



# CO-TEACHING PRACTICE PROFILE

# Co-Teaching Practice Profile

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# Introduction

## Co-Teaching Practice Profile Version 1.0

### Guiding Principles and Terms

The Co-teaching Practice Profile defines the essential attributes of an equitable co-taught learning environment, which is inclusive of each and every learner.

Outlining four core competencies, this practice profile document aims to provide both educators and leaders a framework to promote and support inclusive and equitable co-taught classrooms. The core competencies include:

- **Designing Physical Space and Functional Structures,**
- **Planning Learning Experiences for All Learners,**
- **Delivering Targeted, Individualized Instruction, and**
- **Assessing Student Learning and Providing Feedback.**

The Co-teaching Practice Profile serves as a starting point for practitioners to examine their practice and to implement change at a classroom and school level. Educators at every level may find the practical use of this tool in multiple ways, including:

- **Informing the practice of educators:** as educators build reflection into their daily practice, this tool can help identify areas of strength and needs for teachers, and also promote goal setting in a specific competency.
- **Professional development of educators:** as leaders work to build co-teaching teams, this tool can serve as a basis for developing a shared vision of inclusive and equitable co-teaching practices amongst a district, school, or team.
- **Training and coaching of educators:** as educators and coaches work with preservice teachers or new hires, this framework can build an understanding of inclusive co-teaching practices and building expectations. Furthermore, this tool can cast a wide net to align colleagues, including support services, to a vision or mission (e.g., guidance, social work, paraprofessionals, and psychologists).
- **Building-wide audit:** as buildings and districts look to quantify the degree of inclusive co-teaching practices, and this tool can be used to audit current practices and to inform system change.

Practice Profiles identify the core components of a program, innovation, practice, or intervention, and describe the key activities that are associated with each core component. Practice profiles enable a program to be teachable, learnable, and

doable in typical human service settings Practice Profiles employ three rubric headings: Expected, Developmental, and Unacceptable (descriptions are from [Practice Profile Planning](#)) (Metz, 2016).

**Expected/ Proficient** – includes activities that exemplify practitioners who are able to generalize required skills and abilities to a wide range of settings and contexts, use these skills consistently and independently, and sustain these skills over time while continuing to grow and improve in their position. Phrases used to describe expected/proficient activities may include “consistently”, “all of the time”, and “in a broad range of contexts.”

**Developmental** – includes activities that exemplify practitioners who are able to implement required skills and abilities, but in a more limited range of contexts and settings, use these skills inconsistently or need a supervisor or coach consultation to complete or successfully apply skills, and would benefit from a coaching agenda that targets particular skills for improvement in order to move practitioners into the “expected/proficient” category. Phrases used to describe developmental activities may include “some of the time”, “somewhat inconsistently”, and “in a limited range of contexts.” This section helps to define the coaching agenda.

**Unacceptable Use in Practice**— includes activities that exemplify practitioners who are not yet able to implement the required skills or abilities in any context. Often, if practitioners’ work is falling into the unacceptable category, there may be challenges related to the overall implementation infrastructure. For example, there may be issues related to how they are selecting or training staff, managing the new program model, or using data to inform continuous improvement. Activities in the unacceptable variation may include phrases such as, “none of the time”, and, “inconsistently.” The section also should include unacceptable activity that is beyond the absence of, or opposite of, activity articulated in the developmental or expected categories (Metz, 2016).

## Glossary of Terms

(please refer back to the glossary as you review the document):

**Co-Teaching:** Two licensed educators, often (though not always) a special education teacher and a general education teacher, sharing equal responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction, as well as learning to meet the diverse needs of students in a shared space.

**Co-Plan-Co-Serve-Co-Learn (C3)<sup>TM</sup>:** C3 is one step in a systemic change process. It is intended to proactively serve a heterogeneous group of all learners within a grade level and content area. Such team alignment occurs only after a district has completed significant work in the areas of the history of educational marginalization, asset versus deficit-based practices, identity development, research across disciplines in support of operationalizing equity, development of

equity non-negotiables, and the completion of an equity audit to leverage systemic change. For more information, see <https://www.icsequity.org/> (ICSEquity n.d.).

**Clustering:** When students with disabilities are clustered into one classroom disproportionately to the number of students with disabilities at any specific grade level.

**Educational Equity:** Every learner has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, across race, gender, ethnicity, language, ability, sexual orientation, family background, or family income (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction n.d.).

**Education Team:** School personnel involved in co-teaching are generally two or more licensed teachers or related services staff.

**EL:** English Learner

**Functional Structures:** How a school organizes its resources, time, space, and personnel for maximum effect on student learning.

**High Leverage Practices:** [\*High-Leverage Practices in Special Education\*](#) is the final product of the HLP Writing Team, a collaborative effort between the Council for Exceptional Children and the CEEDAR Center. It describes four interrelated areas of teacher practice and breaks down 22 practices that teachers should be taught and master. *High-Leverage Practices in Special Education* offers a roadmap for student success that will benefit teacher educators, administrators, policy makers, and teachers alike (McLeskey et al. 2017).

**Incidental Benefit:** Where one or more students without disabilities benefit from the special education and related services, and supplementary aids and services provided to a student with a disability in accordance with the student's IEP (instruction by a special education teacher beyond the scope of incidental benefit is considered special education) (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2013).

**Individualized Education Program (IEP):** The yearlong collaborative plan developed by a team including the learner and his or her family along with general and special education teachers, administrators and learner services personnel that indicates the child's annual goals, and specifies the special education and related services which the child will receive.

**Individualized Learning Plan (ILP):** Plan is often based on a learner's profile that creates a path for learners to follow to reach learning targets. This creates a specific plan for each learner to develop and implement academic, social, or emotional goals.

**Instructional scaffolding:** Process through which a teacher adds supports for students in order to enhance learning and aid in the mastery of tasks. The teacher does this by systematically building on students' experiences and knowledge as they are learning new skills. As the students master the assigned tasks, the supports are gradually removed (The Iris Center, 2005).

**Learner Agency:** Evidenced through learners' engagement in their own learning through voice, choice, reflection, and self-direction.

**Learner Goals:** Specific objectives towards which learners are working. These can include academic, social, behavioral, and emotional goals.

**Learner Profile:** Describes the way a learner learns best, including interests, strengths, growth opportunities, and can include academic, social, and emotional goals. This is often co-created with a teacher.

**OT:** Occupational Therapy

**Representative Distribution:** A subset of a population that seeks to accurately reflect the characteristics of the larger group.

**SLP:** Speech and Language Professional

**Specially Designed Instruction (SDI):** SDI in Special Education is federally mandated through IDEA. Special education or specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the student that result from the student's disability, and ensure access of the student to the general curriculum, so the student can meet the educational standards of the public agency that apply to all students.

**Specialized Instruction:** Instruction for learners who have specific needs that require intentionally planned instruction to address those needs, but is not required by IDEA (e.g., other identifications such as English learners, at-risk, or gifted and talented).

**Stakeholder:** Individuals or groups invested in learner's academic, social, emotional life, including families, teachers, school administrators, staff members, and community members.

**Supportive Facilitation:** Another teacher or provider of related services who supports or instructs an individual learner or small group of students within the general education classroom. The intent is not to provide core content, but to facilitate skills, interventions, or specially designed instruction. Related service staff also demonstrate how to embed accommodations or modifications within the setting in which they will be used. The support of the additional staff person assumes their collaboration when planning the instructional period (Florida Inclusion Network, n.d.).

# 1. Designing Physical Space and Functional Structures

## 1.a. Physical Space and Functional Structures

### Contributions to Co-Teaching Practice

When co-teaching partners intentionally and collaboratively design physical spaces and functional structures for all learners, they allow for equitable and inclusive learning environments that promote learning and achievement.

### Expected Use in Practice

- There is evidence that the environment was intentionally designed to provide accessibility and flexibility for academic, physical, social, and emotional learning.
- Flexible learner groupings occur over 70% of the instructional week within the classroom, with both teachers controlling and utilizing the space. When small groups are used, groups stay within the classroom and are not removed to a segregated setting in the building.
- The classroom makeup is intentionally developed for representative distribution that avoids clustering and is reflective of the school's learners across all sub-categories.

### Developmental Use in Practice

- There is some evidence that physical learning spaces (e.g., equipment, materials, space, and arrangement) were considered and designed based on an understanding of learner variability and specially designed instruction needs.
- Flexible groupings are utilized less than 70% over the course of the instructional week. When used, some groups are segregated to the hallway or another space, but the groups are not always the same makeup.
- Co-taught classrooms are planned with a representative distribution of students, yet are limited to one or two classrooms based on availability or readiness of staff members or resources.

### Unacceptable Use in Practice

- There is no evidence that learner variability and specially designed instruction needs were considered. Desks may be arranged in rows interfering with small groupings, some areas are inaccessible to some learners, and materials are presented in only one way, no observable use of technology to make materials more accessible.
- A majority of the instruction over the course of the week is done in whole group instruction, and when small grouping is attempted, the group makeups

are consistently the same. One teacher controls the space, with the second teacher appearing to be a guest in the classroom.

- The classroom makeup is used to cluster a large homogenous group of students with the same label or eligibility for the ease of scheduling teachers or students.

## **1.b. Relationships, roles and responsibilities**

### **Expected Use in Practice**

- Co-teachers model positive and collaborative relationships to create a strong partner team.
- Co-teaching partners enjoy parity of roles and responsibilities – they are treated as equals, both mutually and by learners, although they may not necessarily perform identical tasks.
- Co-teaching partners share the collective responsibility for instruction, structures, routines, norms, and procedures through a defined and regular planning time.
- Co-teaching partners adjust and adapt their roles and responsibilities quickly and efficiently through non-verbal communication and mini-conferences as learner needs are assessed during the lesson.
- When communicating with each other or with stakeholders, language is inclusive, being asset-based and person-first and reflective of 'our' students.
- Both teachers take equal responsibility for all learners in the classroom regarding classroom safety.

### **Developmental Use in Practice**

- Efforts are visible in the development of a positive and collaborative relationship, yet some confusion or frustration may be evident.
- There is ambiguity around roles and responsibilities. Learners respond either by continuing to consider one teacher, the lead teacher, or by intentionally playing one teacher against the other.
- There are some collective responsibilities for instruction, structures, routines, norms, and procedures as planning time is used inconsistently or is at times inefficient.
- Learner needs are assessed, and instruction is adjusted after the lesson is over and is not adjusted or adapted during teachable moments.
- Teachers understand the concept of inclusive language, but teachers are still transitioning, and the language used is inconsistent.
- While both teachers take responsibility for all learners' behaviors, one teacher takes the primary role or has stronger skills in de-escalation, non-violent crisis intervention, or positive behavior intervention.

## Unacceptable Use in Practice

- There is visible animosity between the two teachers, or they ignore one another in the classroom.
- There is a disparity or imbalance of power between the co-teaching partners to each other or by learners.
- One teacher bears the responsibility for lesson planning, instruction, structures, routines, and classroom norms and procedures. There is no defined and regular planning time.
- There is no evidence of nonverbal communication or mini-conferences during the co-teaching time, and roles and responsibilities are not adjusted to meet learner's needs.
- Language is exclusive and reflects 'your' and 'my' learners.
- There is only one teacher in the room who consistently responds to behavior or safety needs, or is seen as being responsible for the behavior or safety needs of a certain group of learners.

# 2. Planning Learning Experiences for All Learners

## 2.a. Pre-Planning and Co-Teaching Partners prepare for Co-Planning sessions

### Contributions to Co-Teaching Practice

When education teams plan for a co-taught environment, learner efficacy, engagement, and self-regulation increase. This contributes to the mastery of content standards. When engaged in collaborative planning, education teams intentionally plan specially designed instruction to support Individualized Learner Plans (ILP), including IEP's, EL Plans, At-Risk Plans, etc. This planning promotes educational equity by ensuring learner agency and ownership to meet learning targets.

### Expected Use in Practice

- Administration provides professional learning for all staff so that co-teaching partners can be equally competent to use the instructional materials, provide instruction, and support learner social-emotional growth.
- Co-teaching partners are aware of each, and every learner's needs — partners have access to all student-related data and documentation in shared documents.
- Co-teaching partners develop and review formative student assessment data and have a shared understanding of grade-level learning targets.
- Co-teaching partners review curriculum, select language and content to address upcoming lessons, and identify background knowledge students need to be successful.
- When accessing grade-level curriculum, co-teaching partners devise learning targets on the basis of state standards.

### Developmental Use in Practice

- Professional development is offered to all teachers but may not be mandatory for certain teacher groups.
- Co-teaching partners have access to and are aware of learner related data and documentation, but one teacher takes the primary responsibility for the group or certain groups of students.
- Co-teaching partners review the assessment data together, and are developing a shared agreement of grade-level learning targets so they can assess students to the same fidelity and expectations around high achievement.

- Co-teaching partners make every effort to review curriculum, select language and content to address upcoming lessons, and identify background knowledge students need to be successful, but this is done inconsistently, which makes it difficult to monitor the effectiveness of the co-teaching classroom.
- Co-teaching partners don't consider standards and simply rely on the grade level curriculum to set learning targets.

### **Unacceptable Use in Practice**

- Administration provides no professional learning to either of the teaching partners, or provides separate professional development opportunities based on teacher licensure areas (e.g., providing instructional professional development to the teachers considered the content lead, or EL professional development only for EL teachers).
- Specialists only have access to IEPs and other student-related needs around academics or behaviors, or only one teacher has access to student information systems or progress monitoring tools.
- There are different expectations of learning targets for different groups of students, and teachers do not review formative learner assessment data together.
- The general education teacher selects language and content to address upcoming lessons and depends on the specialist to identify background knowledge if it is identified at all.
- Only one teacher has access to the grade-level curriculum.

## **2.b. Collaborative Planning**

### **Expected Use in Practice**

- Administration provides a minimum of 30 minutes daily of dedicated time within the building schedule for co-planning, where partners finalize the different aspects of the lesson either in a face-to-face meeting or using an agreed upon virtual platform.
- There is an agreed upon planning template to capture decisions made in the co-planning session.
- Each and every student's progress on formative and summative assessments are used to co-determine:
  - planning instructional objectives,
  - how to incorporate specially designed instruction,
  - the supports needed for content and instructional objectives,
  - how to address and evaluate concepts and skills, co-develop and document learner success criteria, and
  - instructional roles and responsibilities related to the choice of instructional models.

### **Developmental Use in Practice**

- Administration has provided scheduled time during the week for co-planning, but it does not occur daily.
- There is an agreed upon template in place, but it is not used consistently or effectively.
- The planning is primarily the work of one of the co-teaching partners.

### **Unacceptable Use in Practice**

- Administrators have not scheduled time for teachers to co-plan, causing them to find time before or after the workday or during their lunch hour.
- There is no agreed upon template for use in co-planning sessions.
- The teachers follow the curriculum pacing guide with no regard for the student's learning needs and without considering formative assessment data. General education teachers often have created the lesson, and special educators adapt and modify for students with disabilities after-the-fact.

## **2.c. Post-Planning Instruction Preparation**

### **Expected Use in Practice**

- Each co-teaching partner completes various lesson planning tasks (such as instructional scaffolding activities) assigned within the planning template.

### **Developmental Use in Practice**

- The expectation is that the same teacher is always tasked with material preparation.

### **Unacceptable Use in Practice**

- There is inconsistency in who prepares materials prior to the lesson delivery.

# 3. Delivering Targeted, Individualized Instruction

## 3.a. Instruction uses high leverage instructional strategies

### Contributions to Co-Teaching Practice

When education teams co-teach, their instruction consistently ensures authentic learner engagement, learner development, and outcomes that improve with an intense focus on individualization and small group experiences.

### Expected Use in Practice

- Learning materials are represented using multiple modalities (visual, auditory, tactile, and concrete.)
- Instruction intentionally embeds SDI, adjusting as needed based on student progress in the general curriculum.
- All staff interact with all students assuming collective responsibility for the classroom environment, instruction, and behavior support.
- Co-teaching partners utilize visible options (use of assistive technology, stations with materials, spaces for independent or small group interaction, visual or audio cues) for engaging with the lesson or learning target.
- Co-teaching partners interchangeably confer with all students, who fluently converse about their own learning goals and the activities that will lead them to achieve those goals.
- Flexible grouping is used a minimum of 70% of the instructional week, which allows for peer support and peer models so that learners engage with peers around learning targets.
- Co-teaching partners collaborate during the co-teaching session, modeling the use of effective collaboration behaviors (e.g., sharing ideas, active listening, questioning, planning, problem-solving, negotiating) to develop and adjust instructional or behavioral plans on the spot during the class period to maximize student learning.
- Positive and constructive formative feedback is provided throughout the entire instruction period to guide all students' learning and behavior.
- Additional staff (e.g., EL, OT, SLP) supplement the small group or station models planned in the co-taught classroom, providing supportive facilitation in the general education environment to teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings, so that students learn to use new knowledge and skills in the natural environment and can maintain the use of these skills independently in the absence of ongoing instruction.

- Assistive technology is available for each and every student based on their needs. Co-teaching partners use augmentative and alternative communication devices and assistive and instructional technology products to promote student learning and independence. Co-Teachers make informed instructional decisions grounded in evidence, professional wisdom, and students' IEP goals (McLeskey et al. 2017).

### **Developmental Use in Practice**

- More than one modality is used during instruction but are not intentionally aligned to learner needs.
- SDI occurs within the general education setting but is not related to the current classroom learning targets.
- There is still a noticeable preference for students to interact with staff based on their ability status and teacher.
- Visible options are most often utilized by licensed specialists (use of assistive technology, stations with materials, spaces for independent or small group interaction, visual or audio cues) for engaging with the lesson or learning target.
- The general education teacher has the primary responsibility of conferring with general education students to converse about their own learning goals and activities that will lead them to achieve them, and the specialist has this same responsibility for students with IEPs or Learning Plans.
- Flexible grouping is emerging as a practice and evident, but the practice has not evolved to reflect 70% of the instructional week.
- There is some evidence of effective collaborative behaviors, but there is also evidence that one teacher takes the lead and makes unilateral decisions.
- Positive and constructive formative feedback is provided sporadically throughout the instructional period (e.g., providing only an exit ticket), or is the feedback is limited to a few or a select group of learners.
- Supportive facilitation is used to teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings so that students learn to use new knowledge and skills in the natural environment and can maintain the use of these skills independently in the absence of ongoing instruction, however, the practice is disconnected to the planned co-taught lessons.
- Assistive technology is only available for some learners based on their individual needs or is limited to learners who require it due to their IEP goals.

### **Unacceptable Use in Practice**

- Instruction is provided using only one modality (visual, auditory, tactile, and concrete.)
- SDI happens in a different space, a segregated space, or is not appropriate to the needs of the learner.

- Responsibility for students is based on their ability status (e.g., general ed. teacher focuses on students with ILPs and special education teacher focuses on students with IEPs).
- There is no use of assistive technology, stations with materials, spaces for independent or small group interaction, visual or audio cues for engaging with the lesson or learning target.
- Goals are teacher determined, and activities are teacher-directed without student input or knowledge of their own goals.
- Flexible grouping is rarely used, or flexible grouping is used to track learners of similar or same skill level.
- There is no evidence of co-teaching partners collaborating together during the co-teaching session.
- There is no effort to provide immediate feedback that will guide students' learning and behavior.
- Students are routinely removed from the co-teaching environment to access related services or to be taught specific skills.
- Assistive technology is not available for any student within the general education environment.

# 4. Assessing Student Learning and Providing Feedback

## 4.a. Co Assessing Learning Targets

### Contributions to Co-Teaching Practice

In a co-taught classroom, education teams believe that all learners can and will succeed and provide opportunities to find the expert learner in every child. When assessment data is gathered and analyzed, teams intentionally guide instruction and future assessment practices. Additionally, by providing students ongoing, consistent, supportive, sensitive, and meaningful feedback, co-teachers can reduce students' discrepancies between current understandings and performance and their desired learning goals.

### Expected Use in Practice

- Co-teaching partners routinely manage and engage in ongoing data collection using curriculum-based measures, informal classroom assessments, observations of student academic performance and behavior, self-assessment of classroom instruction, and discussions with key stakeholders (i.e., students, families, and other professionals).
- Well-targeted formative assessment informs what the learning targets will look like for the next day or week. Co-teaching partners can then identify where each and every student is in their learning, allowing scaffolding and response when planning the next level of instruction.
- Co-teaching partners can use IEPs and ILPs to formatively assess each and every learner's progression towards achieving the learning target.
- Assessments reflect multiple avenues for learners to choose to demonstrate their learning so that assessments may be individualized to support student skills that vary in terms of learner strengths, weaknesses, and learning needs.
- Co-teaching partners integrate assessments into the learning process, which include learner reflection and goal setting (e.g., often co-created by learners).

### Developmental Use in Practice

- Co-teaching partners routinely manage and engage in ongoing data collection, but it is limited to one or two data sources.
- Well-targeted formative assessments are utilized; however, they are not used to scaffold and respond to the next level of instruction for each and every student.
- It is primarily the specialists' role to assess learners' progression towards achieving learning targets using information from IEPs or ILPs.

- There is some variability in assessments that reflect multiple avenues for learners, though assessments are created or chosen by the teachers.
- Assessments are integrated into the learning process but do not allow learners to reflect on their own learning and set goals.

### **Unacceptable Use in Practice**

- Co-teaching partners follow pre-made curricular assessments and do not manage or engage in data, but instead use assessments exclusively for grading purposes.
- Formative assessments are not aligned to the learning targets.
- Assessments are not created using specific information from IEPs and ILPs goals.
- Assessments are whole group experiences with no consideration for learner strengths, weaknesses, and learning needs.
- Assessments are not integrated in the learning process, are given for the sole purpose of grading, and do not allow learners to reflect on their learning and set goals.

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