

# REACH Observations in Co-teaching Settings

## **Introduction**

Meeting the diverse needs of students is a challenge in every classroom. Co-teaching is a partnership between two teachers working together to deliver instruction in the same classroom at the same time. Co-teaching can be an effective support for students with special needs who are included in the general education setting. The use of co-teaching approaches is driven by the needs of students.

CPS and CTU convened a group of teachers, principals, ODLSS staff, and Talent Office staff to develop guidance for observing instruction in co-teaching settings. The group generated best practices for conducting REACH observations in the context of each co-teaching approach. The special considerations identify unique characteristics of each approach to further clarify elements of practice and implementation. It is recommended that school administrators and co-teachers review these considerations together to establish a common understanding prior to the REACH observation series.

## **Pre-Observation Conference**

As a best practice, co-teachers and school administrators should utilize the pre-observation conference to explain and discuss any unique characteristics of professional practice. These may include (but are not limited to): co-teaching planning, roles/responsibilities, teaching styles, classroom environment, routines/procedures, student discipline, student needs, and learning objectives.

## **Post Observation Conference**

The post-observation conference provides an opportunity for school administrators and co-teachers to discuss the instructional practices observed for further clarity and understanding. It is best practice to conduct a post observation conferences following an informal REACH observations to gather additional evidence of professional practice and to discuss student, interpersonal and/or environmental factors that may have affected instructional decision making.

## **The Co-teaching Relationship**

Ideally, co-teaching includes collaboration in all facets of teaching: planning, instructional delivery, assessment, classroom culture and management. Characteristics of effective co-teaching relationships include:

A shared philosophical basis	Clearly established classroom dynamics
Prerequisite knowledge and skills	External supports that include principal support, common planning time, and training for co-teachers
A collaborative professional relationship with parity	

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## ▪ Additional Factors to Consider

We encourage school administrators and co-teachers to engage in ongoing communication regarding co-teaching. There are many factors that affect instruction in co-teaching settings which should be addressed in pre and post observation conferences and taken into account in observations and component-level scoring. A few of these factors are:

- Common planning time
- Pedagogy and expertise of each teacher
- Division of roles and responsibilities
- Parity and compatibility of the teachers
- Overall workload of each teacher
- Composition of the class and the range of student abilities and needs
- Shared space and instructional materials
- Instructional and organizational routines
- Classroom management & expectations

Evaluators and educators should use this guidance to broaden and deepen thinking around the co-teaching approaches. Some considerations may not be applicable to all co-taught lessons. This is not an exhaustive list of best practices and considerations for conducting the REACH observation series in co-teaching settings, but rather guidance on the unique aspects to be considered when conducting REACH observations in co-teaching settings.