co-teach with general education teachers (Anderson 2008; Education Resource Strategies 2021) and schedule dedicated co-planning time.
>
> - The literature suggests several scheduling considerations, such as limiting co-teaching assignments to one to two classrooms per year (Mitchell 2005 in Anderson 2008); limiting to not more than three lesson plan preparations (Basso and McCoy 2007 in Anderson 2008); or limiting assignments to common grade levels or subject areas (Friend 2007 in Anderson 2008).

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON TOPICS FOR CO-TEACHING TEAMS, SUPERVISORS, AND COACHES

Skills in co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing (Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Cramer et al. 2006 in Anderson 2008; Friend et al. 2010; Keefe and Moore 2004; Mavropalias, Deligianni, and Symeonidou 2019 in Alnasser 2020; Murawski and Lochner 2010; Simmons and Magiera 2007 in Alnasser 2020; Scruggs et al. 2007 in Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017)

Skills in differentiated instruction (Alnasser 2020)

Culturally relevant instruction, particularly when collaborating to support multilingual learners (Gleeson and Davison 2016 in Bauler and Kang 2020)

Co-teaching models (Murawski and Lochner 2010)

A SCHOOL-WIDE VISION FOR INCLUSIVITY

Funding for support staff positions (Dove and Honigsfeld 2018) such as additional psychologists, mental health counselors, special education program staff, and instructional coaches (Education Resource Strategies 2021)

Regular instructional supervision and clear expectations (Alnasser 2020; Weiss and Lloyd 2002 in Alnasser 2020)

Promotion of shared vision of inclusion (McLeskey and Waldron 2015 in Alnasser 2020; Villa et al. 2005)

Investment in school-wide culture of teacher collaboration (Bell and Baecher 2012 in Bauer 2020; Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Dove and Honigsfeld 2018; Webb and Barnash, in Cramer 2006 in Anderson 2008)

Promotion of shared vision of co-teaching (Alnasser 2020)

TIME AND RESOURCE INVESTMENT TO ENHANCE TEACHER COLLABORATION

Well-defined teacher roles (Bauler and Kang 2020; Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Friend and Cook 2010; Mastropieri et al. 2005 in Brendle, Lock, and Piazza 2017; Ripley, in Cramer 2006 in Anderson 2008; Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie 2007 in Alnasser 2020; Simmons and Magiera 2007 in Alnasser 2020; Whiting 2017 in Bauler and Kang 2020)

Teacher trust (Ashton 2003 in Alnasser 2020; Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie 2007 in Alnasser 2020; Ronfeldt et al. 2015)

Equity of teacher roles (Harper and de Jong 2009 in Bauler and Kang 2020; Rice and Zigmond 2000 in Alnasser 2020)

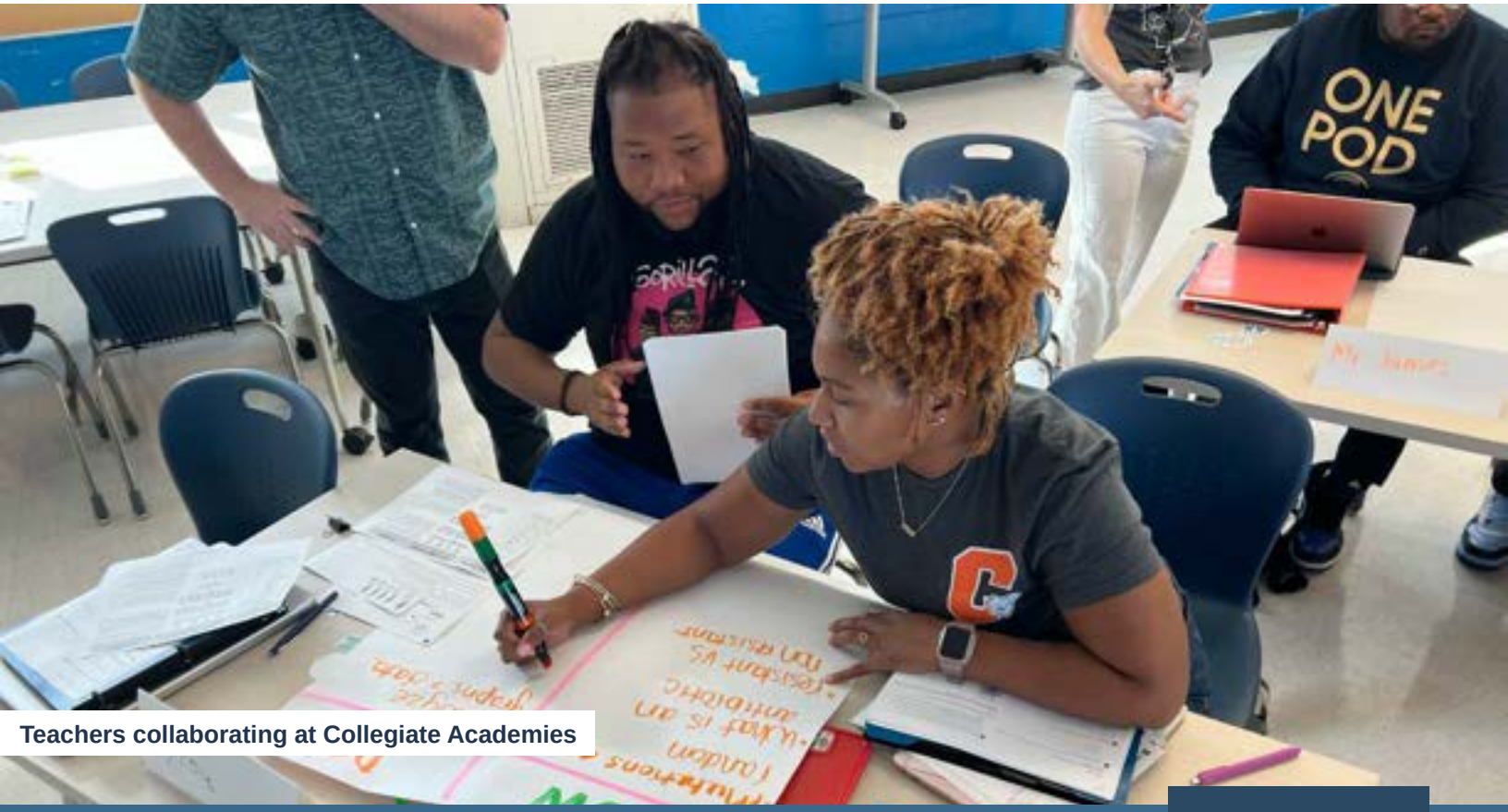
Teacher buy-in for co-teaching (Dove and Honigsfeld 2018; Friend and Pope 2005 in Anderson 2008; Rice and Zigmond 2000 in Alnasser 2020)

Conclusion

In conclusion, collaboration between general and special educators is crucially important for schools that are working to become more inclusive of all learners. Within the broad landscape of collaborative practices, co-teaching is currently the best strategy for effectively meeting the needs of all students within classrooms. Co-teaching can be effective for a myriad of students with learning and thinking differences, including students with disabilities and multilingual learners; thus, creating a district culture of co-teaching can benefit many subgroups of diverse learners. District staff looking to adopt or improve their collaborative practices must recognize that many system-level changes — including scheduling, professional development, culture, and staffing — will be necessary to implement co-teaching, co-planning, and other collaborative teams effectively.

While the literature has not yet been able to provide conclusive evidence of co-teaching efficacy on academic scores, the literature confirms the efficacy of inclusion (solo and co-taught) classrooms and suggests collaboration has positive benefits on classroom culture, student sense of belonging, and teacher job satisfaction, which are all foundational elements to increasing outcomes for diverse learners. In short, collaboration between educators traditionally tasked with serving students in silos has the potential, if the necessary conditions are met, to dramatically increase academic outcomes for diverse learners. If nothing else, co-teaching is an approach to meeting the inclusion requirements of IDEA and ESSA with a whole host of benefits for both students and teachers.

Best practices for collaboration in schools and networks are discussed in the companion collection, ***Opening Doors to Collaboration***.



Teachers collaborating at Collegiate Academies

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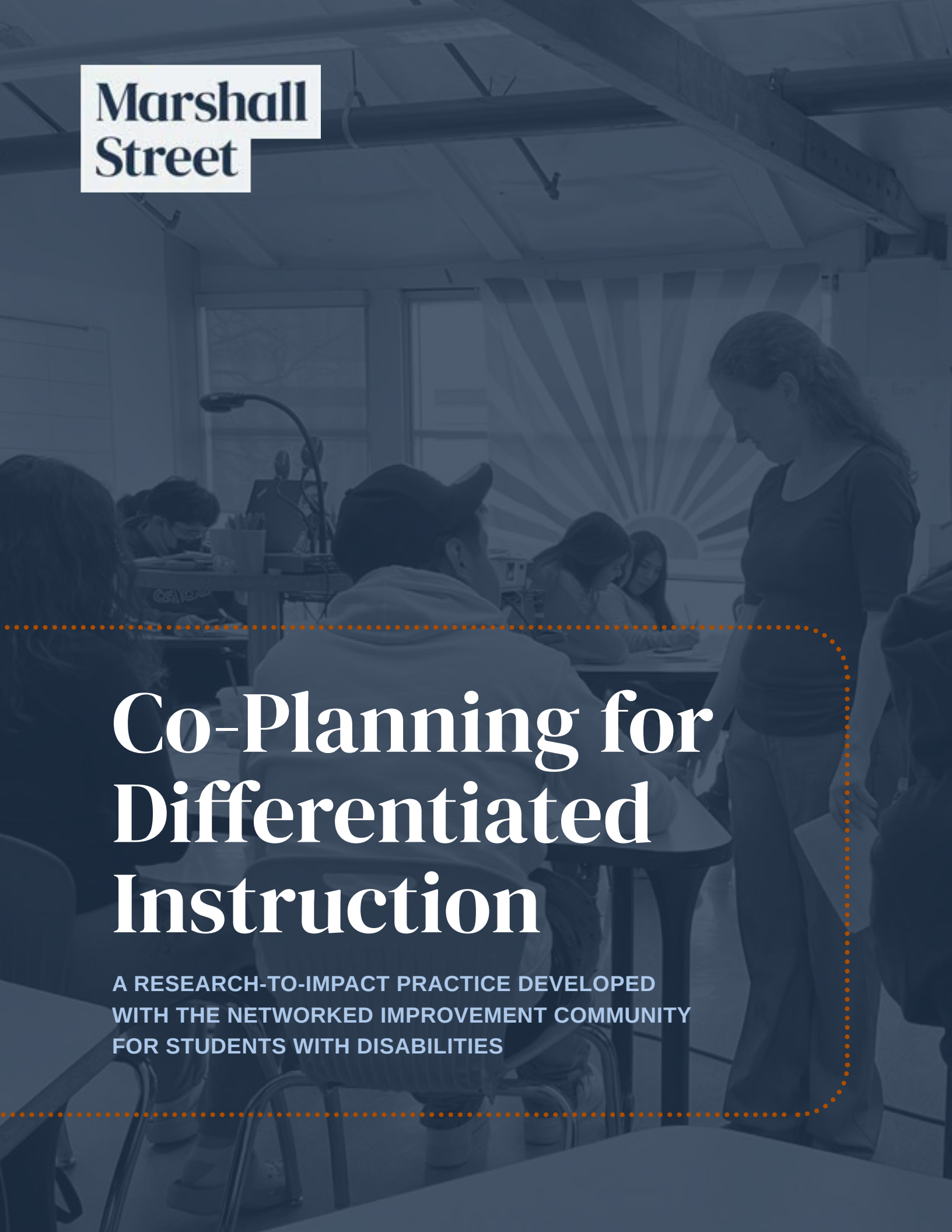
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Marshall Street



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

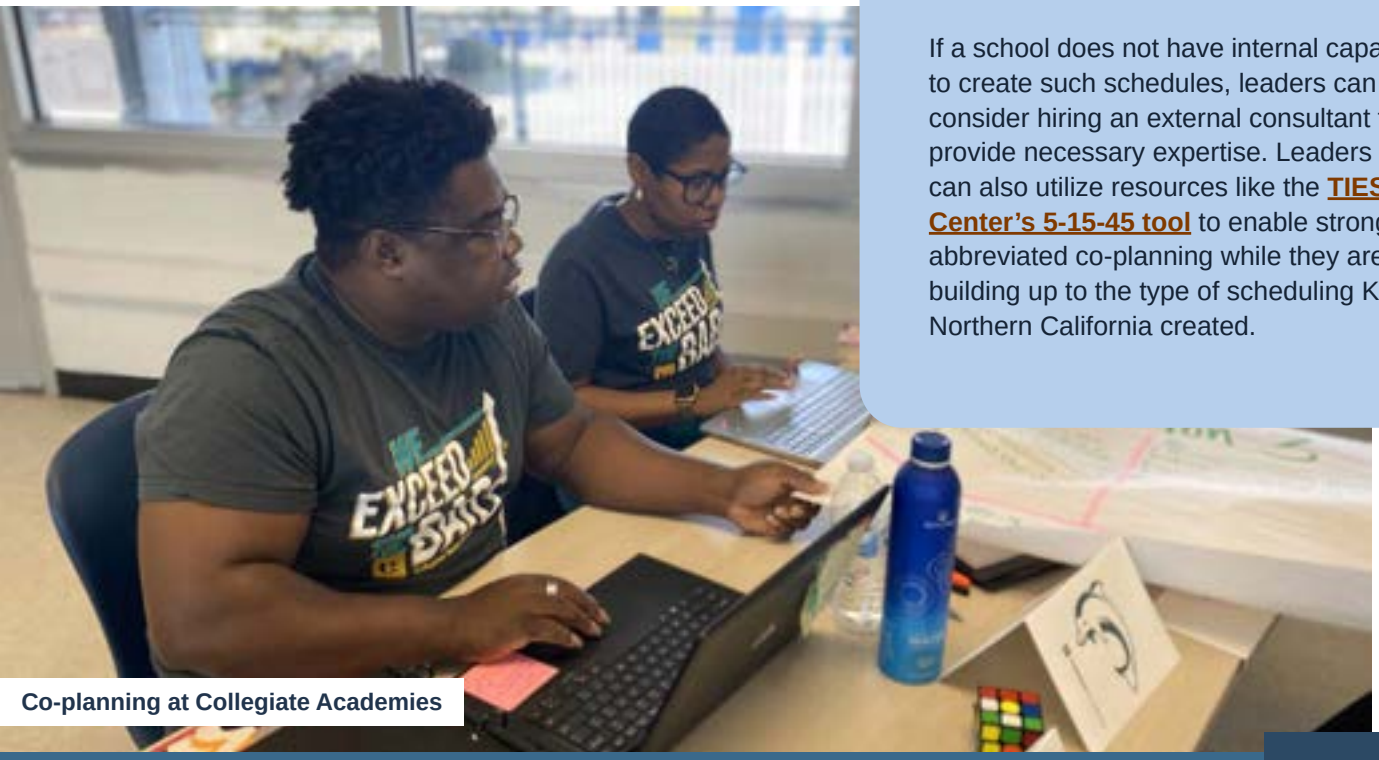
A minimum block of 45 minutes weekly (for co-teachers) or *biweekly* (for other collaborating teachers) is necessary for effective co-planning. Increased amounts of time may be ideal in some situations, such as the following:

- **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.



Co-teachers at 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.

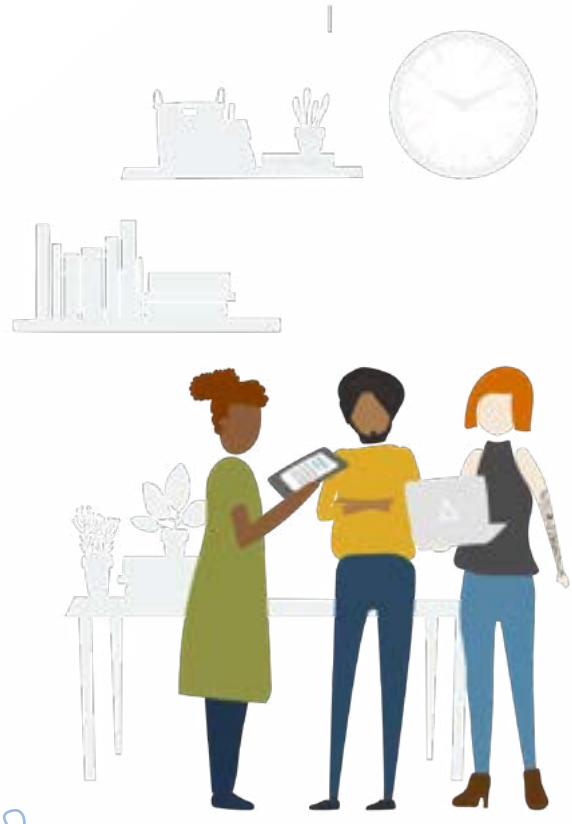
Summary

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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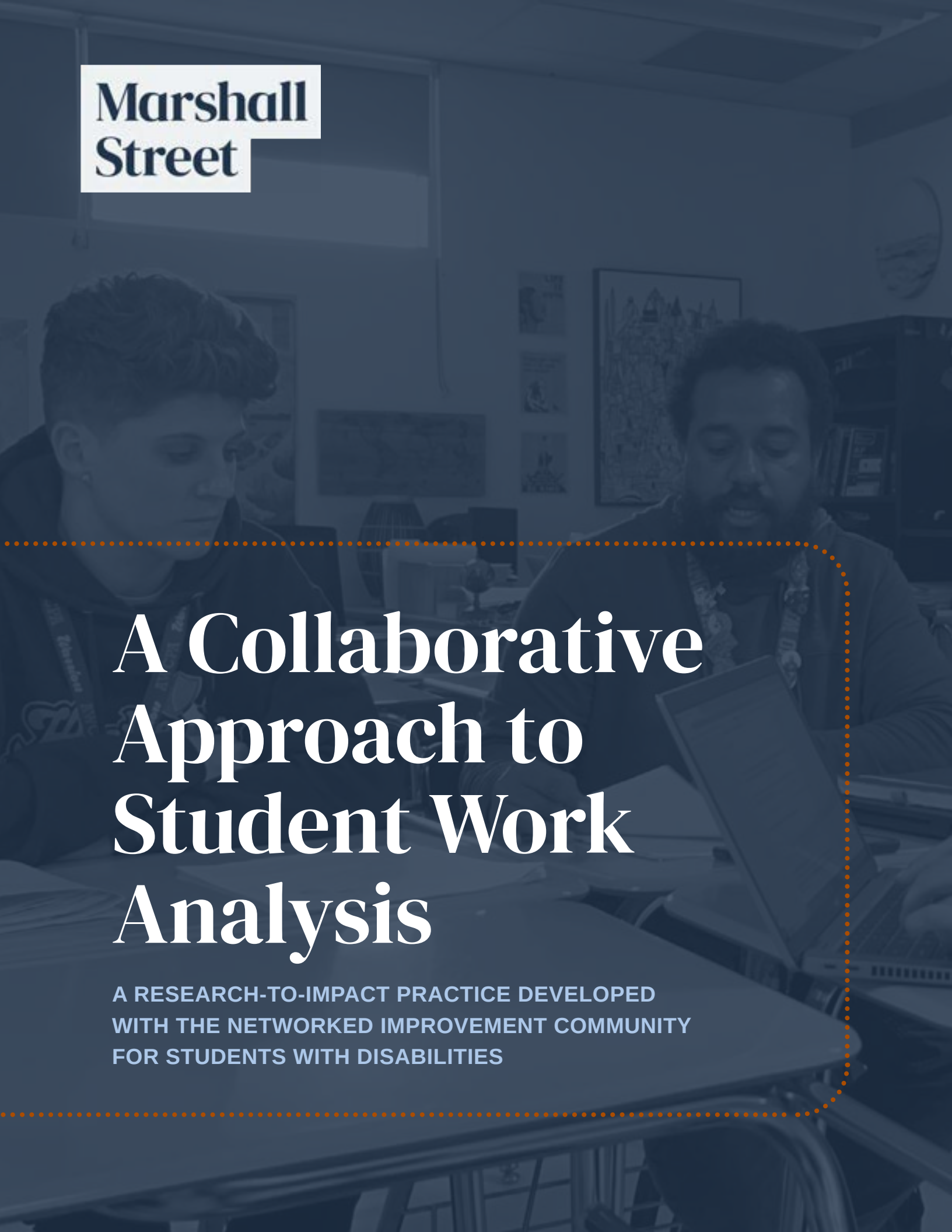
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Marshall Street

A Collaborative Approach to Student Work Analysis

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

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A Collaborative Approach to Student Work Analysis

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?

The collaborative analysis of student work by an interdisciplinary teaching team, specifically a general and a special educator, to collect and review data on student strengths and needs in order to plan instructional next steps.



Student Work Analysis Across *Any* Team

Within the NIC, CMOs featured in this chapter focused their energy on the collaborative student work analysis done between a general and a special education teacher. However, it is important to highlight that whenever multiple educators come together and look at students' work, particularly when those educators possess different areas of expertise, the findings will be more nuanced than those coming from individual or siloed review of the same work. We encourage leaders to think about other **teams** within their schools, such as grade-level or department-level teams, that can benefit from a student work analysis routine to drive data-based decision-making together.

Why is Student Work Analysis Important?

Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty have been underserved for decades. To reverse the effects of learning and opportunity gaps, students must receive the learning support they need, when they need it. When teachers engage in rigorous student work analysis, they are enabled to meet students' exact needs in a rapid manner.[1]

Why it Works

Collaborative student work analysis using an instructionally focused protocol meets the needs of Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty by:

BUILDING EDUCATORS' CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND ROOT CAUSES OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Reviewing student work with an explicit focus on students' "misconceptions, errors and learning difficulties" allows teachers to identify the best instructional practices to address said needs. Doing this review with a colleague who has a different area of expertise allows a teacher to see a wider and more nuanced set of root causes.[2] This was demonstrated by collaborating teachers in the NIC, who, after multiple rounds of collectively engaging in a student work analysis protocol, began to "take on" each other's lenses. This allowed them to expedite students' growth because they were gradually learning from one another and "thinking" like their colleagues.

ENSURING CRITICAL ALIGNMENT BETWEEN TEACHERS

Collaborative work analysis helps teachers gain a shared understanding of grade-level rigor so that both teachers can teach toward it. This makes instruction from each teacher and toward IEP and course goals more efficient and more impactful.

EXPLICITLY ACKNOWLEDGING THE IMPACT OF STUDENTS' LEARNING NEEDS ON THEIR WORK

By including specific knowledge of students' **learner profiles** and IEPs (including their disabilities and accommodations) in the analysis of student work, educators reduce blind spots around the "why" of students' approach to content and learning activities.

LEVERAGING MULTIPLE FORMS OF DATA

Focusing regular analysis on students' work in addition to quantitative data allows teachers to supplement numbers with rich, illustrative examples of students' work and processing.[3] For many teachers, this can reinvigorate their investment in data-informed instruction as it is highly student-centric.[4]

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 recommended time allocation. **Steps to Implement** presents a concise checklist of action items, which are explained in detail in **How to Implement this Practice**, below.

Enabling Conditions

Prerequisites	★ A belief among school leaders that special and general educators both have **valuable perspectives** to bring to student work analysis ★ A shared belief **in the value** of data-informed instruction ★ An approach to data that prioritizes investigation and inquiry, valuing deep curiosity over judgment ★ An expectation that student work is regularly collected and scored in alignment to standards
Recommended Materials	★ A protocol for student work analysis: – **Green Dot Example Meeting Protocol** and **Data Analysis Template** – **Blue Engine Data Analysis Protocol**
Staff Commitment	★ Collaborating teachers or co-teachers ★ Coaching support for student work analysis implementation, particularly as it is being launched ★ Content and instructional support for teachers
Recommended Time Allocation	★ **Regular, weekly shared meeting time for collaborating teachers** – This does *not* replace weekly co-planning. It can, however, occur during schoolwide professional development time or, if timing allows, precede a co-planning block. – Ideally, this is a 30–45 minute block. ★ **Regular time for collaborating teachers to meet** for student work analysis – Ideal for co-teachers: daily (5–10 min.)* + weekly (45 min.) – Ideal for collaborating teachers: weekly (45 min.) – Sufficient: biweekly (45 min.) – Minimum: monthly or quarterly (45–60 min.) ** For schools interested in and able to provide daily time for student work analysis, consider an abbreviated protocol such as Blue Engine's **Daily Data Huddle**.*

Steps to Implement

BEFORE SCHOOL BEGINS

- ☐ Determine analysis cadence
- ☐ Select a student work analysis protocol
- ☐ Launch the protocol with the entire staff and schedule in spiraled sessions
- ☐ Establish coaching support

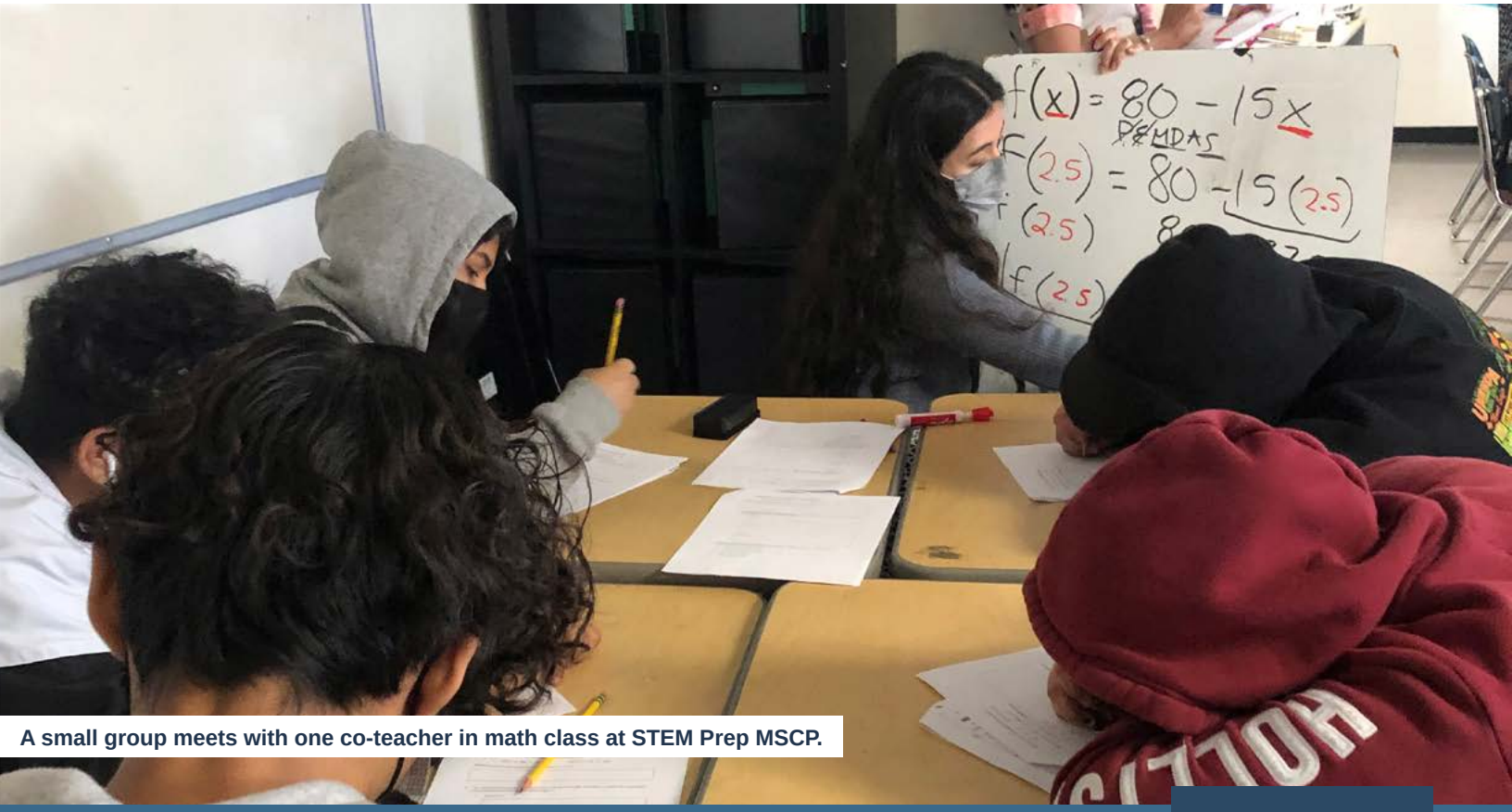
BEFORE THE MEETING

- ☐ Collect student work

DURING THE MEETING

- ☐ Celebrate successes
- ☐ Review data
- ☐ Plan interventions
- ☐ Assign next steps





A small group meets with one co-teacher in math class at STEM Prep MSCP.



Bringing this Practice to Life

INTEGRATING STUDENT WORK ANALYSIS INTO ROUTINES AT GREEN DOT PUBLIC SCHOOLS CALIFORNIA

In 2020–21, the principal at Green Dot Public Schools' Ánimo Watts College Preparatory Academy ("Watts") came into her role with a deep investment in engaging teachers in student work analysis in service of proactively addressing student needs. As she was iterating on that practice, co-teachers were simultaneously beginning to participate in ***quarterly co-planning days****.*

A year later, though survey data showed that teachers loved the co-planning days, student outcomes data continued to display large achievement gaps. The improvement team hypothesized that, perhaps, teachers weren't making substantial changes to their instruction based on student work. They grappled with how to address this discrepancy without overwhelming teachers with a "new" initiative and completed a larger stepback to look at their performance data. This led the team to identify a bright spot in grade improvements at Ánimo Watts. Upon investigation, the team learned that the site had adopted a new student work analysis practice at the school that worked well with the schoolwide collaboration and coaching structures. Based on data and stakeholder interviews, the team decided to adopt Watts's student work analysis protocol (SWA) for further iteration and spread across programs.

In the fall of 2022, Green Dot made the SWA the central focus of the professional development hour that launches each co-planning day. The focus on student work analysis has three core goals:

- Ground teachers' collaboration time in students' learning
- Provide a direct link to the subsequent co-planning time
- Enable teachers to intentionally plan to address the newly uncovered needs

After a semester of use, promising data began cropping up throughout Watts's classrooms. Of their eight co-taught classrooms, seven of them saw students' grades increase such that more than 84% of students were passing their courses.

The example below describes how two teachers, Heather, an 11th grade general education math teacher, and Justin, her special education counterpart, used the shortened SWA protocol to review student exit tickets from the previous day in one of their biweekly co-planning meetings.

Sorting Student Work and Discussing the Lesson's Context

For this meeting, Heather and Justin decided to review a set of work for the full class. Heather brought the exit tickets she had scored against their standards-aligned rubric in advance of the meeting. The teachers confirmed their shared understanding of exemplary completion of the exit ticket, which asked students to (1) interpret a word problem, (2) create an aligned one-step equation, (3) solve that equation, and (4) explain and justify their work in writing.

Next, they sorted their students' work twice: first to gain a picture of overall performance, then to identify any gaps between students with and without disabilities.

Rubric Score	Entire Class	Students with IEPs
0–1	18%	25%
2	21%	33%
3–4	61%	42%

Their findings showed Heather and Justin that they needed to dedicate ample time to understanding the exact needs of their students with disabilities. Understanding the root of students' misconceptions would allow them to provide the necessary support to close the gaps between students with and without IEPs.

Before moving to the next part of their student work analysis — noticing and wondering about students' work — Heather and Justin talked through what they had done to instruct on this skill prior to the exit ticket. In previous days, they had taught students the skill of using arrows to connect components of a word problem to portions of the aligned equation. They had also taught students the acronym "RAD" — that is, "Restate the question, Answer the question, Defend your work and thinking."

Noticing and Wondering

Next, Heather and Justin shifted into "noticings and wonderings," focusing on work at each score level one by one. The teachers reviewed the work of students who scored a 3 or 4 and noted that these students were able to successfully interpret the word problem, accurately solve their equation, and then provide a correct explanation of their work. Heather noticed that students had

correctly justified their answers, yet wrote responses that were superfluous, adding unnecessary detail that clouded their explanations. Justin first wondered if the accommodation that he had previously provided for students with disabilities – providing sentence stems – might have confused students and led them to add more than was necessary. He then noticed that more students with disabilities had demonstrated mastery of this skill than they had in the past, leading him to believe that, in fact, the accommodation was likely supportive.

Heather and Justin then moved on to discussing students who scored a 0 or 1. This group was composed entirely of students with IEPs, so their noticings and wonderings here allowed them to focus entirely on that subgroup. Justin noticed that two students, Jayme and Edwin, had struggled mightily to articulate their answers. They had either made no attempt or had written responses that were disconnected from the math work that they had done. Conversely, another student who scored a 0-1, Kayla, had incorrectly transcribed numbers from the word problem and had completed the equation in the wrong order. This caused her to produce a wrong answer which she had then attempted to defend in writing using the provided accommodation appropriately for written justification, yet incorrectly. Across their analysis of this group, Heather and Justin were able to group these and other students into categories depending on the needs students had demonstrated with the multi-step problem-solving process.

Finally, the conversation shifted to looking at the work of students who scored a 2. For the entire class as well as the subset of students with disabilities, Heather noticed a clear trend: students had correctly interpreted the word problem and accurately solved the ensuing equation, yet they had struggled to defend their work in writing. The teachers focused their attention on students with IEPs, noticing that their written responses were highly literal. So, rather than explaining how they had arrived at their answer to the equation, these students had detailed the steps of their work (for example, “First, I wrote 250, then, I wrote a division sign…”). Justin again wondered if his sentence starter accommodations had confused students who received them. Whereas for students scoring a 3 or 4 he had realized that those accommodations were in fact helpful, for the students scoring a 2 he wondered if his sentence starters were too long and should have, instead, been more concise (“Restate, Answer, Defend”).

Clarifying Root Causes

Having extensively reviewed students’ work, Heather and Justin worked to uncover the root causes of students’ misunderstandings. They began by discussing students who had scored a 3 or 4. For these students, they realized that most of the students who had struggled with concision had arrived to class late, thereby missing the mini-lesson that Heather and Justin had team-taught at the beginning of the lesson focused on being targeted and specific in written responses.

Next, they focused on students who scored a 2. With her increased knowledge of students’ accommodations and needs based on multiple rounds of student work analysis, Heather built on Justin’s wondering about the sentence stems and realized that students scoring at this level were getting lost in the complicated explanations that they had provided. Justin posited that “less could be more” for this group of students.

Finally, they focused on students who scored a 0 or 1. They focused first on Jayme, with Justin noting that her disability impacts her oral and written expression. She had been able to successfully complete the math, but had struggled to articulate and write out her thought processes. Justin noted that Edwin's disability relates to occupational therapy, which causes additional challenges when writing his explanation. The team also noted Kayla struggled with both transcription of the numbers for the problem set, as well as the order of steps for solving. This, they hypothesized, was likely related to her dyscalculia, making it more difficult for her to solve the equation in the correct order and then to explain her results.



Green Dot co-teachers Roane and Schacher implement station teaching in their classroom based on a recent student work analysis.

Defining Focus and Brainstorming Aligned Supports

Finally, Heather and Justin moved to action. They began by articulating their focus and goals for the entire class. Based on what they had seen in their students' work, they decided to focus on the skill of explaining mathematical processes and thinking in writing. They agreed that this skill applies broadly to the application of multiple content standards within their mathematics course, and it helps students with other courses and content, namely English Language Arts.

They set the goal that within three weeks, 85% of all students will score a 3 or higher on their written explanations of the day's math content. They did not set a separate goal for students with IEPs, but instead planned to focus their instructional efforts to offer re-teaching and accommodations to ensure these students could demonstrate proficiency at the same target levels as their peers. They agreed that regardless of the math content for the next three weeks, they would add in opportunities for students to practice written defenses of their thinking.

Finally, they discussed aligned instructional strategies. Justin noted specific considerations for students based on their learning profiles. For example, Edwin has a speech-to-text accommodation he is often hesitant to use that could assist in his written justification of his response, while Jayme benefits from examples of what is expected in order to reference them as models for his own attempts. Justin decided that a focus on shared writing for daily written defenses was an instructional approach that could meet both of these students' needs. He decided to work with the two students together in a small group to model aloud exactly how a strong written response could sound and to practice multiple examples verbally, then in written form, so they could gradually demonstrate the skill with greater independence. Justin decided that after a week of this practice, he would gradually shift the task of articulating a response to Edwin and Jayme so that they could gain practice with it on their own. Turning their attention to Kayla, Justin and Heather discussed

Heather checking in with Kayla following the next lesson to share feedback on where she got stuck and assist her in making a step card to check her work, first for the accuracy of her transcription of information, then for completion of the steps. If that strategy worked well, Heather would continue to check in with Kayla 1:1 following instruction to check her understanding and give her immediate feedback to help her self-monitor for errors over time.

For the remaining students, Heather and Justin decided to use stations during class time, creating intentional, small, homogeneous groupings of students based on this exit ticket data. They realized that while students had learned the description of “RAD” and had heard the criteria for strong written responses, they hadn’t yet seen a classmate do that work successfully and succinctly. They decided to use students’ work samples in an upcoming lesson to show the rest of the class what a clear and concise response looks like. After that lesson, they would weave error analyses into the coming weeks’ lessons based on one or two pieces of student work. Heather and Justin agreed that having students use an aligned rubric to evaluate their peers’ work would enable them to more effectively evaluate their own work.



Co-teachers at Green Dot Ánimo Watts meet to complete a student work analysis

Heather and Justin’s next steps relied on station teaching in their co-taught classroom. For more details, see ***Achieving High-Impact Co-Teaching: A Gradual Release Model***.

How to Implement this Practice

Before School Begins

Step 1: Determine Analysis Cadence

Regular student work analysis dramatically improves the quality of student interventions when paired with collaborating teachers' **co-planning** time. As school leaders are working to carve out time for multiple collaborative practices, they may consider creative ways to structure in student work analysis time, such as:

- **using a portion of regular professional development time** for collaborating teachers to meet;
- supporting teachers to use **5–10 minutes of longer instructional blocks** for daily work analysis; or
- having collaborating teachers **use an alternating schedule for their weekly common prep,** focusing on student work analysis in week A and co-planning in week B.
  Note: This structure does not work for co-teachers who need to co-plan weekly.

Step 2: Select a Student Work Analysis Protocol

Having a standardized protocol is essential to help teachers understand how to analyze student work. School leaders can choose to adopt a strong, existing protocol, such as **Green Dot's**, or they might modify or create their own protocol. Successful protocols include the following elements:

- Bringing relevant work samples
- Celebrating successes
- Reviewing data together
- Planning interventions
- Assigning next steps

Of paramount importance is that school leaders and instructional coaches are clear on and fluent in the SWA protocol prior to introducing it to teachers.

Step 3: Launch the Protocol with the Entire Staff and Schedule in Spiraled Sessions

Prior to having collaborating teachers initiate their student work analysis practice, leaders launch the protocol.

Commit 45–60 minutes to initial professional development that:

- shares rationale for the collaborative analysis of students' work, focusing on the unique lenses that general and special educators bring to this practice, and
- introduces staff to the student work analysis and response protocol.

As the school year progresses, bring the school wide team together regularly for 45–60 minute blocks of professional development that focuses on skillfully reviewing and analyzing student work. These sessions can be led by any skilled instructional or teacher leader. Less experienced teachers will benefit from development led by someone focused on their specific content area(s) so as to build expertise in the process within the context of the curriculum they are teaching. This is inclusive of special education services. School leaders should ensure that experienced special educators on staff (or, as needed, external consultants) are available to explicitly support teachers in analyzing students' work for the impact of students' disabilities on their output.

These sessions can occur within the context of department professional development, regular grade or department team meetings, or other structures that are already built into teachers' schedules. When built into schoolwide professional development time, this type of session is an excellent opportunity to bring broader teams together to collaboratively analyze work.

For example:

- The occupational therapist is invited to join the 9th grade ELA team's analysis time to share insights about students' writing.
- The vertical math team comes together, allowing 10th grade teachers to provide insight into 12th grade work where misconceptions may be related to prior grade levels' content.

School Spotlight

A pair of **Ednovate** co-teachers were excited about incorporating **different co-teaching models** into their instruction, but were anxious about setting up systems for routine analysis of their students' work. As they planned for new models, they realized that they needed a better understanding of their students' needs in order to plan the most effective groupings.[5] They discovered that by regularly analyzing students' responses on mid-lesson checks for understanding, they could more effectively adjust upcoming instruction to meet students' precise needs.

Protocol Overview: GD Student Work Analysis Protocol

STEP 1: Prior to the Protocol
- Choose 5–10 student work samples

STEP 2: Getting Started
- Facilitator reviews norms
- Teacher provides a very brief description of the assignment

STEP 3: Describing the Student Work
- Discuss the question:
  - What do you see?
- Describe work without judgment or interpretation

STEP 4: Interpreting the Student Work
- Discuss the question:
  - What do these work samples reveal about what students understand or know how to do?
- Use evidence to determine what students understand and don't understand

STEP 5: Implications for Practice
- Discuss the question:
  - "What are the implications of this work for teaching and assessment?"
- Consider what skills and content you need to build and re-teach

STEP 6: Planning for Implementation
- Consider when and how you will implement the next steps related to re-teaching
- Each participant shares their actionable next steps

STEP 7: Reflecting on the Process
- Each participant shares key takeaways about student learning and instruction
- Discuss the process itself and next steps from implementation next round

STEP 8: Suggestions for Support
- Participants may request implementation support for the next steps generated by reflection and feedback from colleagues, CSs, and admin

Step 4: Establish Coaching Support

The impact of coaching on the efficacy of student work analyses is highly beneficial. When a supportive third party joins the discussion, collaborating teachers can be pushed to amplify their individual expertise in reviewing students' work and to think more creatively about how to address the root causes of students' needs.

Before launching this practice with collaborating teachers, school leaders should determine when coaches will support work analysis meetings. Coaches' presence is crucial to the initial success of the collaborative student work analysis and to the increasing efficacy of analysis by pairs who need additional support.

Ideally, **coaches join every student work analysis meeting:**

- as the protocol is launching at their site, or
- if either collaborating teacher is very new to their content or to teaching.

Coaches join meetings monthly or quarterly:

- if coach availability and portfolio do not allow for weekly attendance, or
- once teachers are effectively going through the protocol with minimal facilitation.

School Spotlight

A gradual release of responsibility coaching model can help teachers feel supported as they grow their expertise in the practice. For example, at **KIPP Northern California's Navigate College Prep,** two collaborating teachers were in their early years of teaching, limiting the depth of their analysis of students' work. To deepen their knowledge of what to look for, both a math coach and a special education coach joined the teachers' student work analysis meetings to share noticings and instructional next steps, voicing over the deeper pedagogical knowledge that informed their insights. Over time, this type of support built the collaborating teachers' expertise and enabled them to notice key findings independently. Even after the teachers' expertise grew, one coach continued to join the student work analysis meetings throughout the semester to probe the teachers or to facilitate when needed.

When coaching collaborative teaching teams in the use of student work analysis, there are two common needs for coaches to keep in mind to ensure teams leverage their individual and collective expertise and knowledge of students:

- **Push teachers to "notice and wonder" deeply.** A coach at Green Dot noticed that, when learning how to use the SWA protocol, collaborating teachers often have the inclination to move quickly to instructional next steps. By encouraging collaborating teachers to linger on the notice and wonder step and go deeper in the analysis of students' work — especially through each teacher's unique lens and expertise — the collaborating teachers have more time to bounce ideas off of one another. This back-and-forth builds rapport and understanding and gets to the most accurate and pressing needs for students' learning.
- **Inquire about accommodations.** Coaches should ensure that students have received their appropriate accommodations before the analysis begins. This inquiry creates a space for necessary dialogue to occur if accommodations are not being provided, and also ensures that teachers are looking at the most accurate representation of students' learning.

Before the Meeting

Step 1: Collect Student Work

In order to analyze student work, teachers gather a representative sample of their class's most recent scored work (for example, an exit slip, quiz, or test).

During the Meeting

The goal of collaborative, interdisciplinary student work analysis and response is to carefully review representative students' work for progress toward rigorous, grade-level content standards and for manifestations of disabilities that may be inhibiting students from accessing that content. The findings from the student work analysis process inform upcoming lessons so that barriers to access are removed before instruction occurs, increasing the ability for all students — particularly those with disabilities — to successfully master content the first time.

During the meeting, teachers follow their school's student work analysis protocol. Most protocols include the four steps described on the following page.



The Value of Recent Data

After the first year of implementing SWA efforts, **Green Dot's** improvement lead realized that when teachers focused their student work analysis on the previous day's exit ticket or writing sample, they were able to spend their time addressing their students' most immediate, pressing needs. Conversely, when teachers brought a "bigger" unit assessment from three weeks prior, the findings were often outdated or too broad to feel immediately actionable.

When analyzing students' work, it is imperative that teachers are getting an accurate assessment of what students know. For students who have designated accommodations, it is crucial that those accommodations are provided. If not, collaborating teachers will have an incorrect understanding of a students' knowledge and skill. For example, a student who is entitled to having text read aloud before responding to comprehension questions, but who does not receive that accommodation, may present as struggling with inferential questions when, in fact, they were struggling with decoding the text.

Collaborative Student Work Analysis Protocol

STEP 1: CELEBRATE SUCCESSES

Collaborating teachers reflect on ways in which their collaborative student work analysis and planning has positively impacted their practice and their students' outcomes. Teachers ground themselves in the work's criteria for success and revisit the instructional support that was provided prior to and during the work sample or assessment, including accommodations.

STEP 2: REVIEW DATA

Collaborating teachers review each representative set of students' work and elevate what is seen in the work itself without planning solutions. Both teachers are taking an investigative stance, seeking to note objectively what they see, and an inquisitive stance, seeking to determine why and how these results came about. They use guiding questions to push themselves to elaborate on noticings and wonderings, identifying causes of strengths that can be replicated and using their unique expertise to get to the root causes of misconceptions or challenges.

STEP 3: PLAN INTERVENTIONS

Collaborating teachers identify specific next steps for each group of students reflected in the representative samples, ensuring that there is an explicit focus on the needs of students with disabilities. Teachers articulate what they want to see next in students' work.

Collaborating teachers discuss what they need to address next, based on the root cause reflections and aligned to their articulated foci, as well as how they can best proceed in ways that are accessible to students.

STEP 4: ASSIGN NEXT STEPS

Collaborating teachers explicitly connect their proposed intervention responses to their next steps for planning and instruction, confirming what role and specific responsibilities each will take to enact their plans.

For a more detailed description and guidance, see Green Dot's Student Work Analysis Protocol (2022–23) in the appendix. Alternative versions available for reference include the **Green Dot Biweekly Co-Planning Agenda with embedded student work analysis (2022–23)** *and the* **Green Dot Student Work Analysis Spreadsheet Template (2023–24)**.

Practice Snapshot

ACHIEVING ALIGNMENT FOR GRADE-LEVEL RIGOR AT EDNOVATE

Collaborative student work analysis has benefits beyond highlighting students' most pressing needs. The practice requires reviewing students' work together against the expectations of student performance for that activity. At Ednovate, collaborating teachers Katie (general education, English) and Jerry (special education) found that by collaboratively analyzing students' work, they grew in their shared understanding of what should be expected of their students, regardless of IEP status.

In the spring of 2023, Katie and Jerry began working with a coach to help them optimize their collaborative partnership. Prior to that time, Katie was inconsistently scoring work and inputting the information into Gradebook, their grades platform, but Jerry neither helped with evaluating work nor had access to the submitted results. In an effort to increase alignment as a teaching team, the teachers, with the support of their coach, began engaging in daily data tracking, collecting, scoring, and analyzing against a standards-aligned rubric.

Through this process, Katie and Jerry realized that they were not, in fact, in alignment about what rigorous student work looked like at the end of the lesson. Through their discussions, the teachers realized that Jerry was holding a higher bar for student responses than Katie. v realization pushed them to collectively raise the bar for what they expected when evaluating students' work and to amplify the rigor of the questions that they were asking of students during lessons and in students' work. At the close of the quarter in which they shifted to this type of student work analysis, Katie and Jerry's class saw an increase in their course pass rate from 79% to 97%.



Jerry and Katie used the **Ednovate Student Work Analysis** agenda for their collaborative planning.



Summary

The practice of analyzing student work to inform future instruction is relatively common in schools. However, when general and special teachers collectively analyze students' work through their unique lenses, they are able to build a rich and detailed understanding of strengths and needs in a way that a single educator cannot. In order to best serve the needs of all students, particularly Black and Latinx students with disabilities, instruction needs to be highly tailored and targeted to individual student needs. When students' work and learning are evaluated simultaneously by content experts (general education teachers) and accessibility experts (special education teachers), students' needs are identified more precisely, and aligned supports are crafted with both high rigor and access in mind. All teachers are then able to more effectively respond to the needs of individual students as well as the whole class. This response might look like implementing high-impact small groups based on academic data, rather than simply grouping students based on their ability designations. Alternatively, this collaborative student work analysis could lead educators to identify important moments for whole-class instruction. Analyzing student work as a team ensures that all teachers in a classroom are deeply knowledgeable about student needs and the gaps of the class as a whole. This leads to a greater feeling of shared responsibility for all learners.

FURTHER LEARNING

Weekly Data Meeting Protocol
UNCOMMON SCHOOLS

ATLAS — Learning From Student Work
NATIONAL SCHOOL REFORM FACULTY

Using a Student Work Analysis Protocol to Improve Outcomes
RELAY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Looking Collaboratively at Student Work: An Essential Toolkit
COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS



A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO STUDENT WORK ANALYSIS

Appendix

Appendix

How to Measure

When content and accessibility experts work together to implement student work analysis protocols, 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)	Log	Are teachers meeting to analyze student work? Yes / No	Percent of planned meetings held by teachers for student work analysis	Teachers are consistently engaging in student work analysis 100% of the time as scheduled.	Teams can (briefly) log their meetings to denote that the meeting(s) occurred and/or log the key trends identified in each meeting and 1–2 key next steps.
Process (utilization)	Observation	Are teachers using the protocol? Yes / No	Percentage of time (and/or teams) using the protocol	All collaborating teams use the SWA protocol 100% of the time.	School leaders or instructional coaches can collect completed protocols as an alternative to observing the student work analysis meetings.
Process (utilization)	Observation	To what extent are teachers using all components of the protocol?	Percentage of teams using all components of the protocol	Teachers are addressing all intended components of the SWA protocol during their meeting time.	It may be beneficial to measure implementation by section. A coach may sit in on a student work analysis conversation with a copy of the agenda in hand, noting which sections are addressed, how much time teachers spend on each section, and the outcomes of each protocol section.
Outcome	Student Outcomes Data	Are students' academic outcomes improving as a result of student work analysis–informed instruction?	Percent mastery of individual work samples Percent mastery on summative assessments (overall and for priority subgroups)	Levels of mastery increase for students overall and for priority subgroups of students. Gaps in measured academic performance between students with and without disabilities are shrinking.	Quarterly, leaders and teachers review the mastery percentages for students with disabilities for a subset of focal standards that have been reviewed.

Additional measures can guide a team to know whether student work analysis 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	Observation	To what extent is each teacher's unique expertise being leveraged when analyzing students' work?	Percent of time that each teacher is contributing to discussions of students' work	Both teachers are actively and equitably participating in the student work analysis discussion at nearly equal levels.	A coach might join the student work analysis and gather **frequency and/ or duration data** for each teacher as they participate in the SWA discussion.
Process (usefulness)	Survey	How valuable do teachers find student work analysis?	Average of scores (1–5) on survey	Increasing average of survey scores over time	After each student work analysis meeting, teachers are provided with an anonymous survey which asks, "How valuable do you find the student work analysis process?"
Process	Observation	How are teacher practices changing as a result of using the SWA protocol?	Percent of observed instances where teachers are implementing practices aligned to the student work analysis plan	Collaborative teams are implementing instructional practices that are directly aligned to needs surfaced through students' work.	

PRACTICE TOOL

Green Dot's Student Work Analysis Protocol (2022–23)

Note: Questions that are likely to be within the unique purview of special educators are denoted with "SPED." Ideally, however, as this process occurs more regularly, many of these questions can be increasingly answered by either educator.

INTERDISCIPLINARY, COLLABORATIVE STUDENT WORK ANALYSIS	
Necessary Resources	Bring a representative sample of the most recent scored work (exit slip, quiz, test, etc.): ☐ 2 students who demonstrated mastery and above (earned an 80+% or a 3–4) ☐ 2 students who are approaching mastery (i.e., earned 60–79% or a 2) ☐ 2 students who are not yet approaching mastery (i.e., earned <60% or a 0–1) ☐ 1–2 students with disabilities ☐ 1–2 students who are emergent multilingual learners
Celebrating Successes 3 minutes	Collaborating teachers reflect on ways in which their collaborative student work analysis and planning has positively impacted their practice and their students' outcomes. For example: • What is one way in which you are using student work that is making an impact on your students' learning, experiences and/or outcomes, specifically for students with disabilities? • What is one way you are currently using student work that has made an impact on your teaching practice, particularly when supporting students with disabilities?
Articulating the Context for the Work Sample 5 minutes	Collaborating teachers ground their analysis in a reminder of the instructional support that was provided prior to the work sample or assessment. For example: • What type of methods were used to introduce new material? For practice? • What small group instruction was provided? Who participated? What was the focus? • What are students' accommodations (per their IEP or 504)? Were those accommodations provided when students were producing this work? (SPED) • What specially designed instruction was provided leading up to this work? (SPED) • If relevant, what co-teaching models were used to support this content? Teachers also ground themselves in the criteria for success for the work by: • Reviewing the standard and stating, in their own words, what it demands of learners. • Reviewing the rubric used to assess any written work.

<table>
<tr>
<td>Notice and Wonder
12 minutes</td>
<td>Teachers review each representative set of students' work and elevate what is seen in the work itself without planning solutions.

Collaborating teachers aim to be as generative as possible, taking an investigative stance to review students' work through their unique lens and perspective.

<table>
<tr><th>What are we NOTICING
in students' work?</th><th>What are we WONDERING
about students' work?</th></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>
</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying Root Causes
8 minutes</td>
<td>Collaborating teachers use guiding questions to push themselves to elaborate on noticings and wonderings, identifying causes of strengths that can be replicated and using their unique expertise to get to root causes of misconceptions or challenges.

• What strengths do you see in the student work samples?
– What supports were provided to students to bring about or amplify these strengths? Within their general education course? In any additional services they receive? (SPED)
– How can we replicate those supports?

• What is keeping students back from the next level of understanding and mastery?
– What prerequisite content gaps exist? Be as specific as possible.
– Why do those content gaps exist?
– What accessibility gaps exist? Be as specific as possible. (SPED)
– Are any gaps a manifestation of disabilities or language acquisition needs? How so? (SPED)
– What supports toward those gaps have been provided in class and through specially designed instruction?
– What about those supports has not yet led to content mastery?
– What connections, if any, exist between students' IEP goals and the demands of the current work sample? How can we connect those IEP goals to this work? (SPED)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining the Focus
5 minutes</td>
<td>Collaborating teachers identify specific next steps for each group of students reflected in the representative samples, ensuring that there is an explicit focus on the needs of students with disabilities.

Teachers articulate what we want to see next in students' work by X date.</td>
</tr>
</table>

Brainstorming Aligned Responses 8 minutes	Based on the root cause reflections and aligned to their articulated foci, collaborating teachers discuss: • What steps could we take with these students (and by extension - all of our students) to support their learning and help them progress in their work? • What accommodations and/or specially designed instruction will be necessary to support students' learning? (SPED) • Do the content or skills require quick touchpoints or a full re-teach? – What teaching strategies might be most effective in building these *skills*, re-teaching this *content*, and *assessing* them again? – What consistent strategies could we implement to build student skills? – What instructional model(s) would be most effective to use? *For co-teachers, this includes different* **models of co-teaching**. – How will we re-engage, review, or re-teach to build student knowledge or repair misconceptions? – What opportunities can we use to reassess the student skills or knowledge we build? – What type of data would provide evidence of progress?
Finalizing Next Steps 4 minutes	• What is the timeline for implementing each of your next steps? • What will we specifically do ***in our next co-planning time*** to address the needs identified above?

Notes

1 National Center for Learning Disabilities and Understood, *Forward Together*, 20

2 Langer et al, *Collaborative analysis of student work*, 19

3 Bella, “Benefits of Analyzing Student Work”

4 Knight and Faggella-Luby, “‘Data’ Shouldn’t Be a Dirty Word.”

5 In their publication, “Forward Together,” The National Center for Learning Disabilities cites data-informed flexible grouping as one of the strongest practices for effectively supporting students with learning and attention challenges. When teachers know, specifically, what students need, they can plan strategically for groups of students who have similar needs.

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Marshall Street



Achieving High-Impact Co-Teaching: A Gradual Release Model

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

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Achieving High-Impact Co-Teaching: A Gradual Release Model

Implementation Level

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

Who Implements

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

Practice Overview

What is the Practice?

Coaches intentionally train co-teachers to use the highest-impact models of co-teaching by:

- incrementally introducing co-teachers to different co-teaching approaches,
- supporting co-teachers to use student data to drive instructional decisions, and
- developing co-teachers' skill and confidence with each new model before introducing more.

Two Teachers, Twice the Support

When co-teachers optimize their roles during lessons, all students experience double the support they would have with one teacher. High-impact co-teaching models allow for lower student-to-teacher ratios and different teaching methods, providing students with learning experiences that would not be feasible in a room with only one teacher leading instruction.

Why is this Practice Important?

The use of high-impact co-teaching models benefits **students with disabilities** by:

PROMOTING TRUE INCLUSION

A truly inclusive environment exists when all students are together, in the classroom, getting the support they need to excel.[1]

ALLOWING FOR TAILORED INSTRUCTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Higher-impact models enable teachers to use differentiated instructional methods and targeted interventions to meet a wider variety of students' needs.[2]

DECREASING STUDENT-TO-TEACHER RATIOS

Research shows that lower student-to-teacher ratios can have a significant impact on students' experiences and outcomes in school, particularly for students in our priority population.[3] All high-impact co-teaching models lower the student-to-teacher ratio dramatically.

AFFORDING STUDENTS CONSISTENT ACCESS TO BOTH OF THEIR TEACHERS

Effective use of varied co-teaching models gives all students the opportunity to work with each teacher, naturally providing them access to both teachers' expertise and minimizing stigma.

Using an incremental method to coach on high-impact co-teaching models benefits **teachers** by:

PROVIDING EXPLICIT SUPPORT FOR AN APPROACH THAT IS NOT INTUITIVE

Lower leverage co-teaching models — like One Teach/One Assist — are often familiar, making them easy for co-teachers to default into without explicit modeling and coaching. Dedicated coaching acknowledges that sharing instructional responsibility in nontraditional ways is new and requires direct support.[4]

TRULY VALUING EACH EDUCATOR

When both co-teachers' roles are optimized in the classroom, higher job satisfaction follows.[5] This is particularly relevant in the current landscape in which special education teachers are in tremendous demand and their retention is a top priority for the field.



The Continuum of Co-Teaching Models

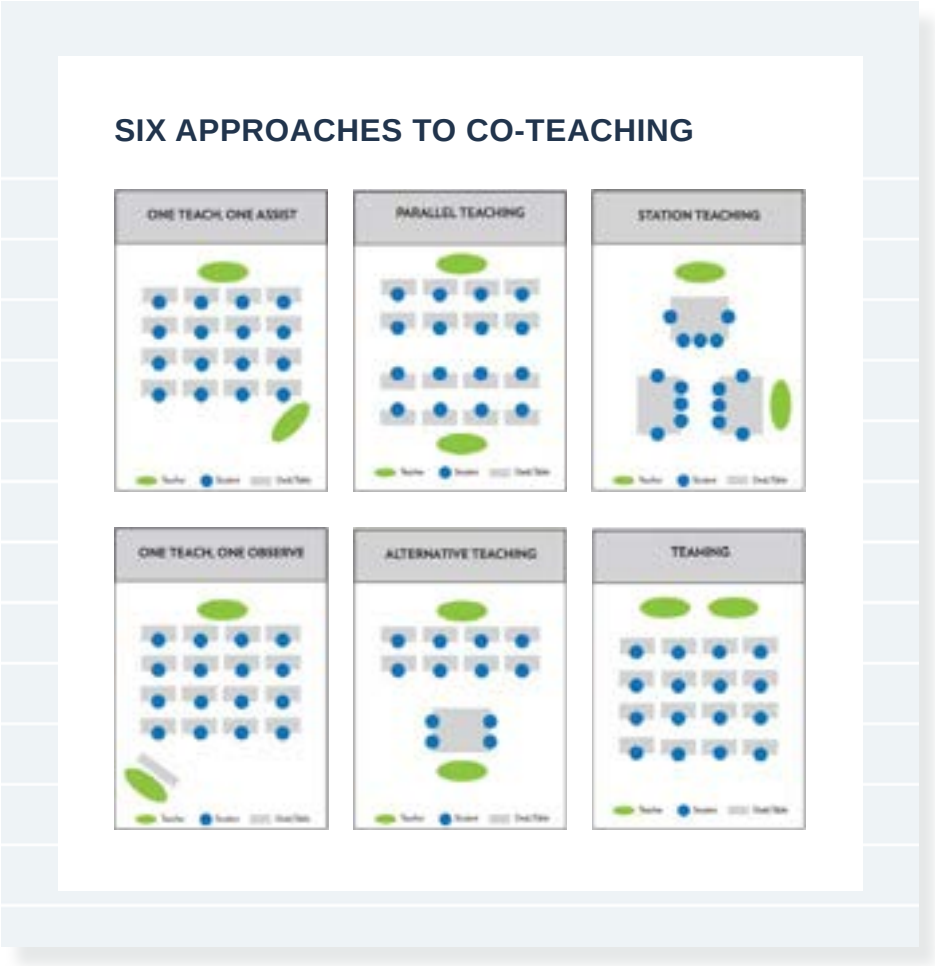
Not all co-teaching models are equal in terms of their impact on students' learning. Marilyn Friend, one of the foremost co-teaching researchers and developers, explains that models in which both people have active teaching roles should be designated for "high use" based on their outsized impact on student outcomes.[6]

The table below summarizes Dr. Friend's descriptions of the models. For more detailed information, see **Blue Engine's co-teaching models resource**.

Impact Level	Co-Teaching Model	Description
High	**Parallel Teaching**	Students are split into two generally heterogeneous groups, each led by a co-teacher. They experience the same lesson.
High	**Station Teaching**	Students are, generally, in three groups (heterogeneous or skill-based). Each teacher works with a group of students while the third group works independently. Most often, students experience each station.
High	**Alternative Teaching**	Most students are doing one activity while a smaller group is gathered and supported by a teacher for a variety of reasons. Groupings are flexible, and which teacher leads the group depends on the students and their purpose for being together. This can occur at any point in the lesson (mini-lesson, guided practice, independent practice).
Moderate	**Teaming**	Co-teachers co-facilitate a single whole-group lesson.
Low	**One Teach/One Assist**	One teacher is teaching all students, while the other teacher is observing and gathering data for a specific purpose.
Low	**One Teach/One Assist**	One teacher (most often the general educator) is teaching the whole group, while the other teacher is supporting individuals.

Coaching Into High-Impact Models

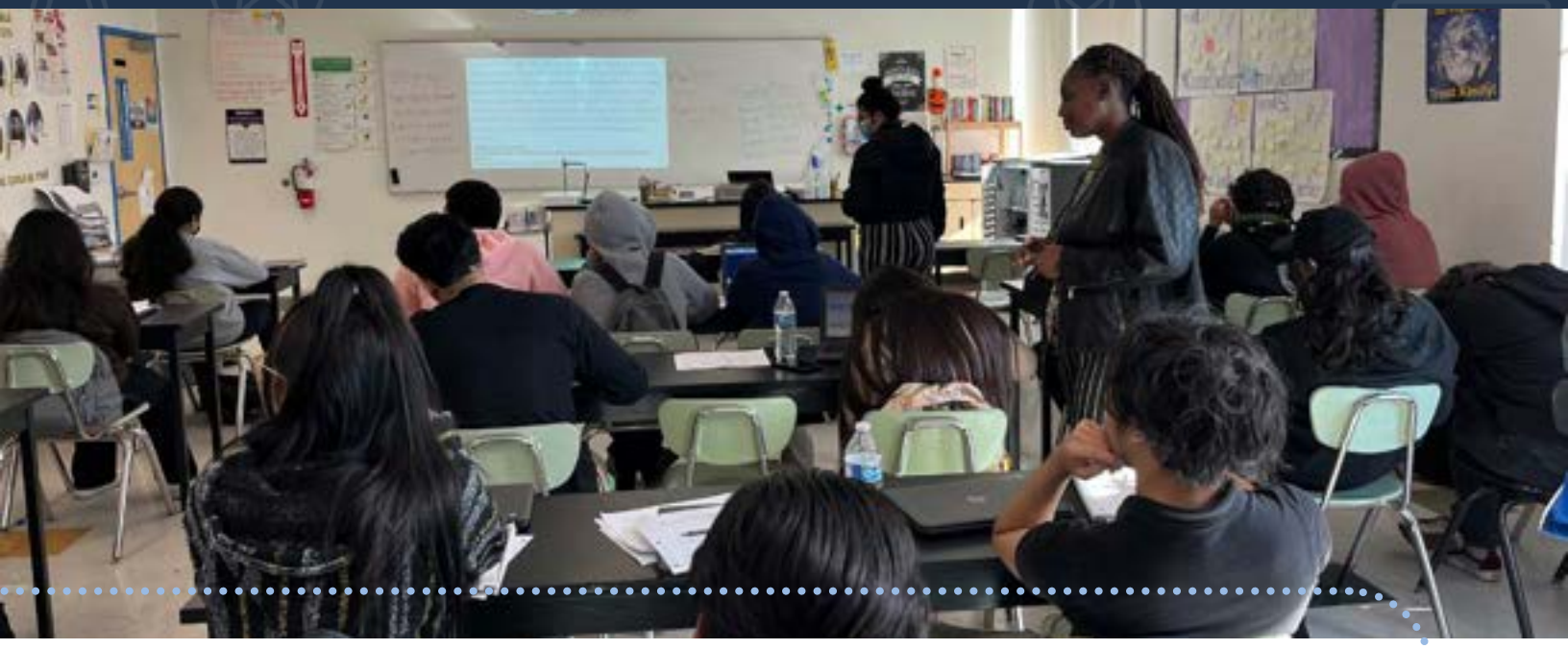
Strong co-teaching that drives results for students requires teaching in ways that are often unfamiliar given the prevalence of solo-taught instruction. Without appropriate support, co-teachers tend to revert to the more comfortable One Teach/ One Assist model or to divide responsibility rather than take a team approach, both of which limit the efficacy of instruction for students. Co-teaching is also a significant investment. School leaders need to ensure that students are benefiting from co-teaching to warrant the expenditures.



*Source: **Teaching Tolerance Seamless Teaching Toolkit***

Often, co-teachers receive professional development on new co-teaching models through workshops or resources presenting and explaining all six models at once. Unfortunately, this kind of professional development typically does not explain how student needs should drive the use of each model. Within the Networked Improvement Community (NIC), leaders found that this professional development approach was ineffective. Teachers were overwhelmed by new information and lacked support for planning for the logistics and instruction associated with each model.

By incrementally building teachers' confidence with more effective co-teaching models, teachers' openness to incorporating a variety of models grew tremendously. At both Collegiate Academies and Green Dot Public Schools, where an incremental approach was used by coaches, the prevalence of One Teach/One Assist decreased significantly in favor of higher-impact, lower student-to-teacher ratio models.



Bringing this Practice to Life

OPTIMIZING CO-TEACHING AT GREEN DOT PUBLIC SCHOOLS CALIFORNIA

*At Green Dot Public Schools, a coach facilitates the introduction of new co-teaching models to co-teaching teams. The process begins with a **student work analysis**, followed by a brief "lesson" about a high-impact co-teaching model that is appropriate for addressing the identified needs. This approach — as opposed to professional development that presents every model at the same time — provides co-teachers with a measured, accessible, and applicable introduction to each new model as it is needed in practice.*

*The following case study presents an example of this process with 9th grade ELA co-teachers Quentin (general education) and Jesse (special education), who have been co-teaching for nearly a year. Glynis is a special education instructional leader at Green Dot who facilitates their conversation, utilizing **adult learning techniques** to push the teachers' practice in a way that is engaging.*

In the introduction described below, Quentin and Jesse have just finished their student work analysis and have determined that students need support on personification. Quentin wants to provide more overt examples of it so that students are clear on the purpose of the technique and when and how to use it.

Strategically Selecting a New Model

After the group completed the student work analysis, Glynis posed a question: *what co-teaching model would best meet their newly uncovered student needs?* Quentin suggested a whole group approach, because all students need to understand how to apply personification in their own writing. Jesse called attention to the small group of students who did not yet fully understand the concept of personification and suggested that perhaps he could work with them during part of an upcoming lesson on this foundational content.

Glynis listened to the teacher's analysis and built upon their insights, highlighting that they had an opportunity to optimize both teachers through a specific co-teaching model: **Alternative Teaching** in small groups. To support her suggestion, she shared stories from other Green Dot schools where the incorporation of groups had led to dramatic improvements in students' grades.

Jesse and Quentin were enthused by the prospect of trying it out, but also shared that they generally relied on One Teach/One Assist or Teaming, so the new model would be outside of their comfort zone. Wanting to ensure that they would be able to gradually incorporate the model, Glynis recommended that they begin by focusing on just one of their co-taught periods, and by planning for Jesse to work with their focal group of students — those who would benefit from foundational content — for 10 minutes. Upon hearing this measured approach, Jesse and Quentin agreed that they were ready to dig in and learn more.

Building Knowledge and Skill

With the teachers in agreement, Glynis launched a quick mini lesson about the tenets of strong, alternative small group instruction (shown in figure 1). She provided brief examples for each aspect of the model, highlighting the ways in which the principles for its effective use appeared in practice.

Next, Glynis wanted to uncover which aspects of planning and implementing the Alternative Teaching model were going to be most challenging for Jesse and Quentin. The co-teachers self-assessed their skill with five foundational components (shown in figure 2), sharing context for their responses. Through this conversation, Glynis learned that the pair's primary needs for coaching related to:

- **logistics** (Where would students sit for the small group? How would they know what to do when they get there? What would the teacher not leading the small group be doing?) and
- **culture** (How would they make sure that students didn't feel singled out when working in a small group?).

FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2



Glynis opted to prioritize the second need — culture — during their time together in this session. She coached the duo on how they could talk to their students about small groupings. She shared effective approaches used by other co-teachers to destigmatize the new structure, including the language previously used by a different co-teaching pair at another Green Dot high school: "We're trying this new thing because we really want to make sure that you're successful on your finals. We know there are a lot of kids in our class, and that can be distracting! Small groups help everyone get the time and attention that they need." Glynis reassured Jesse and Quentin that, overwhelmingly, fellow Green Dot teachers found that students were comfortable if they knew alternative small groups were helping everyone.

Shifting to Logistics

As the meeting neared its end, the group turned their attention to Jesse and Quentin's other coaching need — logistics — as well as next steps. To support the team's practice and development, Glynis shared a resource focused specifically on effective structures for running small groups in co-taught spaces. She encouraged Jesse and Quentin to review the resource together and to note questions or additional needs they found. The following week, Glynis would make sure that the team felt prepared for their first attempt at Alternative Teaching, as well as meet with them after their lesson to reflect on the result for students and their own learnings.

This incremental approach to professional development provided Jesse and Quentin with a useful, applied introduction to a new co-teaching model in a way that was accessible and tied to their students' current needs.



Green Dot Ánimo Watts co-teachers team teach a math lesson before moving to differentiated groupings.

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 recommended time allocation. **Steps to Implement** presents a concise checklist of action items, which are explained in detail in **How to Implement this Practice**, below.

Enabling Conditions

Prerequisites	★ Co-teachers have: – a shared coach or coaches, and – regular coaching sessions. ★ School leaders and coaches communicate the belief that each teacher is a critical asset during instruction and must be leveraged to engage with all students. ★ Coaches have pre-existing knowledge of and experience with high-impact models of co-teaching.
Recommended Materials	★ Co-Teacher coaching agenda ★ Guidance resources on high-impact co-teaching models
Staff Commitment	★ One or more dedicated co-teaching pairs ★ Instructional coach or coaching team ★ Dedicated time by school leadership to engage in observation, goal setting, and feedback cycles one or more times per year ★ Dedicated time for district instructional coaches/leadership to coordinate efforts across school teams
Recommended Time Allocation	★ For coaches, at least 90 minutes per month per co-teaching pair: – 45 minutes: Coaching session – 45 minutes: Aligned observation/prep ★ For co-teachers, at least: – one 45-minute coaching session per month and – 45 minutes of co-planning time per week – Optional: quarterly unit co-planning time*

** An established scope/sequence and unit plan are key accelerants that will allow co-teachers to focus on the day-to-day aspects of removing barriers and optimizing co-teaching models, rather than remaining at a birds-eye view.*

Steps to Implement

CREATE STRUCTURES FOR GRADUAL RELEASE OF HIGH-IMPACT CO-TEACHING

At the start of each school year, **school leaders**:

- ☐ **Allocate time** for coaching and co-planning
- ☐ **Set goals** for the use of high-impact co-teaching models

COACH INTO NEW MODELS

Once enabling structures have been established, **coaches**:

- ☐ Begin coaching with **data analysis**
- ☐ **Focus on one (new) model** based on teachers' readiness and students' needs
- ☐ **Build knowledge and skill** with the selected model
- ☐ Implement short-term **observation cycles**

Pairing with Purpose

Certain models, such as Parallel Teaching, require that both teachers are able to effectively lead lessons for the entire class, so it's beneficial for special education co-teachers to be focused on a content area that aligns with their expertise or interests.[7] If the special education teacher lacks sufficient content expertise, they are less likely to be able to teach a full lesson independently. At **Green Dot's Ánimo Watts College Preparatory Academy**, co-teachers were initially paired without prioritizing content expertise. A special education teacher with years of math experience was working in an ELA class, while a colleague with a degree in English was co-teaching math. Both educators spent the year lacking the content-based confidence to venture into higher-impact co-teaching methods. When these teachers' assignments were flipped, they were able to implement stronger co-teaching models, increasing their satisfaction and improving the learning experience for all students. See ***Co-Planning for Differentiated Instruction*** to learn how strong co-planning addresses content alignment between co-teachers.

The Role of Trust

Co-teaching requires a deep level of trust between educators, particularly when using models that require teachers to relinquish some control and share instructional responsibility with their colleague (e.g., through Parallel Teaching). For the practices detailed in this chapter to be effective, it is imperative that leaders support co-teachers to establish **strong relationships** built upon mutual respect and the trust necessary to fully share responsibility for their students' learning. The **collection introduction** details practices and resources that schools in the NIC have successfully employed to support this work.

How to Implement this Practice

Create Structures for Gradual Release of High-Impact Co-Teaching

Step 1: Allocate Time for Coaching and Co-Planning

In order for co-teachers to advance their co-teaching practice and effectively utilize new, higher-leverage co-teaching models, structures and routines need to be in place to support learning, application, and reflection specific to the practice of co-teaching and the mindsets and skills for collaborative teaming between educators.

These structures should include time for coaches:

- to train teachers to build knowledge of co-teaching models, along with when and how to use them in response to formative and summative student data,
- to observe or collaboratively plan and prepare with teachers (taking a gradual release approach), and
- to debrief and guide reflection.

In addition to regular coaching sessions for co-teaching pairs, co-teachers should be allocated time for routine co-planning between coaching cycles to work as a team to apply their skills and knowledge with greater independence and confidence. Regular co-planning lets teachers plan for upcoming lessons, reflect on students' needs, remove barriers to access, and incorporate new high-impact models as the year progresses.

To adequately support this practice, time should be reserved for the following:

- For coaches, at least 90 minutes per month per co-teaching pair in each **coach's** schedule, to provide at least 45 minutes for coaching sessions and 45 minutes for preparation and aligned observation.
- For co-teachers, at least one 45-minute coaching session per month, and at least 45 minutes of **co-planning** time per week.





Livingston Collegiate Academy co-teachers during an English 1 co-planning meeting with their coach (not shown)

School Spotlight: Example Coaching Models

While participating in the NIC, **Collegiate Academy** co-teachers met weekly with their coach using a co-planning agenda specifically focused on their students with disabilities. This frequency was ideal and allowed for frequent, gradual development for teachers based on their most immediate student needs.

At Green Dot's **Ánimo Watts College Preparatory Academy**, the special education program specialist meets bi-weekly with co-teaching teams to engage in this work. This bi-weekly frequency supports teachers between their quarterly planning days, during which they receive additional coaching on a new model.

Step 2: Set Goals for the Use of High-Impact Co-Teaching Models

Co-teaching development requires attention to a variety of skills for individual educators and co-teaching teams, particularly to build teacher mindsets, form effective co-teaching teams, plan for effective co-taught instruction, and grow teacher capacity in advanced data analysis and co-teaching models. By setting goals for the incorporation of new, stronger co-teaching models, teachers and coaches define the direction and build motivation for their work together. Leaders and coaches can support their teams in this process through the following actions:

AUDITING CO-TEACHERS' CURRENT USE OF CO-TEACHING MODELS

Observe co-taught classes, collecting data in response to questions like these about current model usage:

Models	Student Engagement
• Which models are co-teachers using? • How frequently are they using them?	• How fluid are student groupings? • How are students with and without disabilities working together? • Which students are working with which teacher(s)?

SETTING CLEAR GOALS ON CO-TEACHING MEASURES

Goals should encourage the effective incorporation of higher-impact models. (See **The Continuum of Co-Teaching Models**, above.) Set goals related to the following:

- Increased use of high-impact co-teaching models. For example:
  - After two weeks of coaching, Team A will decrease their use of One Teach/One Assist during the introduction to new material from five lessons (of five total) to four lessons per week, replacing it with Alternative Teaching for students scoring below 50% on the previous week's lessons.
  - After four weeks, decrease further to three lessons; after six weeks, two lessons.
- Improved student outcomes. For example:
  - After six weeks of using Alternative Teaching, exit ticket averages for students with disabilities will increase from 30% to (at least) 50% and for the class overall from 50% to (at least) 65%.
- Co-teachers' roles during instruction. For example:
  - After four weeks, the general educator will lead the alternative group during introduction to new material for at least one-third of lessons.

The measurement table in the **Appendix** offers additional suggestions for measurement.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEER OBSERVATIONS AND LEARNING

For many co-teachers, the concept and instructional approach of collaborative teaching may be unfamiliar. Offering co-teaching pairs opportunities for learning and observation can accelerate their progress. Consider:

- creating a video library of other co-teaching pairs across the school or district;
- making introductions between co-teaching pairs in similar content or grade levels to foster collaboration;
- providing release time for teachers to observe co-teaching in other classrooms at their school, within their district, or at schools with strong models; or
- designing and implementing targeted professional development events for co-teaching pairs to attend together.

School and district leaders can benefit from observations and peer visits.

Between 2022 and 2023, the Networked Improvement Community offered a series of **Learning Tours** to school and district leaders to observe high-impact co-teaching at model campuses. As a result, leaders gained knowledge; acquired tools and resources for establishing co-teaching schedules, site-based systems, and routines; and collaborated in a cross-network professional learning community to share best practices for implementation.

ENCOURAGING SPACE FOR CO-TEACHERS TO REFLECT ON THEIR USAGE OF STRONG MODELS

Trusting coaching relationships can lead to meaningful teacher reflection. At Green Dot, co-teachers spend time in coaching sessions reflecting both on what co-teaching models they default to and on what models they want to begin incorporating into their practice. This gives the coach the ability to develop an authentic coaching plan based on teacher-centered goals for strong co-teaching models.

Coach Into New Models

Step 3: Begin Coaching Session with Student Data

Different models of co-teaching (and the groupings used within them) serve different instructional needs. By beginning a coaching session with an analysis of students' most recent data, coaches can help to ensure that teachers are building their capacity with a new method that will effectively address the needs presented. This analysis could be either a **student work analysis** or a review of other recent quantitative and qualitative data.

Step 4: Offer Choices for the New Model Based on Teacher Interest and Skill

The coach presents co-teachers with a handful of different high-leverage co-teaching models (including derivations of standard models, as in the Green Dot example in figure 3). Teachers choose one model to learn about and incorporate into their practice. Coaches should offer guidance to teachers on **the model(s) that will best align with current student needs**.

FIGURE 3



Step 5: Build Knowledge and Skill with the Selected Model

Once teachers have identified the co-teaching model that they want to focus on, the coach provides a brief learning experience, gives them a high-level overview, calls out key considerations, and provides an opportunity for questions about how this model can best meet students' needs.





Example slides from Green Dot Coach's co-teaching model overview

Step 6: Implement Short-Term Observation and Coaching Cycles

It is imperative that coaches observe and debrief with co-teaching teams as they try new co-teaching models, swiftly addressing barriers, gathering data, and celebrating successes. Quick and targeted feedback allows teams to tweak the implementation of models and gradually build their skill and knowledge based on what has previously been tried.

Coaches should also help co-teachers progress monitor as they work through and try each new model:

1. **Regularly review** **student academic outcomes data** to assess whether changes to the co-teaching model are positively impacting student learning. This ideally happens in weekly co-planning meetings between teachers for more rapid review and response to student data, rather than monthly coaching cycles.
2. **Gather** **students' feedback** **on their learning experiences,** inquiring about how the use of higher-impact co-teaching practices is impacting their student experience (e.g., by administering a **brief, biweekly student survey**).

By ensuring confidence and efficacy with one model before moving on to the next, each new structure becomes an established tool for co-teachers to use. Coaches can help their co-teachers determine if they are ready to progress to another model, using resources to help assess mastery, such as Collegiate Academies' **co-teaching models scope and sequence**.

Ongoing: Build Teachers' Cross-Department Knowledge and Skill

For co-teachers to effectively implement co-teaching models, they need to share instructional responsibility during lessons and communicate rapidly with one another throughout instruction. Further, both teachers need deep knowledge of course content and accessibility strategies that allows them to tailor instruction to individual student needs. Special education teachers should receive targeted professional development that builds their content knowledge and fluency with the course curriculum. General education teachers should similarly receive development focused on techniques for effectively supporting students with disabilities. It is important that school leaders and coaches ensure they are providing co-teachers with this essential training in an ongoing fashion.



Summit Atlas collaborating teachers review student data for action planning.

Summary

High-impact co-teaching models — specifically Parallel, Alternative, and Station Teaching — allow co-teachers to leverage their doubled capacity to meet the needs of all students, especially those with disabilities. These models lower student-to-teacher ratios, allow for more universally designed instruction, and create opportunities for each educator to have an active, strategic role with students, thereby ensuring their learning and engagement.

While higher-impact co-teaching models yield stronger outcomes, teachers often experience a variety of barriers to their implementation: knowledge of their different purposes and components, sufficient content expertise, time necessary for effective co-planning, and support that helps them develop in all of the above.

In order to implement these models well, co-teachers need to plan for different types of lesson delivery as well as more complicated logistics. When coaches gradually introduce co-teachers to new models and ensure their success with each approach before introducing another, they are significantly more likely to see confident pairs who optimize their shared presence in the classroom and, in turn, see students grow.

FURTHER LEARNING

Think Inclusive Podcast interview with Marilyn Friend (transcript)
MARYLAND COALITION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

"Inclusive Education Research and Practice"
MARYLAND COALITION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

"Welcome to Co-Teaching 2.0"
ASCD

"6 Co-Teaching Models"
UNDERSTOOD

"15 Top Strategies for Teaching Adult Learners [+ FAQs]"
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO PROFESSIONAL AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

ACHIEVING HIGH-IMPACT CO-TEACHING:
A GRADUAL RELEASE MODEL

Appendix

Appendix

How to Measure

When working with teams to optimize co-teaching, you will want to measure effectiveness of the tools and coaching to improve the usefulness, usability, and utilization of co-teachers to improve student outcomes. At minimum, these measures are most essential:

PRIMARY MEASURES				
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**
Process (utilization)	Observational data by coach	How often are co-teachers using high-impact co-teaching models?	Percent of instructional time that high-impact co-teaching models are being used	The prevalence of low-impact models is gradually replaced by high-impact models.
Perception (usefulness)	Survey	How comfortable are you utilizing (high-leverage) models of co-teaching?	Average score (1–5) indicating level of comfort with high-leverage co-teaching models	Teachers indicate that they feel an increased comfort and confidence with co-teaching models that are shown to yield stronger outcomes for students.
Outcome**	Student exit ticket data	Do students' academic outcomes improve as co-teachers employ high-impact co-teaching models?	Percent of students (with disabilities) whose outcomes are improving	Increased student achievement (overall and as a subset with disabilities) compared to the time prior to coaching

***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 student work analysis is leading to the desired improvements for students:

SECONDARY MEASURES				
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**
Perception	Survey	Student: Do you feel that both teachers support your learning? How so?	Percent of students who feel that both teachers support their learning	Increasing percent of students who feel supported by both teachers until reaching 100%
Perception	Survey	Student: Are you comfortable getting support from both co-teachers?	Percent of students who feel comfortable getting support from both (or all) of their teachers	Increasing percent of students who feel comfortable getting support from both/all teachers until reaching 100%

Notes

1 IRIS Center, “What is inclusion?”

2 Marilyn Friend, interview by Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education

3 Egelson et al, *How Class Size Makes a Difference*

4 Solis et al, “Collaborative models of instruction”

5 Teach Plus, *A Million Paper Cuts*

6 Marilyn Friend, interview by Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education

7 Hanover Research. *The Effectiveness of the Co-Teaching Model*

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Egelson, Paula, Patrick Harmon, Art Hood, and C. M. Achilles. *How Class Size Makes a Difference*. SERVE, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. 2002. **https://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/SERVE_how_class_size_makes_a_difference1.pdf**

Hanover Research. *The Effectiveness of the Co-Teaching Model: Literature Review*. March 2012. **https://drive.google.com/file/d/1M6HscQyOaN_9bbb5_jqBO2Eq_wKLBFnu/view?usp=drive_link**

IRIS Center, Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College. “What is inclusion and why is it important?” Accessed November 2023. **https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/inc/cresource/q1/p01/**

Marilyn Friend, interview by Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education. *Think Inclusive*. Podcast audio, July 29, 2021. **https://podcasts.apple.com/mt/podcast/marilyn-friend-co-teaching/id583456652?i=1000530372462**

Solis, Michael, Sharon Vaughn, Elizabeth Swanson, and Lisa Mcculley. “Collaborative models of instruction: The empirical foundations of inclusion and co-teaching.” *Psychology in the Schools* 49, no. 5 (2012): 498–510. **https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21606**

Teach Plus. *A Million Paper Cuts: Why Special Education Teachers Leave the Profession*. January 2023: 11. **https://teachplus.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Teach-Plus-IL_Million-Paper-Cuts.pdf**

How Quarterly Professional Development Cycles Helped a Network Maximize Data-Driven Co-Planning for Co-Teachers

GREEN DOT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EXPLORE THE COLLECTION

The practice of co-planning helps build collaboration between general and special education teams. Explore ***Opening Doors to Collaboration***.

Snapshot

WHAT IS THE PRACTICE?

The coordination and implementation of quarterly professional development days for co-teaching teams that blend professional learning with intentional co-planning time. These facilitated days create purposeful time for teams to connect, reflect on student data with a student work analysis template, expand knowledge of high-leverage co-teaching models, and design instruction using those models for the upcoming quarter.

Each day includes four core components:

- Completion of a student work analysis protocol
- Facilitated professional learning with the coach
- In-depth planning time for the co-teaching pair
- Group debrief and reflection

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Quarterly co-planning days have:

- improved the ability of co-teaching teams to use student data and high-leverage co-teaching models to effectively address student needs,
- improved the relationships between co-teachers, and
- built a school-wide perception that co-planning is a positive practice.

These factors contributed to a 25-point increase in the percentage of students with disabilities who passed every class with a C or better at Ánimo Watts College Preparatory Academy.



"[Regular quarterly co-planning days] give us time to plan in more depth and address student learning gaps that we otherwise rarely have the time to focus on."

— QUINTAN, GREEN DOT CO-TEACHER, OSCAR DE LA HOYA CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL



Co-teaching in action at Green Dot Ánimo Watts

The Challenge

How can schools best protect and use co-planning time?

Glynis, the improvement lead and instructional coach at Green Dot Public Schools in Los Angeles, CA, knew that when Green Dot's co-teaching teams were able to regularly step away from the classroom and strategically co-plan instruction, learning outcomes improved for their students with disabilities.

Despite this fact, and even though a weekly co-planning period for co-teaching teams was scheduled, it was increasingly challenging for the co-teaching teams to use the planning periods to actually plan their instruction. This was especially true during COVID-19, when new demands regularly took over planning periods and teachers no longer had the flexibility to check in informally throughout their days.

Additionally, Glynis observed that when co-teaching teams could carve out a planning period — whether a weekly planning block or quarterly planning day — the teams did not consistently use data to inform the design of instruction, leading to less effective co-teaching in the classroom.

She needed a new solution.

Glynis needed to find a way to ensure that regular planning time for co-teachers was held sacred, that co-teachers felt supported by the school in their skill development, and that co-teachers were deepening their data-driven instructional planning and co-teaching practices through bite-sized coaching.

Essential Terms

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

The Practice

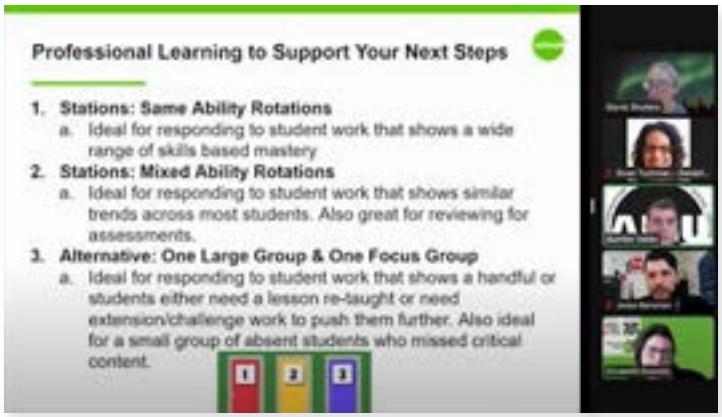
Quarterly co-planning days give teachers much-needed time to co-plan.

Green Dot's quarterly co-planning days were designed as a pilot to gather teachers for protected time for development and instructional planning. Now, after several years of implementation and revision, the practice follows a specific and targeted structure for the four components of quarterly co-planning that Glynis and the Green Dot team learned — from experience, observation, and teacher feedback — were most critical for co-teacher success:

1. **Completion of a student work analysis protocol.** The co-teaching pair starts the day together with a student work analysis facilitated by their coach (either in-person or virtually), analyzing student data to inform needs for instruction. The coach guides the teaching pair to select either the most effective model of co-teaching to meet the needs that appear in the student work analysis

session or the model most of interest to the pair for their growth and development. The pair's selection guides their instructional planning and determines the priorities for the day's professional development.

2. **Facilitated professional development.** After the co-teaching pair selects an area of focus for their professional learning, the coach facilitates a mini-lesson to deliver the content. This content comes from the **coach's prepared, on-demand instruction** playlist designed to build co-teachers' skill and knowledge in **high-leverage co-teaching models**, which they can immediately plan into their upcoming lessons.
3. **In-depth planning time.** Following the professional learning time, the teaching pair has more than half of the day set aside for in-depth planning. During this time, the pair works together in a predesignated space that is distraction-free and held sacred for their focused planning. Their coach is available to join them to answer questions or guide them through challenges they may face.
4. **Group reflection and debrief.** At the end of the day, the pair meets again with their coach to share progress, reflect on their takeaways, and debrief the day. The pair can elect to share an artifact from their planning day, such as a unit or lesson plan they have developed. Finally, they complete an exit survey to share feedback on the day's process for continuous improvement.



Green Dot co-teachers select a co-teaching model to guide their professional development and instructional planning, with guidance from Glynis, their instructional coach.

Green Dot's Co-Planning Day Structure

8:00 a.m.–9:15 a.m.
Partner Set Up Time

Partners use this time to take care of any needs in regard to sub plans, student needs, gathering and organizing co-planning materials, collecting and organizing student work samples, and conducting any individual planning or organizing that is needed to ensure success of the day.

9:15 a.m.–10:15 a.m.
Co-teachers Meet with Glynis Virtually on Zoom

This time focuses on using a student work analysis protocol to analyze the most recent formative or summative assessment data and using this data talk to inform what co-teaching model to choose to focus on to address the needs identified in student work. This time is designed to be customized to meet the specific needs of the co-teaching pair.

10:15 a.m.–3:00 p.m.
Co-Plan with Partner

Take lunch and breaks as needed in this block.

3:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.
Closing with Glynis on Zoom

This is a time for sharing reflections, discussing next steps, and completing an exit slip.

How Green Dot Implemented the Practice

Creating a Schedule

To begin the pilot, Glynis first tackled scheduling. She collaborated with school leaders to confirm that co-teachers had common planning days in the school calendar. To ensure co-teaching teams had the coverage needed to consistently attend quarterly, full-day co-planning, school leadership worked closely with Green Dot network staff to build a large substitute teacher pool.

Later, with learning from the pilot, Glynis created a systemized process for scheduling co-planning days that has become part of the infrastructure for the practice. The process requires close collaboration with school leadership and co-teachers to schedule the days well in advance. It has five basic steps:

Green Dot's Scheduling of Co-Planning Days

Step 1: Coach sends scheduling options to school site administrators.

Between August and September, Glynis sends site administrators a list of options for co-planning days for each quarter. The options are based on coach availability, school vacations, other school and network events, and school culture (for example, Mondays are avoided in order to keep a consistent schedule for students).

Step 2: Site administrators confirm dates.

The site administrators confirm whether the list of optional dates will work for their sites in two waves: by late August for the first quarter and by mid-September for quarters 2–4.

Step 3: Teachers sign up for co-planning days.

Teachers receive the list of options for co-planning days and select their preferred dates via a Signup Genius. If the available dates do not work for a teaching pair, they can email the coach directly, who will coordinate a separate date with the co-teachers and their administrator.

Step 4: Teachers request substitute teacher coverage.

After selecting their preferred dates, co-teachers email their school's office manager to inform them of the upcoming co-planning professional development days. The office manager then coordinates with substitute teaching agencies to secure coverage.

Step 5: Teachers craft coverage plans.

Finally, co-teachers craft coverage plans for any classes they will be missing and reserve a private space in which to work together during their planning day.

Co-teacher Summer	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Day 1: • Content and planning time (teacher led sessions offered) **Day 2:** • Facilitated Co-planning Day	**AM** • Overview/ framing • Strong start partner check in • Goal setting • Overview of SWA and how to use through the year **AM-PM** • Co-planning block with your partner **PM** • Reflection	**AM** • Student work analysis • Co-teaching Model Self Selection & mini professional development **AM-PM** • Co-planning block with your partner **PM** • Reflection	**AM** • Student work analysis • Co-teaching Model Self Selection & mini professional development **AM-PM** • Co-planning block with your partner **PM** • Reflection	**AM** • Student work analysis • Co-teaching Model Self Selection & mini professional development **AM-PM** • Co-planning block with your partner **PM** • Reflection

Green Dot's 2023–24 Quarterly Co-Planning Day Calendar Overview

Strategic Scheduling Considerations

When scheduling co-planning days, plan around school events to ensure teachers can make use of a full release day for collaborative planning and development. Consider the weekly school calendar for shortened days, such as early-release collaboration days. Avoid irregular calendar weeks, such as interim or state assessment weeks or parent-teacher conference weeks. Finally, plan around the school calendar for major activities and field trips.

Refining the Co-Planning Day Structure

In their third year using the practice, and with the new scheduling system in place, Glynis turned her attention to fine-tuning structures to help co-teachers build their data-driven instructional planning practices. The Green Dot team had previously identified a bright spot in student grades at Ánimo Watts College Preparatory Academy, which, once investigated, appeared to be connected to the development and integration of a **student work analysis protocol** with school-level teams. Glynis adapted the pilot quarterly co-planning day structure and coaching agenda to integrate the student work analysis protocol so that co-teachers could drive instructional planning from that data. Glynis also added a mini-lesson component to her morning sessions with co-teachers that allowed teams to choose to learn more about an instructional practice they wanted to build. These changes meant that the professional development provided by co-planning days aligned to school-level tools and routines, reinforcing their standard use across teams, and remained highly informed by and tailored to the unique needs of each co-teaching pair. Co-teaching teams then worked to design lessons using the new practice during their co-planning time later in the day.

How the Student Work Analysis Protocol is Embedded in the Co-Planning Day

- **Step 1:** Teachers select recent student work representative of all student subgroups, such as recent exit tickets, quizzes, or assessments.
- **Step 2:** Teachers describe the work sample, the context behind the work, and the standards they aimed to address in their instruction.
- **Step 3:** Teacher teams review the work samples and descriptions to identify what they "notice" and "wonder" about the student work.
- **Step 4:** Teacher teams select a high-leverage **co-teaching model** that addresses the needs identified in the student work analysis, and the coach delivers a targeted, on-demand mini-lesson on the selected model to deepen co-teachers' understanding and to help ensure effective implementation.
- **Step 5:** Utilizing the selected co-teaching model, teacher teams plan instruction and/or interventions to address the identified student needs.
- **Step 6 [Optional]:** Teacher teams create an artifact that represents their instructional plans, which they can use for reflection with their coach later in the day.

For more information on the practice of student work analysis, see ***A Collaborative Approach to Student Work Analysis***.

Evaluating the Practice for Continuous Improvement

Throughout Green Dot's implementation of quarterly co-planning days — from the pilot to the present — Glynis and the team have gathered feedback and data to monitor effectiveness and improve the development of the practice. Feedback collected from co-teaching pairs focuses on three key areas: **Use of Time, Impact of Time,** and **Ideas for Improvement.**

To collect this feedback, Glynis provides teams with an exit ticket survey at the end of each co-planning day. The survey contains a rating scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) and open-ended questions such as the following:

USE OF TIME	IMPACT OF TIME	IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
• The morning framing and goal-setting session was helpful in guiding our co-planning session focus today. • Our time co-planning as a pair was a productive use of our time. • My relationship with my co-teacher was enhanced by today's session.	• How did today's co-planning day impact your planning for your classroom? • What will be different in your class this week due to today's facilitated co-planning day?	• What could be changed or improved to enhance your experience? • What topics do you need support with for future planning?

The Impact: Spreading Within and Beyond Green Dot California

The practice of quarterly co-planning days, with embedded student work analysis and customized professional development, has been a huge success. **Since its implementation, class passage rates of a C+ or higher nearly tripled for students with disabilities.**

Further, recent survey results show teachers value the practice. **One hundred percent of the participating co-teachers stated that the day was a constructive use of their time.** Additionally, 100% of the co-teachers noted that the co-planning day improved their relationship with their co-teacher.

Glynis has continued to facilitate quarterly co-planning days to a growing positive reception. One participant described co-planning days' many benefits:



"We are able to be much more intentional with our planning. [It's] really helpful to have actual sit-down time to strategize and reflect on student learning. With dealing with new curriculum and new grading practices and policies, it helps to have a thought partner in how to approach student learning, what to cut, what to include, and how to include reteach opportunities in the class."

In addition, quarterly co-planning days have positively influenced the culture across the Green Dot network. At the end of the 2022–23 school year, staff, administrators, and teachers shared, via survey results, that co-planning days are considered to be highly valuable and that co-planning is a positive practice.

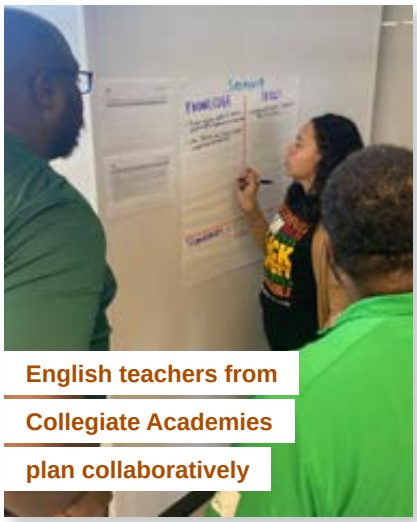
This may be because, as Glynis and the co-teachers have observed, the quarterly co-planning days provide a different type of professional development than what teachers had previously received from their coaches and administrators, all of whom have different expertise, passions, and needs. Because co-planning during the week can often be cut short by the length of prep periods or competing priorities, the quarterly co-planning days provide the teachers with deep, focused practice and support for using the student work analysis protocol that they may not otherwise receive. Teachers also appreciated the extent to which their needs and preferences drove the focus of the professional development provided within their co-planning days, rather than it being directed solely by Glynis.



Co-teaching in action at Green Dot Ánimo Watts

Based on this success, Green Dot will continue to build the culture of co-planning across the network. In the 2023–24 school year, Green Dot will spread the practice of co-planning with student work analysis to two more campuses, increasing the number of co-teaching pairs from 10 to 18. Additional co-teachers will try using student work analysis protocols on a more frequent, biweekly basis. Finally, Glynis will work to determine the most aligned measurement of efficacy between co-planning days and student learning outcomes.

The practice is also spreading to other school districts within the Networked Improvement Community (NIC). **Collegiate Academies** in Louisiana adopted co-planning days for the 2023–24 school year after collaborating with Green Dot and the NIC co-teaching professional learning community. The academic program team at Collegiate adapted the practice of co-planning days to convene co-teachers two weeks before the launch of a new unit, starting with six courses of focus: Algebra I, Geometry, English I, English II, Biology, and US History. The co-planning day takes a course-level approach to both content standards and curriculum, as well as planning for accessibility of diverse learners in the way co-teachers apply Universal Design for Learning, specially designed instruction, high-impact co-teaching models, and student accommodations. The **agenda** includes morning sessions focused on data reflection and the modeling of exemplary co-teaching using an upcoming course unit. Later, co-teaching teams have dedicated time to apply the content to their **co-planning and practice**. The Collegiate team continues to build out their implementation with tools and coaching resources, including the **co-teaching scope and sequence and co-teaching vignettes** to illustrate models of strong co-teaching.



English teachers from Collegiate Academies plan collaboratively

The impact of the offsite days has been seen in strong increases in teacher's execution of co-teaching models and in the frequency of co-planning. In addition, as of December 2023, student achievement data was pacing 30% ahead compared to the same week of instruction a year prior, putting Collegiate on track to exceed their annual goal for the academic performance (measured by GPA and course mastery) of students with disabilities and English language learners.

FURTHER LEARNING

Example Co-Planning Day Training Deck

GREEN DOT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Green Dot Student Work Analysis Template

GREEN DOT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Example English I and II Training Deck

COLLEGIATE ACADEMIES

To learn more about how collaborative teaming structures can help you improve learning outcomes for students with disabilities and develop your teachers, see *Opening Doors to Collaboration*.

Green Dot Public Schools California *serves approximately 10,000 students in grades 6–12 across Los Angeles, CA. Focal schools for the practice included Ánimo Watts College Preparatory Academy and Ánimo Mae Jemison Charter Middle School.*

Green Dot Public Schools is a part of the ***Marshall Street Networked Improvement Community,*** *a three-year intentional community of 10 public charter school networks nationwide aiming to make dramatic gains for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty. Collectively, the 10 networks identified over 20 best practices that improve learning outcomes and school culture for students positioned furthest from opportunity. Learn more here.*

Marshall Street

How-To:

Launch Effective Collaborative Teams

OPENING DOORS TO COLLABORATION

A collection of research-to-impact practices developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

How-To: Launch Effective Collaborative Teams

Guidance Document for School and Network Leadership

Introduction 7.2

Common Questions Leaders Face when Supporting Effective Collaborative Teams 7.3

How do we create a shared vision of strong collaboration between general and special educators? 7.3

How do we intentionally staff collaborative teams? 7.4

How do we build collaboration mindsets? 7.6

How do we facilitate relationship-building conversations for collaborative teams? 7.6

Summary 7.8

Appendix 7.9

Professional Development Example from Summit Public Schools and KIPP Northern California 7.9

Team Formation Questions from Livingston Collegiate Academy 7.9

Notes 7.10



Introduction

The push for more inclusive and collaboratively planned and delivered instruction for students with disabilities has gained significant momentum over the past 20 years. While the theoretical outcomes of this type of teaching are positive, **research shows** that putting two teachers together and assigning them the task of collaboration without careful attention to their professional dynamic leads to an underutilized partnership.[1] This finding is validated by the experience of the charter management organizations (CMOs) featured in this collection of research-to-impact practices, **Opening Doors to Collaboration**.

Effective teaming is a critical enabling condition for the success of collaboration efforts. School teams within the Networked Improvement Community (NIC) dedicated substantial resources and energy to ensuring that thoughtful attention was paid to the relationships between pairs of educators implementing the instructional practices detailed in the collection. By doing so, the CMOs ensured that the ongoing planning and teaching done by collaborating educators was highly effective and supported by strong, trusting relationships between the two professionals.

Critical to the success of collaborative teams were the supportive mindsets of the leaders, coaches, and staff across school and district offices, and the relationships between these professionals and collaborating educators. The cross-network collaboration and learning within the NIC led school teams to develop resources to refine the structures and routines for collaboration across their organizations to proactively support the formation of their teams. This was, in large part, due to the recognition that the formation of their teams was an essential element of accelerated progress for students. Further, they found team formation efforts were most dramatically effective when led by school leaders, particularly principals, in partnership with other leaders at the school and network level.

School leaders can intentionally support the formation of effective collaborative teams by:

- attending to strategic staffing,
- building shared inclusive beliefs,
- developing trust between collaborating teachers, and
- establishing clear role delineation.

This guidance document provides school leaders with recommendations and resources that have been used to form effective school teams at Collegiate Academies, Green Dot Public Schools, KIPP Northern California, and Summit Public Schools.

Key Definitions

- **Collaborating teachers** are two teachers — one providing general education services and one providing special education services — who work together to support students with disabilities.
- **Co-teachers** are two teachers — a general education teacher and a special education teacher — who are jointly responsible for a course. They co-assess, co-plan, and co-teach lessons to support all students.
- The term **collaborative teams** refers to both types of teaching partnerships.

Common Questions Leaders Face When Supporting Effective Collaborative Teams

How do we create a shared vision of strong collaboration between general and special educators?

ARTICULATE A CLEAR VISION FOR EXEMPLARY COLLABORATION.

Leaders, at either the school or network level, **generate a vision** for exemplary collaboration between general and special educators. Ideally, the generation process includes other school-based staff, particularly general and special education support team members.

ESTABLISH A CULTURE OF STRONG GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION COLLABORATION AT ALL LEVELS OF THE SCHOOL.

School leaders develop inclusive structures at all levels of their school, beginning with their leadership team. Guidance for this collaboration should come from the vision for collaboration discussed above.

At Green Dot's Ánimo Watts High School, the principal's weekly instructional team meeting serves as the incubator for all decisions related to instruction and major school happenings. By including the special education department chair on that team, the top levels of the school administration are dismantling the silos between general and special educators and programming.

ESTABLISH CLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Collaborative teams often struggle with a lack of clarity concerning roles and responsibilities in their partnerships, causing confusion and placing stress on their working relationships. This can lead to inefficient collaboration, delays in services and core instruction, and widening of existing gaps in students' learning. School leaders can prevent these effects by explicitly outlining what general and special education teachers are responsible for, individually and collectively, within their collaborative partnership.

Examples of strong guidelines for roles and responsibilities for collaborating teachers include the following:

- **Stetson Associates' Roles and Responsibilities of Collaborative Teachers: A Decision-Making Exercise**
- **Longwood Preparatory Academy's (a Blue Engine partner school) Responsibilities of Co-Planning and Co-Teaching**
- **Collegiate's Livingston Collegiate Academy's Co-Teaching Expectations**

As partnerships are forming, share the roles and responsibilities documents with teams so that they can incorporate them into their team-building conversations. This is also a valuable tool for coaches to apply to initial coaching meetings with teams to confirm how the team members will work together to ensure their collective success for students.

How do we intentionally staff collaborative teams?

HIRE WITH INCLUSIVITY AND COLLABORATION IN MIND.

When hiring, leadership teams have an opportunity to steer their school's culture toward stronger collaboration across departments in service of all students' needs.

When interviewing:

- **Share your team's vision for collaboration,** including your rationale for it. Invite candidates to share their reactions to the vision and what they see as the benefits of this type of partnership.
- **Seek examples of strong, professional relationships** with colleagues across departmental lines. How did the candidate establish those relationships? How did they work through challenges in them?
- **Seek examples of collaboration in service of supporting students with special needs.** Ask for examples of how a candidate has collaborated with general or special education colleagues. What did that collaboration entail? How did they leverage colleagues' strengths to support students?

PAIR TEACHERS STRATEGICALLY.

Gather and use teachers' input to create thoughtful collaborative teams.

Using questions **such as these** (co-created by teams from Green Dot and STEM Preparatory Schools), seek input from every teacher on your staff about their experience with collaboration, their working style, and their content comfort and expertise. Use that information to determine which teachers are best suited to be partnered together.

Prioritize pairing special education teachers in content areas where they feel confident.

Content expertise is consistently cited as a key factor in special education teachers' ability to be and feel effective in their collaborative work. Whenever possible, pair them with content that they are confident with to expedite and strengthen the collaborative process.

Introduce collaborating teachers to one another as early as possible.

Our partner schools found that, whenever possible, early introductions help collaborating teachers establish rapport and get to the heart of their work sooner.

Maintain strong partnerships over multiple years.

Wherever possible, keep collaborating relationships and partnerships in place over a number of years to allow individuals to build skill and develop their collaborative practice. During the 2022–23 school year, co-teachers at Green Dot began to see substantial improvements in their students' classwork scores in rooms where co-teachers had been working together for multiple years. Teams cited stronger professional relationships and an ability to understand and leverage each other's styles and strengths as key components of that improvement. At Summit Atlas, general education teachers cited their multiple years' worth of collaboration with their special education co-planner as a key factor in their willingness and ability to seek and take feedback about serving students with disabilities from their colleagues.

Mindset Matters: Collegiate Hiring Practices

At Collegiate Academies, leadership team members state unabashedly that it is every team member's responsibility to serve and support all students. They are more interested in mindset than instructional capacity, and would generally pass on a candidate with more experience of a subject in favor of someone with a growth mindset and less experience. To help assess candidates' shared mindsets and skills, they incorporate scenario questions like these into their interviews:

The following students come into your class. How do you support them?

- A student reading on grade level?
- A student reading three years below grade level?
- A student who is developing their proficiency with English?
- A student with a learning disability?

In the candidate's responses, the hiring team is looking for insight into the extent to which the candidate expresses feeling responsible for each student's outcomes and experience, as well as the ways in which the candidate anticipates collaborating with team members to supplement their own knowledge and instructional skill.

Co-Teaching Staffing Best Practices

Students in priority populations — such as the NIC's focus on students at the intersection of race, class, and ability — need their schools and classrooms to maximize instruction, particularly in general education courses where they are expected to master rigorous content. Co-teaching requires a particularly deep level of collaboration given that two teachers are jointly responsible for the facilitation of an entire class.

School teams must pay special attention when forming co-teaching partnerships, taking key considerations about mindset, beliefs, and expertise into mind:

- **Willingness to collaborate.** Co-teaching requires a high degree of collaboration and communication across the pair of teachers, which some educators are more naturally inclined to than others. It can be helpful to reflect on teachers' mindsets by asking whether both teachers are actively invested in collaborating with a colleague and sharing responsibility for all facets of the classroom, including the outcomes for all students.
- **Classroom culture skills.** It is helpful for co-teachers to have a similar level of competence with establishing and upholding a strong classroom culture. An imbalance in ability or attitude toward classroom management may create a lead/assistant dynamic, resulting in teachers defaulting to the low-impact "one teach, one assist" model more frequently. Not only does this lead to lesser outcomes for students, it also creates a lack of parity in the classroom, which tends to create feelings of frustration and erodes trust within the relationship.
- **Content and teaching experience.** Ideally, both teachers have a solid handle on the content and on their instructional role. Sometimes, staffing realities mean that two less experienced teachers are paired together as co-teachers. However, whenever possible, administrators should work to pair special and general educators who are both a few years into their craft. This allows for power dynamics to be relatively even as both can equally contribute to their shared work.

Green Dot special education administrators created **this guide** for school administrators to help them think through a variety of other considerations as they staff co-taught courses.

How do we build collaboration mindsets?

ENGAGE IN DIRECT, FACILITATED CONVERSATIONS WITH THE ENTIRE STAFF ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION COLLABORATION.

All leaders within a school (and at the network level) must communicate their beliefs that every person on a child's instructional team has valuable perspectives and expertise that need to be leveraged and that effective collaboration among pairs of educators is the foundation for strong outcomes for all students, especially those with disabilities. Communication of these principles can be supported through discussions among leadership team members and then the broader staff based on shared readings on the rationale behind and importance of general and special education collaboration. Recommended readings and discussion questions can be found in the **Appendix**.

How do we facilitate relationship-building conversations for collaborative teams?

PROVIDE AMPLE TIME AND DIRECTION TO COLLABORATIVE TEAMS AS THEY ESTABLISH THEIR RELATIONSHIPS.

Collaborative teams need time before the school year starts to establish their relationships. Allot at least three hours of preservice time for team members to get to know one another, ideally consisting of a combination of formal (meetings and structured conversations) and informal (e.g., lunch, coffee) settings.

Provide teachers with tools, such as **Green Dot's Co-Teaching Partner Planning Guide**, **Livingston Collegiate Academy's** Team Formation Questions, or **Blue Engine's Team Formation Resources**, to guide their initial conversations. Well-planned team formation activities will enable collaborative teams to discuss and work through mission-critical components of their partnership in advance of teaching and planning together, specifically each teacher's:

- experiences in education and vision for their work, specifically related to issues of race, socioeconomics, and disability;
- work and communication styles, teaching experience, and instructional expertise;
- roles and responsibilities within their partnership; and
- preferences and commitments when navigating inevitable conflict.

Schools may also consider crafting a scope and sequence for collaborating teachers' team formation, such as this **Co-Teaching Foundations and Planning Guide** used at Collegiate Academies' schools.

CREATE ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES TO REFLECT ON COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS.

The relationship between collaborative teams needs to be cultivated and supported regularly. By scheduling specific points at which collaborative teams reflect on their relationship and by providing teams with **resources** for doing so, administrators and coaches ensure that teams progress in a healthy way through the stages of team development and continue to grow and strengthen.

More formal reflection within collaborative teams should be explicitly carved into the yearly professional development calendar to ensure it happens. For example, a principal can set aside 45 minutes of each quarterly professional development day to allow collaborating teachers to engage in this conversation with the support of their coaches.

ENSURE THAT TEAMS HAVE REGULAR, PROTECTED TIME FOR COLLABORATION.

As discussed in this collection's **overview** and individual chapters, dedicated collaboration time in the school schedule (at least 45 minutes of biweekly co-planning time and at least 45 minutes of monthly student work analysis time) is critical to collaborative teams' ability to build a strong relationship and productively work together throughout the year.



NIC Co-Teaching Learning Tour participants visit partner schools

Summary

For collaboration among educators to successfully address the needs of our most vulnerable students, collaborative teams and partnerships must be intentionally planned and implemented. When teachers are given the time, resources, and coaching necessary to collectively explore their different mindsets, perspectives, and talents, they are able to strategically partner in service of getting their students, particularly those with disabilities, what they need. Research indicates that the level of trust, parity, and mutual understanding in a collaborative relationship has a massive impact on the team's ability to work in service of students, which is only possible when roles and responsibilities have been carefully established and fostered, and routines for collaboration, communication, and coaching have been structured and maintained.

FURTHER LEARNING

"Co-teaching in Classrooms: Literature review of teachers' perspectives, readiness and knowledge"

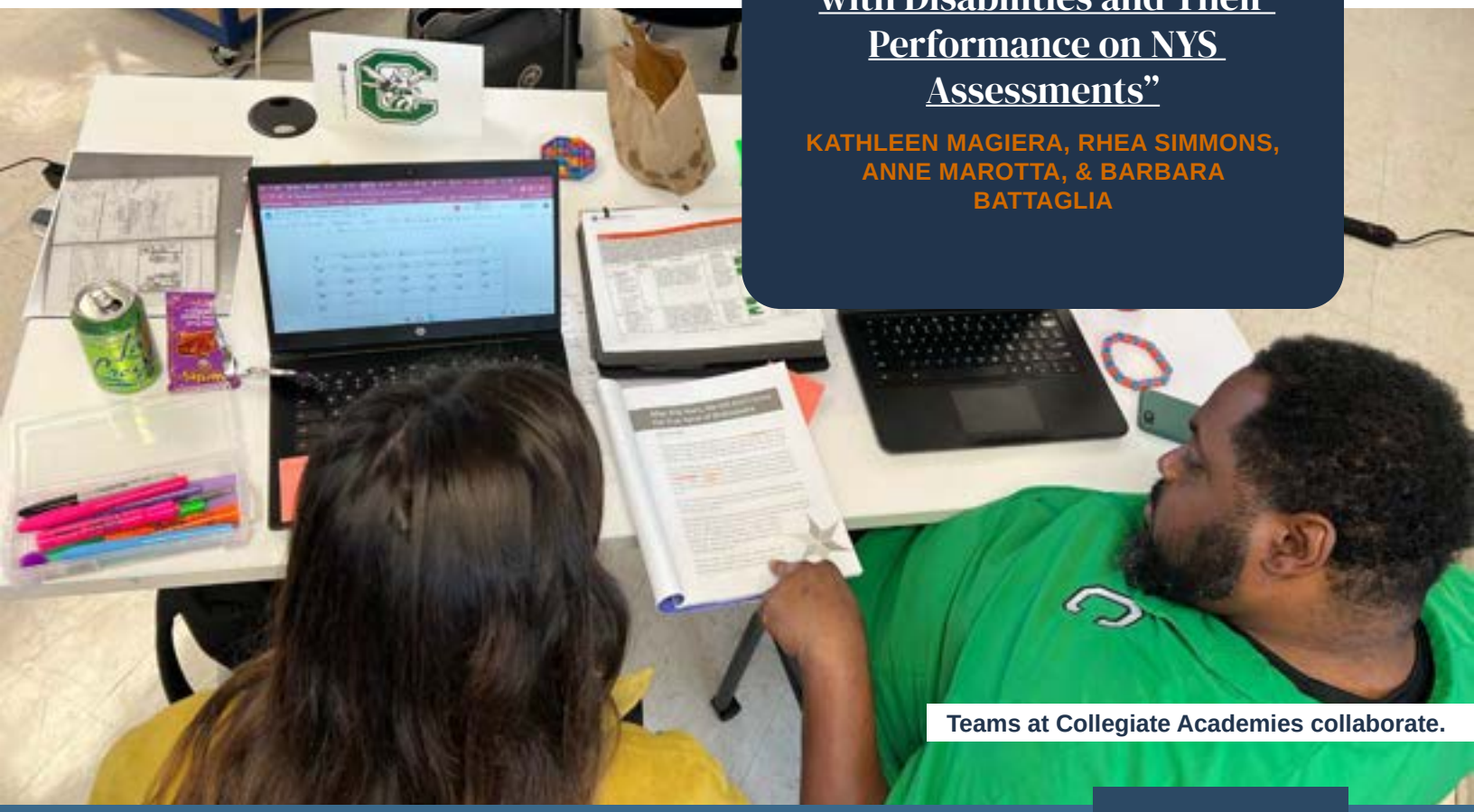
RASHED A. ALDABAS, *JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND PRACTICE*

"Teacher Collaboration in Instructional Teams and Student Achievement"

MATTHEW RONFELDT, SUSANNA OWENS FARMER, KIEL MCQUEEN, & JASON A. GRISSOM, *AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL*

"A Co-Teaching Model: A Response to Students with Disabilities and Their Performance on NYS Assessments"

KATHLEEN MAGIERA, RHEA SIMMONS, ANNE MAROTTA, & BARBARA BATTAGLIA



Teams at Collegiate Academies collaborate.

Appendix

Professional Development Example from Summit Public Schools and KIPP Northern California

In March 2022, the Summit Public Schools team witnessed the power of co-teaching, co-planning, and co-facilitation during site visits to NIC partner schools. This experience prompted the network's director of MTSS to collaborate with the improvement lead at KIPP Northern California to construct a summer professional development session focused on inclusive mindsets. The key principles for strong collaboration underpinning this **PD session** included the following:

- As key stakeholders in the school community, it is our responsibility as leaders to create an environment that enables strong co-teaching (with protected common prep periods, coaching for co-teachers related to co-planning, etc.).
- We value the benefits of a heterogeneous population of students and faculty and build physical and emotional safety for all.
- Every individual deserves respect, and everyone brings unique perspective and expertise to the table in ways that can positively impact students.
- Protected co-planning time must be built into the weekly schedule.
- Strong, trusting teams enable outcomes individuals can't achieve on their own.
- All students are capable of accessing grade-level content with the right support.
- All educators are responsible for supporting all students.

This session served as the launch for the subsequent school year's co-teaching and collaboration initiatives.

Team Formation Questions from Livingston Collegiate Academy

- What's a fun fact related to your background in (subject area) / teaching?
- In your opinion, what is the purpose of cross-department general and special education collaboration? Of co-teaching? Why?
- Review and discuss the network's **co-teaching expectations**.
- What is one thing that you appreciate (about this work)? What is one thing you have a question about?
- When will you plan together? When will you touch base daily?
- How will you, specifically, share the responsibility of supporting all students? How will we hold each other accountable to this shared responsibility?

- What are things that help you operate at your best working relationship with others? Can you give an example?
- What are things that have gone wrong in the past when collaborating with others and how do you think we can avoid them? Can you give an example?

Notes

1 Aldabas, Rashed A. “Co-teaching in Classrooms: Literature review of teachers’ perspective, readiness, and knowledge.” *Journal of Education and Practice* 9, no. 9 (2018).

Marshall Street

How-To:

Establishing Coaching for Collaborative Teams

OPENING DOORS TO COLLABORATION

A collection of research-to-impact practices developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

How-To: Establish Coaching for Collaborative Teams

Guidance Document for School and Network Leadership

Introduction **8.3**

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How do we determine collaborative teams' need for coaching? 8.5

What is the right coaching structure to use? 8.5

How do we create the necessary infrastructure for coaching (and collaboration between coaches)? 8.10

What does it look like to launch a coaching relationship? 8.10

How do we regularly check in on coaching relationships? 8.11

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Introduction

Collaboration between general and special educators has the ability to transform the experience and learning of both students and teachers.[1] However, collaborative work between these two historically siloed departments is neither intuitive nor easy to achieve. Teachers need specific knowledge and skills in order to effectively co-plan, co-assess, and for some, co-teach. When collaboration is not supported, research shows, promising practices fall by the wayside.[2] To meet the diverse needs of students, teams need coaching on their collaboration mindsets, systems, and routines.

Instructional coaching as a form of professional development for teachers has been proven to have a positive effect on both instruction and student achievement.[3] In order to complete the complex task of effective teaching, all educators, regardless of skill level or experience, need support. Coaching is one way to ensure the improvement in both instruction and achievement that leaders desire.

The priority population for the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities (NIC) — that is, Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty — often has significant learning gaps, and closing those gaps requires educators to leverage a wide variety of expertise. Leaders must vigilantly support collaborating teachers[4] to harness their shared talents so that students receive the academic rigor they deserve and the supportive instruction they need to fully access it. Significant time and resources are necessary for collaboration, and coaching ensures that those allocations yield better results.

Coaching was integral to the success of teachers' collaboration at schools across the NIC, including at Collegiate Academies, Green Dot Public Schools, STEM Preparatory Schools, Summit Public Schools, KIPP Northern California, and Ednovate. Teachers enjoyed working together and had time to do so, but they struggled to leverage their shared expertise. Once regular, targeted coaching was added to teachers' collaborative work, students' scores jumped dramatically.

This guide addresses some of the most common questions leaders face when setting up effective coaching of collaborative teams, which we define *as supporting general and special education teachers in their collaborative practices to ensure that their partnership results in excellent outcomes for all students, particularly those with disabilities*. Leaders are encouraged to identify and read the most relevant sections or to read straight through like a step-by-step guide. The suggestions and resources in this guide have been used by NIC school teams to effectively keep their students with disabilities at the forefront when planning and teaching.

How do collaborating teachers and co-teachers compare? For whom is coaching 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.
- **Coaching** is relevant and important for collaborating teachers regardless of the way instructional support is delivered. Aspects of coaching differ depending on whether the teachers are implementing co-teaching, push-in, pull-out, consultant teacher support, or a combination of these services.

Common Questions Leaders Face when Establishing Coaching for Collaborative Teams

How do we determine collaborative teams' needs for coaching?

The NIC found that all collaborating teacher pairs benefited from coaching on their collaboration mindsets, systems, and routines, yet there were different levels of need for this coaching. Most often, collaborating teachers newer to this work required more frequent coaching to teach skills and build routines for collaboration, while established partnerships needed less frequent coaching focused on higher-level skill development and strategic problem-solving.

Coaching for collaborative teams is different from one-on-one instructional coaching in its focus on building effective and efficient partnerships between educators. To define the needs for coaching, the following actions are essential:

ARTICULATE A CLEAR VISION FOR EXEMPLARY COLLABORATION.

School and network leaders generate a **vision for exemplary collaboration** between general and special educators. This vision defines one or more student-centered outcomes, as well as mindsets and behaviors for collaboration across the team.

GATHER DATA ON CURRENT PRACTICES.

School leaders use their vision for strong collaboration to guide **walkthroughs** and conversations with teachers to gather data on current practices and to identify teachers' strengths and needs. This data can inform what supports might be universal for all collaborating teachers, and what coaching supports or strategies might be targeted to specific teaching pairs or subgroups, such as content-area or grade-level partners.

ESTABLISH SPECIFIC GOALS AND OUTCOMES RELATED TO COLLABORATION.

In order for collaborative practices to receive the attention that they need in order to progress, it is important for leaders to be clear on what they want the focus of this coaching time and work to be, keeping in mind both the instructional growth they're hoping to see and the impact on student outcomes that they want the growth to lead to. Once this clarity is established, coaches can narrow in their collaboration-focused coaching on these goals and priorities. For example, a coach might lead a team toward dual goals of instructional growth and student achievement by focusing their time on the specific knowledge and skills needed to effectively communicate mid-lesson on shifts in the lesson design to meet the data-driven needs of learners.

TAKE STOCK OF COLLABORATING TEACHERS' NEED FOR COLLABORATION-FOCUSED COACHING.

It is important for leaders to be realistic when prioritizing which collaborating pairs receive coaching, how much collaboration-focused coaching pairs receive, and when the coaching will take place. School leaders should consider all of the following factors:

- **Teacher Content Experience Levels**
  How much experience does each teacher in the collaborating/co-teaching pair have with their content area and/or curriculum? If they are newer to either or both, more intensive coaching of co-planning will likely be beneficial.
- **Teacher Collaboration Experience Levels**
  How much experience does each person have working in close partnership with another teacher? For teachers who are very new to these practices, explicit coaching and facilitation can help educators work through critical team dynamics and challenges as they arise.
- **Course Types**
  Are there gateway courses for graduation that have been producing vastly different and lower results for students in our priority population than for students on average? These courses and their teachers may be excellent candidates for coaching.
- **Teacher Mindsets**
  When considering a teaching pair's priority level for coaching, consider their mindsets about collaboration. If either teacher has negative mindsets about general education and special education collaboration, it is important for leaders to think carefully about that **teacher's placement and readiness for this work** and/or their place at the school.
- **Teacher Efficacy**
  If a teacher struggles significantly with management, curriculum, and/or instruction, they may not yet be the ideal candidate for this level of intentional and targeted collaboration and coaching. Rather, they may need to develop their skills with a single coach for the current year and aim to be ready for a collaborative partnership the following.

PRIORITIZE THE CADENCE AND FOCUS OF COLLABORATION COACHING FOR EACH PARTNERSHIP.

Leaders determine which collaborating teachers are most in need of collaboration-focused coaching. This information is then paired, as described in the following section, with an understanding of coaches' capacity.

What is the right coaching structure to use?

NIC schools utilized a number of different coaching structures to support collaboration between educators, including single-coach and team-coaching models. Coaching structure decisions require intentional design that considers the strengths and needs of both the collaborating teachers and the coach or coaches supporting each team. Critical factors for consideration include the following:

THE COACHING CADENCE OF EACH COLLABORATING PAIR

After determining who is receiving what level of coaching, leaders must determine the cadence of that support. At STEM Preparatory Schools, leaders “tier” their coaching support based on what the coach is seeing from the co-teaching team. “Exploring” teachers engage in a cycle every one to two weeks; “developing” teachers, every two to three weeks; “experienced” teachers, every three weeks. Using this approach allows school leaders to differentiate the coaching that they provide to their collaborating teachers, guaranteeing that everyone receives coaching support tailored to their readiness and skill level.

THE DETERMINATION OF WHO WILL COACH

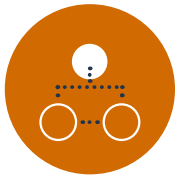
Because coaching for collaboration is often an additional layer of support, it is important for school leaders to be as expansive as possible in their thinking about who can provide that support. Consider who else may have valuable expertise that they can lend to this work to help manage the workload, for example:

- Special education department chairs
- Grade-level team leaders
- Department chairs (if they do not already coach)
- Deans (who have instructional backgrounds and/or significant expertise in special education)
- Curriculum team members or district content specialists

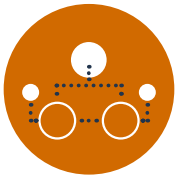
Once leaders are clear on who can coach, they can think more creatively about which coaching structure(s) they will employ.

THE COACHING STRUCTURE FOR EACH COLLABORATING TEAM RECEIVING COACHING

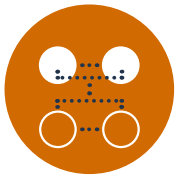
There are three primary coaching models that partner schools in the NIC have used with success:



ONE LEAD COACH
for a collaborating pair



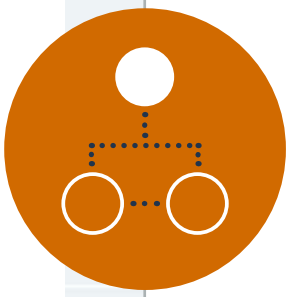
A SUPPLEMENTAL COACH
for a collaborating pair



TWO COACHES
collaboratively coaching a collaborating pair

We highly recommend that school leaders select the coaching structure before the school year begins, as each of the models requires different schedule considerations for coaching routines and will be dependent on staff capacity, coach expertise, and team member schedules. In some instances, these coaching models serve as the primary content coaching for the teaching team alongside coaching on collaboration. In other cases, educators have two types of coaching supports or systems in place that work together to develop content expertise and collaboration mindsets and routines.

ONE LEAD COACH for a collaborating pair



One coach supports both the general and special educator in a collaborating pair, serving as each person's primary content coach as well as their coach for collaborative work.

At STEM Prep School's Math and Science College Preparatory (MSCP) High School, the assistant principal coached a math co-teaching pair, providing individual coaching as well as coaching for the team.

Benefits

Consistent Messaging: Collaborating teachers receive feedback from the same person. The coach is simultaneously coaching the teaching pair on their individual roles and content expertise and on the mindsets and behaviors for meeting the needs of shared students. This model decreases the likelihood that teachers receive conflicting feedback.

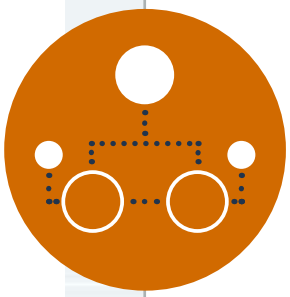
Staff Capacity: This model streamlines the coaching of teams, reducing the number of staff members required to coach the team and simplifying the number of schedules to coordinate for coaching.

Considerations

Coach's Confidence: The coach must feel confident in their ability to navigate the needs of both teachers and to coach across general education and special education content areas. Though MSCP's assistant principal did not have a math background, she was highly experienced with special education and co-teaching and regularly collaborated with STEM Prep's director of mathematics to support her teacher teams. Thus, she felt capable of leading the teachers who had each taught math for two years.

Collaboration Among Coaches: A culture of shared support and responsibility must exist with this model so the lead coach and collaborating teachers can supplement their coaching when needed. At MSCP, when the assistant principal recognizes a need from her team related to complex math content, she collaborates directly with STEM Prep School's director of mathematics or invites her to join a coaching conversation to provide support.

A SUPPLEMENTAL COACH for a collaborating pair



Each collaborating pair has a dedicated coach for their partnership in addition to their own individual coaches.

At Rosenwald Collegiate Academy, the school's director of scholar support coached the Geometry co-teaching team once a week on adapting instruction for their students with disabilities. She also met weekly with the special education teacher for an individual coaching session, as the school's director of curriculum and instruction did with the math teacher.

At Ednovate, a Blue Engine coach met with co-teaching pairs weekly. Each Ednovate teacher also had their own individual, school-based coach for instruction.

Benefits

Focus on Collaboration: Collaborating teachers are able to focus exclusively on their work together in service of students' needs. Coaching time is uniquely tailored to their work as a team and focused on team formation, data analysis, instructional planning, and when relevant, co-teaching.

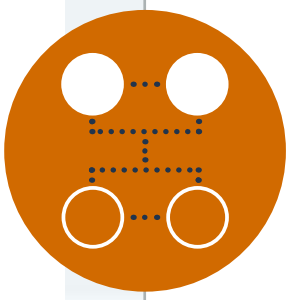
Staffing Flexibility: Because the coaching role can be performed by an external coach, this model provides flexibility for school leaders looking to incorporate expertise and support even if they do not have staff capacity.

Considerations

Scheduling: This model requires thoughtful scheduling. Leaders need to develop site-based schedules that protect time for teachers to engage in routine supplemental coaching focused on collaboration with their teaching partners.

Coach Communication: Coaches need clear lines of and systems for communication so that all staff supporting the two teachers are aligned on what is being discussed and worked on in individual and supplemental coaching sessions. Without this system for communication, teachers are likely to receive conflicting feedback on their instructional next steps and will struggle to prioritize their next moves.

TWO COACHES collaboratively supporting a collaborating pair



Two different coaches (one focused on special education, one focused on general education content) come together to co-coach a collaborating teaching pair.

At MSCP, the director of special education co-coached a math co-teaching pair with the director of mathematics. The two coaches conducted all observations and debriefs together and met together before and after coaching sessions to plan next steps.

Benefits

Building Capacity in Coaches: This model can be used to support the growth of a coach until they are confident in their ability to support outside of their own expertise. STEM Prep's director of mathematics cited her co-coaching with the director of special education as key to her ability to effectively coach special educators in future years in a one-lead-coach model.

Ensuring Deep, Aligned Support: In this model, everyone remains fully aware of and aligned on the work that is happening with both teachers. This allows coaches to identify trends and needs across pairs that can inform professional development areas of focus or guide the development of new or updated guidance to benefit educators in serving all students.

Considerations

Coaches' Relationships and Pairings: School administrators will need to invest time and energy in the formation of these coaching teams similar to their investment in the creation of teaching teams. It is important to plan proactively and strategically to develop and support these coaches to work together in service of their teaching pairs, and ultimately, the students they aim to serve.

Coach Communication: \Coaches need clear lines of communication and systems to ensure that all who are supporting the two teachers are aligned on what they are discussing and working on with teaching pairs. Coaching teams will want to develop norms and routines around communication and follow-up so they have clear roles and responsibilities that reinforce their collective goals for team development.

Staff Capacity: This model is resource-intensive. It requires significant amounts of coaches' time. Coaches' workloads, including the number of individuals and teams they coach, need to be planned thoughtfully so they have the time and capacity to reach their desired outcomes.

How do we create the necessary infrastructure for coaching (and collaboration between coaches)?

System infrastructure for coaching needs to be considered at the individual, teacher-team, and school levels and may also include infrastructure at the department or district level.

BUILD PROTECTED TIME INTO THE SCHOOL TRAINING AND TEACHING SCHEDULES.

This should include time for all of the following:

- Collaborating teachers to meet regularly. Ideally, teams will meet at least one period weekly if not more frequently.
- Collaborating coaches to meet regularly. If two coaches are collaboratively coaching a pair, their coaching schedules and other priorities need to support shared attendance at coaching activities and take into account the need for coaches to observe and debrief with co-teachers on a regular basis. For example, STEM Prep co-coaches held regular pre- and post-coaching huddles together to review data, establish priorities, and debrief their coaching meetings to reflect on improvements and coordinate next steps.
- Collaborating coaches and teachers to meet and launch their work together before the school year starts.

PROVIDE COACHES WITH THE RESOURCES NECESSARY TO ENGAGE IN STRONG, VISION-ALIGNED COACHING.

Providing resources like the examples below, which can be adapted to suit both co-teachers and other collaborating teachers, will improve coaching and help maintain a school's vision for teacher collaboration.

- **Clear roles and responsibilities for collaborating teachers**
- **Coaching agendas**
- Rubrics and criteria for exemplary **co-planning** and **co-teaching**
- Observation tools (like **Blue Engine's** and **Collegiate Academies'**)

What does it look like to launch a coaching relationship?

DISTINGUISH COLLABORATION COACHING FROM OTHER, ROLE-SPECIFIC COACHING.

It is the responsibility of coaches to let collaborating teachers know that their work together is specifically focused on the team's collaboration in service of meeting the needs of all students, particularly those with disabilities. Coaches have a responsibility to call attention to disparities in experiences and outcomes for subgroups of students like students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and students experiencing homelessness, and to work with the teacher teams to identify ways in which they can lean on and use each other's presence and expertise to provide high-impact support.

The unique role of collaboration-focused coaching is to support general and special educators':

- establishing and upholding a strong and trusting relationship;
- utilizing student data to understand the needs of all students, particularly those with disabilities;
- leveraging each other's expertise to bolster their lessons and supports for all students;
- effective co-planning to ensure alignment, rigor, and accessibility; and
- for co-teachers, planning for and implementing high-impact co-teaching models that make optimal use of their shared presence in the classroom.

ESTABLISH COMMUNICATION EXPECTATIONS AND STRUCTURES.

Teachers and coaches — particularly collaborating teachers who are working with multiple coaches — should proactively align on communication methods and expectations to ensure feedback is manageable and aligned across coaches for the team. Ideally, this happens before the start of the school year during summer professional development preservice and focuses on systematized methods of collaboration and communication across coaching domains (i.e., collaboration and content-area guidance) using **model resources** to establish norms. Such systems should consider how coaching feedback will be prioritized for teacher teams and how it will reinforce content and skill development in all domains.

How do we regularly check in on coaching relationships?

ENSURE COLLABORATING TEACHERS FEEL SUPPORTED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

As the school year progresses and as collaborating teachers establish routines with each other and with their coach, it is important to step back from the day-to-day to monitor the progress of the coaching relationship. This can take place in a variety of ways, for example:

- Coaches or school leaders can have one-on-one meetings with teachers at the middle of the year to monitor their progress, ongoing capacity, and satisfaction with both coaching and their collaborating teacher.
- School leaders can administer a teacher survey to gather feedback on coaching relationships and use the data to make adjustments to how coaching is executed.

Summary

Instructional coaching has often focused on content expertise, not collaboration across educators serving the same students. Collaborating with colleagues around data and instructional planning isn't often covered in teacher preparation programs, and it's not necessarily intuitive for educators. As more collaboration across special education and general education occurs in classrooms, teaching teams need support to learn how to collaborate effectively to leverage their joint expertise and build their mindsets and skill to move their practice forward together. This document addresses some of the key components of effective coaching of collaborating teachers, which requires special attention to be paid to how co-teachers work together while teaching and planning. Regular, vision-aligned coaching of collaborating teachers is the key way to reinforce all aspects of good co-teaching and ensure every student has their needs met in the classroom.

Appendix

Notes

1 Hehir et al., *A Summary of the Evidence*

2 Solis et al., “Collaborative Models of Instruction”

3 Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan, “The Effect of Teaching Coaching”

4 We use the term *collaborating teachers* to mean a general and special educator working together to support a set of students.

References

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Solis, Michael, Sharon Vaughn, Elizabeth Swanson, and Lisa Mcculley. “Collaborative Models of Instruction: The Empirical Foundations of Inclusion and Co-Teaching.” *Psychology in the Schools* 49, no. 5 (2012). **https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21606**

Marshall Street

Conclusion

OPENING DOORS TO COLLABORATION

A collection of research-to-impact practices developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

Conclusion

Too often, special education is siloed within schools. Special educators, tasked with meeting the varied needs of students with disabilities, are made to do so largely on their own, which leads to a great disparity between the content expertise that students with and without disabilities receive on a daily basis. Additionally, because being a siloed special educator is particularly challenging, teacher turnover rates in this field continue to rise, meaning that the students who are often furthest from opportunity are being taught by more and more inexperienced teachers. While special education teachers have specific training, students with disabilities benefit most from a collaborative approach that engages multiple educators to meet their unique needs. In order to improve outcomes for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty, schools must adopt inclusive mindsets and practices and improve collaboration between general and special educators at all levels of America's education system.

Over the course of three years, the Marshall Street Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities (NIC) saw teachers and leaders from 10 participating charter networks implement, study, and adjust various best practices for improving outcomes for the target population of students. This collection — itself an outcome of the work these schools have done — describes some of the strongest of these practices, giving particular attention to collaboration between general and special educators, based on the understanding that improving this collaboration leads to improved educational experiences and outcomes for all students. It highlights three best practices: co-planning, student work analysis, and a gradual release model to optimize co-teachers. There is one case study showing what this work can look like when done well. The collection also includes guidance documents about effectively forming collaborative teams and supporting those teams with strong coaching.



The work highlighted in these pages has improved student outcomes over the course of the NIC because of the implementation of strong collaborative practices and support structures. Intentional co-planning, in particular, led to strong measurable improvements in

student achievement. At **Collegiate Academies**, the percentage of students meeting their IEP plan goals more than doubled in the two years following the implementation of co-planning. At **STEM Prep**, the combination of co-planning and collaboration coaching led to the percentage of students with disabilities achieving a B or higher doubling in a single semester. **Summit Public Schools** implemented a form of co-planning and saw an increase in skill mastery for students with IEPs of almost 20%.

Some practices took root at a classroom level and showed similarly strong results. When looking at student work is approached with a collaborative lens, the elevated rigor of the conversation leads to improved outcomes for students. One classroom at **Ednovate** shifted to interdisciplinary student work analysis, which led to an almost 20% increase in their course pass rate as they were able to better focus on the specific needs of their students. At **Green Dot Public Schools**, an increased focus on collaborative student work analysis led to 84% of students passing their co-taught classes in just a single semester.

Key Takeaways

COLLABORATION STARTS NOW.

It is very rare for a school system to consider a new approach and have the structures in place to flawlessly implement that new approach right away. Collaboration is no exception; in fact, creating the conditions that enable highly effective collaborative practices requires a great deal of time, energy, and staff. However, by delaying implementation until all of those systems are in place, leaders rob students of the opportunity to be supported by teachers working together. Instead, start now! Collaboration is a spectrum, and while not all schools are in a place where all classrooms can be co-taught, all schools can ensure that general and special educators have some protected co-planning time, which is a start. Collaboration, in any form, is the first step on the road to more equitable support for all students, particularly students with disabilities.

ADDITIONAL EDUCATORS MEANS ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS.

Effective teacher collaboration is a gift for students. When done well, it allows teachers to adjust small groups and use differentiated instruction in many more ways than they would be able to solo. Co-teaching increases the amount of expertise in the classroom, particularly when general and special educators are effectively collaborating with one another on a regular basis. All of this means that more students, particularly those with disabilities, are given increased access to learning opportunities.

CO-PLANNING MUST BE A DELIBERATE ACTION.

In order for collaboration between educators to be effective, there must be specific time set aside for deliberate co-planning. Not only that, but the time must be used intentionally to increase access to learning for all students. The collaborating teachers and co-teachers in the NIC found that simply meeting together was not enough. Rather, meeting with a plan and with support led to the growth in practice and student impact that they were looking for.

IMPROVING COLLABORATION MUST BE A WHOLE-SCHOOL (OR NETWORK) EFFORT.

Putting two or more educators in a room together, while a step in the right direction, will not lead to improved student access or outcomes. Improving collaboration requires a systematic approach, starting at the leadership level. Just as general and special educators need to work together intentionally, instructional leaders must work together with special education directors to ensure that inclusive mindsets and enabling conditions are in place. Only when all individuals within a school are working together will true classroom-level collaboration be at its most effective.

The three chapters and two guidance documents in this collection lay out the key components of effective collaboration.

Put together, these components set the stage for collaborative work that supports all teachers to better support all students, while simultaneously growing the capacity of leaders within the system. The participating members of the NIC found that as they honed their collaborative skills, student learning outcomes increased at a greater rate. It is a misconception, however, that these components cannot be implemented until each one is carefully manicured and perfected. Rather, we urge school and system leaders to start now. Each school system has different needs, but prioritizing collaboration is an invaluable use of time and resources that will lead to improved equity and student outcomes.



Networked Improvement Community

FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities (NIC), a group of 10 public charter school networks serving more than 75,000 students nationwide, identified the best practices through their work between 2019 and 2023.

Led by Marshall Street at Summit Public Schools, in partnership with technical assistance providers NIRN, RTI International, SRI International, and SWIFT Education Center, the purpose of the three-year NIC was to systematically improve the way our education system serves Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty and share these solutions with school systems everywhere.

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