

# Preface

**E**nter your classroom of 28 students. Six students have individualized education plans (IEPs), one is autistic, three have limited English skills, and an additional four live in the subsidized housing apartment complex on the community's outskirts. Three students just moved into the district, while six have lived here since kindergarten. One student received services through the gifted program but was recently reassigned to your classroom. Seven students did not meet standards on the state assessment test, while five exceeded standards. Several students in your class are experiencing serious issues, such as divorce, loss of a home, blended families, abuse, abandonment, and other emotional challenges, which seriously impact their behavior, attentiveness, and learning.

While this may sound like a fictitious classroom proposed for the purpose of this book, this classroom really exists, as do many others like it across the country. This example is not from a school in an inner-city urban area but rather a classroom in an upper-middle-class suburban school district. This is not a special education classroom but rather a general education classroom taught by a general education language arts teacher. This teacher may be you, and your assignment is to teach them all—to leave none behind.

Ensuring the success of each student, regardless of ethnicity, background, gender, skills, emotional status, or income level, embodies the mandate of the 2002 legislation No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Fulfilling this mandate by helping each child learn in large classrooms represents a tremendous challenge for teachers—quite a different task from that faced by our predecessors in classrooms at the turn of the previous century. The public school classroom of the early 1900s was the vehicle to homogenize immigrants coming to America. The theme of the factory model of education was “One size fits all.” In contrast, teachers of the twenty-first century have been mandated to ensure success for each student. This necessitates a change in emphasis from teaching *all* to teaching *each*. But how can one teacher meet the needs of such a diverse student body? The answer may be found in co-teaching.

Co-teaching occurs when two or more professionals jointly deliver substantive instruction to a diverse, blended group of students in a single physical space (Friend & Cook, 2007). On the surface, co-teaching may merely appear to be two teachers in the same classroom. However, to understand and benefit from co-teaching, a paradigm shift is needed—think of the experience of 3-D image viewing.

Have you ever been challenged with a “magic eye” picture? This picture includes an image on the surface that is readily apparent, but underneath that image is another, a three-dimensional picture, which will emerge only if you change your perspective. Some easily change their perspective

and see the 3-D image immediately. Others need coaching, specific directions, and lots of practice. With persistence and many trials, however, the image eventually emerges.

Co-teaching also requires a shift in perspective, but this shift is a change in perspective about how you view yourself, your class, and your teaching. As you change your perspective, from a single teacher delivering the curriculum to an entire class to a co-teacher working collaboratively to meet the individual needs of *each* student, you will begin to experience the rewards of co-teaching. For some, this perspective switch happens within the first few weeks; for others, it may take months or even an entire school year; and for some, the image never emerges.

To see the 3-D image emerge in the “magic eye” picture, the trick is to keep your eye on a distant target. Co-teaching is like this, also. Keep your eye on the target—the individual learning needs and achievement of each student. You and your co-teaching partner must shift perspective from covering the curriculum to teaching so that each student is learning. The purpose of our book is to coach you through the perspective change—to allow you to see the image emerge and experience the wonderful rewards of co-teaching.

We have written this book to provide administrators, general and special education teachers, service providers, interdisciplinary team members, and others who are co-teaching with practical, research-based, proven, and successful ways to approach this endeavor. District-level special or general education personnel who support site-based co-teaching may find the text as a helpful guide in their mentoring efforts. Even educators in nonteaming situations may benefit from the instructional ideas presented here. The text draws on the experience of co-teachers in the field who are seeing positive results from working side by side with their colleagues. You will also see how co-teachers blend their interpersonal skills and instructional expertise to support all children in the general education classroom. You will read case studies from teachers at various levels and in various subjects who have struggled with working with their partners and in finding ways to make co-teaching work. In other words, you will benefit from the lessons learned from the field. In short, we share the realities of co-teaching.

This book is different from other books on co-teaching as we blend the art of co-teaching with the research-based science of effective instructional methods. We include a model of co-teaching that emphasizes interpersonal skills, content knowledge, instructional design, teaching philosophy, and the stages of co-teaching. Each of these components must be considered when co-teaching.

Chapters include activities, checklists, and lesson plans, which you may find helpful as you plan and assess your co-teaching endeavors. Up-to-date chapter resources are included to guide your efforts, as well.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of co-teaching, which provides a framework for the remaining chapters. In Chapter 1, you will learn the definition of co-teaching, the components and prerequisites of co-teaching, and our model of co-teaching. Chapter 2 presents common issues and concerns and possible solutions to those issues. The remaining chapters provide examples of co-teachers at various grade levels teaching various subjects with varying levels of expertise with co-teaching who are using effective, research-based instructional methods. Each chapter emphasizes research-based instructional methods and effective interpersonal skills as the co-teaching team seeks to address an issue. We trust that the examples will inform your co-teaching practice.