

Collaborative Classroom

Supporting Students with Special Needs in the General Education Classroom

An Online 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

Module assignments are based on specific module lessons, textbook readings and online research. 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 that will be developed throughout the modules and presented to the instructor as a final project. This is an online sixty-hour, three credit graduate level course that is completed over a thirteen-week period.

Hardware & Computer Skills Requirements

Computer and Internet access required. Students must have regular access to a computer and be able to use computer skills to successfully complete this course. Many problems instructors and students run into stem from mis-configured browsers, incorrect software versions, pop-up blockers, and other issues. Most of these issues can be prevented by performing the browser tune up before the course or once a problem arises. Often students find it easier to use *Mozilla Firefox*, *Google Chrome*, or *Safari* rather than Internet Explorer; for some applications Internet *Explorer* may work well.

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.

Module Outline

Module One: Co-Teaching Defined

Content:

1. Establish a common language and working definition for co-teaching.
2. Recognize other commonly accepted terms for co-teaching.
3. Read research support for collaboration and inclusion.
4. Compare and contrast co-teaching, collaboration, team teaching, cooperative teaching and inclusion.
5. Establish the purpose and goals for co-teaching.

Module Two: Establishing a Rationale For Co-Teaching As It Relates To Research and Legislation

Content:

1. Provide a rationale through philosophy, research and recent federal and state legislation for implementing co-teaching.
2. Relate co-teaching to current trends toward collaboration in public schools, both in general education and special education.
3. Examine the effectiveness of co-teaching for teachers and students.

Module Three: Developing Effective Partnerships

Content:

1. Define the roles of the general and special education teachers.
2. Define the types of services special education teachers can provide.
3. Identify individual prerequisites for co-teaching.
4. Define the professional relationship between co-teachers.
5. Examine guidelines to achieve parity in the co-teaching relationship.
6. 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.
7. Outline steps for administrators to support co-teaching practices.

Module Four: Essential Components of a Co-Teaching Relationship

Content:

1. Identify the eight critical components of the co-teaching relationship.
2. Implement strategies for effective dialogue that will improve and enhance co-teaching relationships.

Module Five: Co-Teaching Models

Content:

1. Understand the most commonly accepted instructional models used in co-teaching classrooms: One Teach, One Assist/Observe, One Teach, One Drift, Parallel Teaching, Station Teaching, Alternate Teaching, Team Teaching
2. Identify how each model provides a format for teachers to modify both instruction and student work.
3. Identify the categories of student disabilities.
4. Examine how the co-teaching models meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Module Six: Working with Support Personnel: The Paraprofessional as Part of the Co-Teaching Team

Content:

1. Establish definitions for paraprofessional, teacher aide and teacher assistant
2. Identify types of paraprofessionals (i.e. – 1:1 aide)
3. Explain the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals
4. Identify the legal responsibilities of paraprofessionals
5. Explore teacher supervisory responsibilities of paraprofessionals

Module Seven: Response to Intervention

Content:

1. Define the legal requirements for teachers under IDEA
2. Examine an overview of RtI as an evaluative tool
3. Compare and contrast the Discrepancy Model and RtI
4. Assess the impact of RtI on general and special education teachers
5. Explore how RtI is used in the classroom
6. Develop assessment tools and early intervention strategies
7. Provide a list of research-based programs

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

Content:

1. Identify the diverse learners in today's classrooms
2. Identify the critical components of differentiated lessons
3. Examine various pre-assessment tools that determine student readiness, interest and learning style preference
4. Apply Bloom's Taxonomy to differentiated instruction lessons
5. Develop and implement effective differentiated instruction lessons
6. Evaluate differentiated instruction lessons

Module Nine: Assessing Co-Teaching Programs

Content:

1. Identify factors that contribute to the effectiveness of co-teaching programs
2. Identify factors that undermine the effectiveness of co-teaching programs
3. Evaluate program efficacy from teacher, student, administrator and parent surveys
4. Develop additional strategies for effectively evaluating programs
5. Evaluate differentiated instruction lessons

Module Ten: Making Co-Teaching Work: The Issue of Common Planning Time

Content:

1. Examine a variety of ways common planning time can be scheduled.
2. Develop collaborative meeting agendas, planning sheets, etc.
3. Read additional resources that support co-teaching.
4. Post final project (action plan) in the forum.
5. Complete final exam and reflection.
6. Complete course evaluation.

Student Requirements

1. Participation: Actively participate by posting and responding to other participants in all Forum activities.
2. Reading Assignments: Complete all readings and reflection assignments.
3. Final Project - Participants will develop an action plan that demonstrates the use of ideas and concepts presented in this course. A copy follows and is included at the end of Module Two.
4. Final Exam – Complete the final exam at the end of Module Ten.

COURSE PROJECT:

Develop a new or evaluate your current co-teaching program. Use the following guidelines for your project:

AN ACTION PLAN

Freytag identified nine research-based factors associated with effective co-teaching programs including:

1. Administrative support
2. Balanced classroom rosters
3. Common planning time
4. Training and staff development
5. Voluntary participation
6. Teacher voice
7. Effective communication
8. Parity in teacher roles and responsibilities
9. Teacher efficacy in the instruction of students with special needs

Consider these factors in developing your action plan. Your project should also address the following questions:

1. Is there a history of collaboration in the school? How is this demonstrated?
2. Is collaboration strongly supported by the principal and other members of the school community?
3. What criteria have been established to determine who will be selected to co-teach?
4. How will teams be established?
5. What initial and on-going training will be offered to teachers and other school personnel?
6. What models will be used? Which subjects will be co-taught?
7. How will students be selected?
8. How many students will each class have? What percentage of students will be inclusion students? What other types of students will be included in the class?

9. How much planning time will teachers be allotted?
10. How will student progress be monitored in co-taught classrooms?
11. How will co-teaching arrangements and implementation be evaluated?
12. What other factors have been considered?

Course Evaluation

Assignment	Points
Forum Participation	25
Reflections	45
Final Project	20
Final Exam	10
Total Points	100

Grading Scale

- 93 – 100 A
85 – 92 B
77 – 84 C

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.