

## Six Models for Collaborative Team Teaching

One of the hardest things to get used to in a team-taught classroom is how to split teaching responsibilities; that is, actual instruction of students. This is merely one of the allocations of responsibility that is necessary in a team-taught classroom, but I think it is the most important one as it most directly impacts students. Today, there are six widely-accepted models of how to split instructional responsibilities in the team-taught classroom. Let's explore each of these models, some examples of how they could be implemented, and their pros and cons.

### 1. One teach, One Observe

In this model, one individual (generally the stronger of the two teachers in the content or subject being taught) handles all instruction while the other teacher floats or observes the class. This model can be useful when completing student observations for IEPs or Functional Behavioural Analysis (FBA), but does not really allow both teachers to add to the classroom.

***Pros:***

Minimal coordination or collaboration is required when planning  
Allows the stronger teacher to deliver quality instruction without interruption  
Can conceal weaknesses on behalf of a weaker partner in general or on a particular subject

***Cons:***

Does not fully utilize each instructional specialist  
Can create a behaviour/authority problem for the observing teacher if done regularly  
Can breed frustration or contempt from the instructional leader if used too often (unless by mutual choice)

***Example:***

While one teacher teaches, the other sits in the back of the room observing and taking notes on one student for an IEP meeting.

### 2. One Teach, One Assist

In this model, one teacher instructs the class while the other teacher manages behaviour or assists individual students as needed.

***Pros:***

Allows a teacher who may be instructionally strong to deliver instruction without interruption

***Cons:***

Does not make full use of two instructional specialists  
Can establish one teacher as the "bad cop," resulting in negative feelings toward the behaviour manager

***Example:***

While one teacher delivers the lesson, the other teacher walks around rewarding students with stickers, check marks, or private conversations. The floating teacher also narrates behaviour and enforces class rules/consequences as necessary.

### **3. Station Teaching (Rotational Teaching)**

In station teaching, each teacher plans and is responsible for a different aspect of the lesson, or for a different lesson entirely. There may also be independent work provided for the students. Students are divided into two or more groups depending on how many 'stations' are available, and either students travel from centre to centre or students stay in one position and a teacher or work travels to them.

***Pros:***

Each teacher can independently plan for an area or lesson of strength  
Each student is exposed to similar material, but groups can be differentiated by level  
Makes good use of two teachers for management purposes

***Cons:***

Requires excellent timing, which can take practice  
Requires management of students working independently  
May be logistically difficult depending on your classroom space

***Example:***

One teacher teaches a reading lesson on making connections to other texts, one teacher teaches a writing lesson on how to introduce dialogue in an interesting way, and one group of students works independently on the computers or in social studies centres. Students remain in their groups and travel to each station during the course of the class period or block.

### **4. Parallel Teaching**

In parallel teaching, the class is split in half and each teacher takes a half of the class to teach the same lesson. Students all receive the same material.

***Pros:***

Provides a smaller group and thus more individual attention  
Can provide control for socially-based behaviour problems between students

***Cons:***

Requires excellent timing, which can take practice  
Requires collaborative planning  
Can be difficult to invisibly differentiate in a smaller group  
Requires that each teacher be equally strong in the material to be presented

***Example:***

The class is split in two, both teachers teach the same lesson on cell cycles to a smaller group of students

### **5. Alternative Teaching**

In alternative teaching, one teacher teaches the main lesson to a larger group of students while the other teacher works with the smaller group of students on an entirely different lesson.

***Pros:***

Provides excellent differentiation opportunities  
Provides a chance for remediation or enrichment for students who need it  
Can provide behaviour control in the smaller group

***Cons:***

Must not 'pigeonhole' one group of students by consistently pulling them together

May reduce the efficacy of inclusion by separating students with special needs  
May reduce students' exposure to the general education curriculum

**Example:**

The large-group teacher teaches a lesson on writing introductions to a story while the small-group teacher helps students brainstorm on a topic for a story.

## **6. Tag Team (Traditional Co-Teaching)**

In tag team teaching, both teachers plan and deliver instruction together, with each teacher equally responsible for the material in the lesson. This can be scripted or spontaneous.

**Pros:**

Models an excellent respectful working relationship between adults  
Allows both teachers to provide perspective on a topic  
Can allow teaching of two strategies or ideas simultaneously  
Promotes respect for both teachers

**Cons:**

Requires a rapport that cannot be rushed or faked  
Requires meticulous planning together, which can be time-consuming

**Example:**

During a lesson on multiplication, one teacher teaches using the lattice method while one teacher teaches with the traditional method. Both teachers work together when students work in groups or independently.

## **References**

Friend, M & Cook, L 2003. *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals*.  
Pearson Education, Inc, Boston.

[www.inclusiveclassrooms.org](http://www.inclusiveclassrooms.org).

[www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)