

Tips for Avoiding Potential Co-Teaching Problems

Adapted from: *"A Guide to Co-Teaching: Practical Tips for Facilitating Student Learning"*, Villa, Thousand, Nevin, 2004

Tip 1. Know with whom you need to co-teach.

Co-teaching partners are not limited to teachers only. You may also include students, parents, administrators, specialists, support personnel and community members.

Tip 2. Establish and clarify co-teaching goals to avoid hidden agendas.

Have a planned method for developing and articulating goals for co-teachers to reduce anxiety of the unexpected. An important component of goal setting is for each co-teacher to say what he or she needs from the other co-teachers.

Tip 3. Agree to use a common conceptual framework, language, and set of interpersonal skills.

Establish ground rules for how the partnership will operate. Such as it is OK to ask questions or have unfamiliar terms explained. Receive training as needed to improve co-teaching skills.

Tip 4. Practice communication skills for successful co-teacher interactions.

Co-teachers must have an array of interpersonal skills. These include trust building, communication, creative problem solving and conflict resolution.

Tip 5. Know how to facilitate a collaborative culture.

Stay away from the "lone arranger" way of teaching. Only through sharing ideas, materials, resources and expertise do teachers develop, survive and thrive.

Tip 6. Recognize and respect differences in excellence and the multiple sources of motivation for co-teachers.

Co-teachers will improve their effectiveness when the individuals are given opportunities to improve. Create planning and debriefing time.

Allow opportunities for teams to observe and interview other co-teachers.

Tip 7. Expect to be responsible and expect to be held accountable.

Effective co-teachers act responsibly and follow through on what they agree to do. They support each other and celebrate individual and team success.

Tip 8. Agree to reflective analysis of the co-teaching process and celebrate often.

Have a tool to measure growth as a team. Self-assessment in the form of journals or reflective analysis can empower teams to celebrate their current levels of co-teaching skills and set goals for continued improvement.