

Collaborative Classroom

Supporting Students with Special Needs in the General Education Classroom

A Graduate Course

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Course Description

This course provides educators with a strong foundation for planning, implementing and maintaining successful co-teaching programs that improve and enhance the instruction of students with disabilities being taught in the general education classroom. In today's inclusive classroom settings, students with disabilities work together with students without disabilities. All of these students have a variety of learning styles, cultural differences, and educational, behavioral and social needs. It has become important for teachers and administrators to find effective research-based methods to help every student achieve greater success. One of the fastest growing trends nationally is the provision for co-teaching practices. Starting first with developing a clear definition of co-teaching, then examining critical components of co-teaching models and how they support student learning in the classroom, and finally evaluating current co-teaching programs, the focus of this course will be to explore both the conceptual and operational aspects of this approach to delivering instruction.

Congress reauthorized the IDEA in 2004 and most recently amended the IDEA through Public Law 114-95, the Every Student Succeeds Act, in December 2015. IDEA requires that students with special needs be educated in the least restrictive environment and whenever possible, in the general education classroom where they are provided with access to the same general education curriculum as all other students. In addition, many educators are finding that an increasing number of students come to school with a variety of other problems putting them at greater risk of failing. In order to successfully address the challenges of meeting the needs of all these different students, co-teaching has received widespread attention and has become an accepted form of delivery of instruction. With the reauthorization of IDEA and introduction of ESSA, state regulations and guidelines have set parameters to address how educators can meet the needs of diverse populations. For example, the New York State Commissioner of Education's Part 200 Regulations allow school districts to include integrated co-teaching on the continuum of special education services.

This course examines the most commonly accepted co-teaching practices between general and special education teachers and how collaboration can effectively take place between the co-teaching partners, and the partners and other school personnel on the elementary, middle and high school levels to meet the needs of all learners. It is based on current research and experiences of prominent individuals in the field of education including Richard A. Villa, Dr. Marilyn Friend and Carol Ann Tomlinson.

Course Objectives

- Establish a common language and working definition for co-teaching.
- Recognize other commonly accepted terms for co-teaching.
- Assess research support for collaboration and inclusion.
- Compare and contrast co-teaching, collaboration, team teaching, cooperative teaching and inclusion.
- Establish the purpose and goals for co-teaching.
- Provide a rationale through philosophy, research and recent federal and state legislation for implementing co-teaching.
- Relate co-teaching to current trends toward collaboration in public schools, both in general education and special education.
- Examine the effectiveness of co-teaching for teachers and students.
- Define the roles of the general and special education teachers.
- Define the types of services special education teachers can provide.
- Identify individual prerequisites for co-teaching.
- Define the professional relationship between co-teachers.
- Examine guidelines to achieve parity in the co-teaching relationship.
- Clarify the roles of and establish guidelines for the collaborative relationship between co-teachers and other school related professionals who serve to meet students' IEP mandated goals. These individuals may include the literacy coach, ESL instructor, resource teacher, speech and language pathologist, and school psychologist.
- Outline steps for administrators to support co-teaching practices.
- Identify the eight critical components of the co-teaching relationship.
- Implement strategies for effective dialogue that will improve and enhance co-teaching relationships.
- Analyze the most commonly accepted instructional models used in co-teaching classrooms.
- Identify how each model provides a format for teachers to modify both instruction and student work.
- Identify the categories of student disabilities.
- Examine how the co-teaching models meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- Establish definitions for paraprofessional, teacher aide and teacher assistant.
- Identify types of paraprofessionals (i.e. – 1:1 aide).
- Explain the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals.
- Identify the legal responsibilities of paraprofessionals.
- Explore teacher supervisory responsibilities of paraprofessionals.
- Define legal requirements for teachers under federal and state regulations examine an overview of RtI as an evaluative tool.
- Compare and contrast the Discrepancy Model and RtI.
- Assess the impact of RtI on general and special education teachers.
- Explore how RtI is used in the classroom.
- Develop assessment tools and early intervention strategies.
- Identify the diverse learners in today's classrooms.
- Identify the critical components of differentiated lessons.
- Examine various preassessment tools that determine student readiness, interest and learning style preference.

- Apply Bloom's Taxonomy to differentiated instruction lessons.
- Develop and implement effective differentiated instruction lessons.
- Evaluate differentiated instruction lessons.
- Identify factors that contribute to the effectiveness of co-teaching programs.
- Identify factors that undermine the effectiveness of co-teaching programs.
- Evaluate program efficacy from teacher, student, administrator and parent surveys.
- Develop additional strategies for effectively evaluating programs.
- Evaluate differentiated instruction lessons.
- Examine a variety of ways common planning time can be scheduled.
- Develop collaborative meeting agendas, planning sheets, etc.

Curriculum Design

The activities are designed to allow participants to experience various co-teaching models. The methodology used in this course provides participants with the necessary tools and practical strategies to work effectively in a co-taught classroom. Participants will apply course curriculum to a school study or project that will be presented during the last class sessions. The students will be required to complete and pass a final examination that reflects their course knowledge. This is a forty-five hour graduate level course taught in the classroom and online.

Course Materials

The required text for this course is Best Practices in Co-teaching & Collaboration: The HOW of Co-teaching - Implementing the Models by Susan Gingras Fitzell

Session Outline

Session One: Defining a Collaborative Relationship

1. Personal reflection and experiences: How would you define a collaborative relationship? What have been your personal experiences in collaborative and/or co-teaching relationships?
2. Introduction and sharing of reflection responses
3. Classroom demographics chart (i.e. – class representation)
4. Definition of collaborative relationship: A class consensus
5. Course requirements
6. Instructor's expectations
7. Course registration

Session Two: Establishing a Rationale for Co-Teaching as it Relates to Research and Legislation

1. History of inclusion
2. Overview of federal and state laws
3. T-Chart of advantages and disadvantages of having two teachers in a classroom

4. Research-supported benefits of collaborative classrooms for teachers and students

Session Three: Examining and Evaluating the Key Elements for Effective Collaborative Relationships

1. Individual prerequisites
2. Defining roles of the general and special education teachers
3. Who should co-teach? (i.e. – beginning teacher with beginning teacher)
4. Defining a professional co-teaching relationship
5. Utilizing the co-teaching rating scale
6. Achieving parity between co-teachers using preliminary discussion points
7. The administrator's role in co-teaching: providing support for personnel

Session Four: Essential Components of a Co-Teaching Relationship

1. Developing effective interpersonal communication: scenarios
2. Physical room arrangements
3. Familiarity with curriculum
4. Curriculum goals and modifications
5. Instructional planning
6. Instructional presentation
7. Classroom management
8. Assessing the co-teaching relationship

Session Five: Co-Teaching Models

1. One teacher/one assist/observe model
2. One teacher/one drift model
3. Parallel teaching
4. Station teaching
5. Alternate teaching
6. Team teaching
7. Additional instructional activities

Session Six: Working with Support Personnel: Paraprofessionals as Part of the Co-Teaching

1. Types of teacher aides (i.e.- 1:1 Aide)
2. Roles of paraprofessionals: classroom responsibilities
3. Legal responsibilities of paraprofessionals
4. Teacher supervision of paraprofessional

Session Seven: Response to Intervention (RtI)

1. Legal requirements for teachers under IDEA
2. Use of RtI as an evaluative tool on the elementary level
3. RtI models
4. The impact of RtI on general and special education teachers
5. How RtI is used in the classroom
6. Assessment tools and early intervention strategies

Session Eight: The Use of Differentiated Instruction in the Co-Teaching Classroom

1. Identifying the diverse learners in today’s classrooms
2. Critical components of differentiated instruction lessons
3. Pre-assessing students’ needs and abilities
4. Pre-assessing students’ interests
5. Assessing students’ learning styles
6. Developing and implementing effective differentiated instruction lessons
7. Using Bloom’s Taxonomy in differentiated instruction lessons
8. Evaluating differentiated instruction lessons

Session Nine: Assessing Co-Teaching

1. Examples of co-teaching programs
2. Factors that undermine co-teaching programs
3. Surveying teachers, administrators, students, parents about the effectiveness of their co-teaching programs
4. Other strategies used for evaluating programs

Session Ten: Final Projects and Final Exam

1. Review
2. Final project reviews and presentations
3. Final exam
4. Evaluations

Student Requirements

	Points	Grading Scale	
Class Participation/Attendance	30	100-93	A
In-class Assignments	10	92-85	B
Final Project	20	84-77	C
Group Project	10		
Final Exam	30		
Total Points	100		

Student Academic Integrity

Participants guarantee that all academic work is original. Any academic dishonesty or plagiarism (to take ideas, writings, etc. from another and offer them as one's own) is a violation of student academic behavior standards as outlined by our partnering colleges and universities and is subject to academic disciplinary action.

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