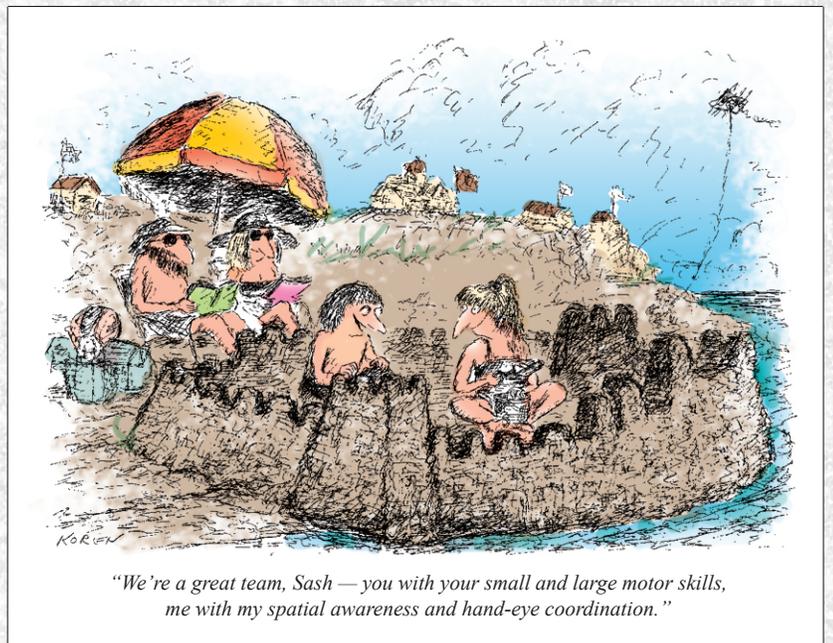


## Leadership for Collaborative Teaching

Whether you're helping to build a sandcastle or helping to build a future for students, the best results come when talent, experience, and knowledge are combined.

Collaborative teaching, also referred to as co-teaching, support facilitation, and team teaching, is a proven practice for ensuring **all** students make progress in school. In collaborative teaching, a general education and a special education teacher share responsibilities in a single classroom with students of varied abilities.

Like the children building the sandcastle, the two teachers combine their expertise and talents to support learning. But they also bring different personalities and working styles to the shared classroom.



*"We're a great team, Sash — you with your small and large motor skills, me with my spatial awareness and hand-eye coordination."*

Collaborative teaching is a big challenge for most teachers. Teachers are used to running their own classrooms, whether it's a high school English class or a self-contained classroom for students with disabilities. Some collaborative teachers work well together from the start, while for others, the new partnership can create conflict.

School leaders need to help teachers by bringing their own talents to the "sandcastle." They can assist teachers by defining and developing their roles in achieving the benefits of collaborative teaching.

*"Much attention was given to the idea of having students with and without disabilities educated together . . . but relatively little emphasis was placed on helping general and special education teachers work together in a single educational environment."*

Voltz, 2001

### Our Mission Statement

The Florida Inclusion Network provides learning opportunities, consultation, information and support to educators, families, and community members, resulting in the inclusion of all students.

Look  
inside  
for ways to  
help teachers  
work together.

# What does collaborative teaching look like?

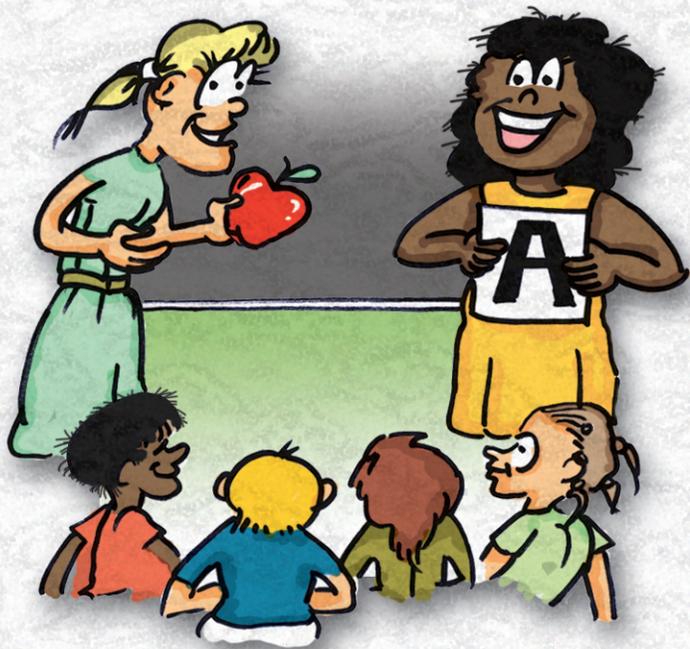
Collaborative teaching is a partnership of professional equals. One teacher is not the assistant to the other. Neither is assigned to support *only* specific students. Both teachers must be flexible and able to shift roles throughout the day and week. Here are some examples of commonly used approaches to collaborative teaching.

**One Teach/One Assist:** Mr. Simmons teaches a math lesson to his fifth grade class while his teaching partner, Ms. Green, quietly checks daily planners and provides individual assistance to struggling students.

**Teaming:** Mr. Elliot and Mr. Baker are conducting an algebra lesson. While Mr. Elliot provides a lecture to the whole class, Mr. Baker asks clarifying questions and models the use of graphic organizers on an overhead transparency.

**Station Teaching:** Ms. Rosen and Ms. Estrada plan ahead to use station teaching for a science lesson on plants. Ms. Rosen has one station where she gives a lesson on what plants need in order to grow. Ms. Estrada has a station where students dissect a flower and view it under a microscope. Some students stay at one station, while others move from one to the other. A third station is made up of students who are independently following a lesson plan and lab on their own.

**Parallel Teaching:** Ms. Edwards and Ms. Alton decide in advance to divide the class into two groups. Both teach a lesson on folktales. Ms. Edwards uses a long story and asks the students complex questions about the purpose of the story. Ms. Alton uses a different and shorter folktale with a small group of students who are struggling to keep up. At the end of the teaching session, the whole class discusses both folktales and how they might be used to teach life lessons.



**These are just a few examples of collaborative teaching structures.**  
For more information about collaborative teaching, check out our Web site  
and the resources listed in this publication.

# Leadership for collaborative teaching

Often, teachers have to figure out by themselves how to make collaborative teaching work. Sustained support from school leaders can ultimately avert “deal-breakers” between teacher partners.

## ***Here are some ways you can help teachers develop a trusting partnership:***

- Get in-depth information on collaborative teaching roles and responsibilities.
- Obtain outside resources (e.g., training and technical assistance) to help teachers get started and stay on the right track.
- Allow opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classrooms before they begin teaching together.
- Determine effective and ongoing methods of communication between teachers and administrators.
- Provide time for planning and problem-solving for teachers working together. Teachers say this is the most essential ingredient for successful collaborative teaching.
- Address professional development needs in your School Improvement Plan.
- Anticipate and respond to the problems teachers are having.
- Provide teachers with strategies for dealing with conflicts.
- Inform parents of both general and special education students about the collaborative teaching model and involve them in problem-solving.
- Observe collaborative teachers in action and provide practical and immediate feedback. You’ll find some useful classroom observation tips on the back page!

***FIN can help you and your teachers with all of these strategies.  
Contact your local FIN Facilitator to get started!***

# Classroom observation

Observing the classroom and providing feedback to teachers is an important part of your leadership role. When you visit a classroom where collaborative teaching is taking place, how can you tell if it is going well? Adapted from Wilson (2005), here are some questions to ask as you observe collaborative teachers in action:

## **Roles of Teachers:**

- Can the role of each teacher be clearly defined at any given point in the lesson?
- Does each role enhance the learning process?
- Are both teachers working with **all** students?

## **Strategies to Promote the Success of ALL Learners:**

- What evidence is there that teachers engaged in co-planning the lesson?
- Are the teachers focused on process as well as content?
- What strategies/adaptations are employed to help struggling students?

## **Evidence of Success:**

- Are struggling students answering and asking questions?
- Are students engaged in meaningful work?
- How are teachers assessing the learning of each student?

For a copy of the full  
**Co-Teaching**

**Observation Guide**

and **Co-Teaching**

**Rating Scale**, visit

our Web site

**“Resources”** section

or contact your local

**FIN**

**Facilitator.**

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

**Your FIN Facilitator can provide free training, resources, and technical assistance on these and other topic related to collaborative teaching:**

- ✓ Problem-solving for Collaborative Teams
- ✓ Collaborative teaching Roles and Responsibilities
- ✓ Instructional and Classroom Management Strategies
- ✓ Effective Communication Strategies

## **For further information:**

Voltz, D.L., et al., 2001. What Matters Most in Inclusive Education: A Practical Guide for Moving Forward. Intervention in School and Clinic, Vol. 37.

Gately, S., 2005. Two Are Better Than One. Principal Leadership, May 2005. The National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Wilson, G.L., 2005. This Doesn't Look Familiar! A Supervisor's Guide for Observing Co-Teachers. Intervention in School and Clinic, Vol. 20, No. 5, May 2005.

