



# Culture, Collaboration, and Curriculum: A Co-Teaching Approach to Equity in Social Studies

Ashlyn Tidwell

## INQUIRY QUESTIONS

1. How can co-teaching in social studies support equitable access to curriculum?
2. How can co-teachers implement culturally responsive strategies to help their students?
3. What schools and/or districts should adopt these models?

## PURPOSE

Districts that have implemented co-teach models have almost exclusively focused on language arts and math classrooms. Social Studies requires students to develop and refine their intercommunication, historical knowledge, critical thinking, as well as a wide variety of other skills that aim to develop an informed citizen. These classrooms feature some of the most direct and culturally relevant subjects that people will interact with in their lives after the K-12 system. The branches of government, personal rights, and taxation are just a few of the topics covered that tangibly affect students whether they are interested or not. The importance of teaching these concepts to individuals is critical, especially for those in marginalized communities. Students with language or academic gaps are particularly at risk of losing support in these classes that build off a foundation of strong English competency. Introducing a culturally responsive co-teaching system in social studies would greatly expand student equity in such a vital and often overlooked subject.

## TPEP ALIGNMENT

This topic corresponds with TPEP standards as well. Criteria 2, 'Demonstrating Effective Teaching Practices' is explored through research of the co-teach model and its emphasis on differentiation. The next criteria, focusing on student needs and how to address them, is greatly investigated through collaboration between a content specific educator and their co-teacher. This model also provides students more access to one-on-one support which can greatly help with building relationships and classroom management. Additionally Criteria 4, focuses on clear and intentional subject matter in class content and curriculum, highlighted by the pedagogical approach of designing a culturally responsive curriculum in collaboration with the school and local community.

## Types of Co Teaching Strategies

### 1. One Teach, One Observe:

One of the advantages in co-teaching is that more detailed observation of students engaged in the learning process can occur. Can be very impactful for getting to know students and their behaviors at the start of a year.

### 2. One Teach, One Assist:

In a second approach to co-teaching, one person would keep primary responsibility for teaching while the other educator moves through the room providing assistance to students as needed.

### 3. Station Teaching:

In this co-teaching approach, teachers divide content and students. Each teacher then teaches the content to one group and subsequently repeats the instruction for the other group. If appropriate, a third station could give students an opportunity to work independently.

### 4. Team Teaching:

In team teaching, both teachers are delivering instruction at the same time This is most effective when both educators have a strong rapport with one another and to want show multiple perspectives on a subject.

## WHAT IS CO-TEACHING?

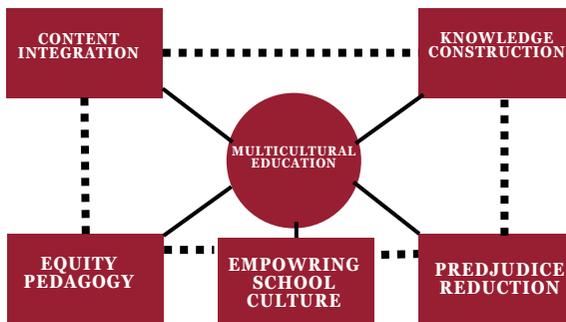
As of 2018, roughly 62% of SWDs (Students With Disabilities) spent 80% or more of their school day in the general education setting, an increase of 29% in the past two decades. In response to an increasing emphasis on these "push in" approaches, general education teachers have had to adapt their instruction and teaching styles rapidly to meet the needs of a population whom they have little training or experience working with.

Similarly, multilingual learners in public schools have also increased significantly throughout the country, often lacking access to adequate resources to bridge language barriers. In response to these realities, districts across the nation have begun to implement co teaching models that aim to provide equitable access to curriculum. These models vary from school to school and because of their recent wide scale implementation, there is little cohesiveness on expectations, strategies, and design.

Despite these barriers, many districts have demonstrated effective co teaching through pairings of a content area teacher and a specialized teacher for classes with high amounts of learners with targeted needs (Special Ed./ELL). For example, if a social studies class of 25 students contains 11 with IEP plans, primarily focused on improving reading and writing skills, a special education teacher would have ample opportunity to provide individualized support.

## MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

- Primary and secondary sources used in class show a wide range of perspectives. They show the lived or seen experiences of individuals from different cultures, class, ability, etc.
- Create a classroom that emphasizes tolerance and gives students ample opportunity to work with their peers.
- Be familiar with the community you work in and design a curriculum that represents them as much as possible. Tie the connection of the students or their families to the historical topic you are teaching if possible.
- Allow for multilingual students to be provided class resources in their native languages and when grading responses, teachers should take into consideration allowing a student to write in a mix of their native and second languages.
- Develop a PBIS system that advocates for teachers to address their own biases and their own cultural experiences.
- Encourage student self-reflection in classroom activities.



Dimensions of Multicultural Education

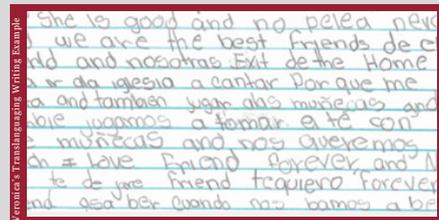
## TECHNOLOGY IN CO TEACHING

Assistive technology tools are not only useful to students in special education, but also those in gen ed. classes. This creates a perfect space to utilize these tools in a co-taught classroom. Useful to both general and special education. An assistive technology tool allows a learner to complete a task that the learner could not complete independently. For example, providing a screen reader for someone who is visually impaired. Instructional Technology (IT) tools on the other hand, are designed for all types of learners. They are usually used to reinforce or to provide additional practice for skills already taught.

## PRACTICES FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

The average graduation rate in the U.S. sits at 87%. For ELL students however, this number drops drastically to just 72%.

Translanguaging can help students create connections between two different languages as well as the content they are learning.



For example, Veronica's word choice in the image above demonstrates flexibility and competency in transitioning between two separate languages. Her first language is Spanish and her work shows her teacher a clear look into her English ability. She demonstrates that she is able to read the prompt written in English and answer logically in English while connecting this to her Spanish proficiency.

- English language Learners who engage in translanguaging should have their skills viewed as an asset rather than a deficit.
- With increasing accessibility to translation tools, teachers have the ability to communicate and assess students' writing abilities in different ways.
- Rubrics are relatively adaptable and can be used in most assessment types, developing these with MLL needs in mind is a low-cost and practical way co teachers are able to design their instruction to not only avoid penalties to these students, but also preserve individual's native language skills.
- Including students' communities as part of the classroom setting not only allows the student to interact with the content more effectively, but also exposes students to various different cultural and linguistic perspectives.

## HOW TO EFFECTIVELY DEVELOP

Co-teaching models run into problems if not properly structured. Teachers are often not provided any professional development training or specific standards for their co-taught classes. Additionally, special education teachers are often stretched between multiple content areas with little opportunity to collaborate with their content specific counterparts. These common issues are the primary threats to an effective co teaching model."

- In a social studies context, schools should try to incorporate local history and stories to make the content more immediately relevant to the students.
- Teachers should collaborate with those in their content area and grade level every week to better develop specific elements to include in their classes.
- Collaboration and support from administration is essential to the development of an effective multicultural approach.
- Understanding teacher strengths and weaknesses is a large part of creating an engaging dynamic for Co teachers.



## ACTION

While my ability to Co-teach in the future is not guaranteed, I hope to continue to find ways to provide equitable access to students. In my future classrooms, I hope to design inclusive grading practices rooted in culturally responsive teaching. Multilingualism and translanguaging should be represented in the norm and incorporated into the writing curriculum and classroom environment. Students referencing cultural stories and folklore in creative writing can help bring cultural identity to the classroom and is strongly connected to Washington State history standards like demonstrating cultural groups contributions and exposure to various historical perspectives.

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