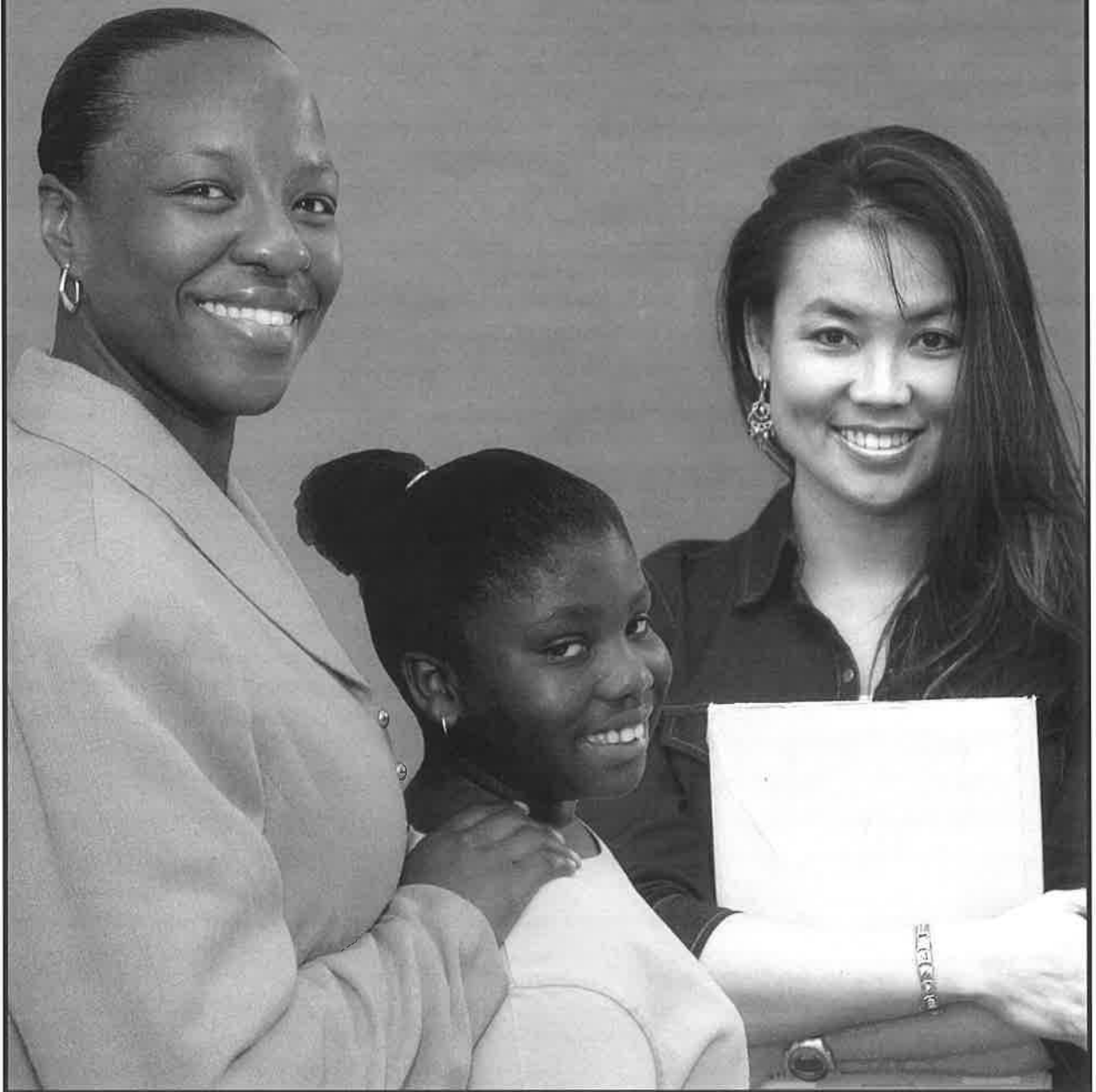


# Section I

## *What is Co-Teaching?*



# RATIONALE AND DEFINITION OF CO-TEACHING

## Rationale

The requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB 2001) and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) have brought about many changes in the delivery of instruction to students with special needs. NCLB 2001 emphasizes the accountability for learning of all students and requires all teachers to be highly qualified. IDEA 2004 further supports that students with special needs have access to the general education curriculum and ensures that these students will be taught by highly qualified teachers. One way schools and districts are meeting this challenge is through the implementation of co-teaching. While co-teaching is not a new concept, many districts are now finding it to be an effective service delivery model for increasing the achievement of students with special needs while also meeting the needs of diverse learners in the general education classroom.

## Definition

\*Co-teaching is an educational approach whereby general education teachers and specialists work together to deliver instruction to **all** students in an inclusive classroom. The two teachers work as partners to jointly design, plan, and implement lessons appropriate for each student. They also share the responsibility of assessing the students' mastery of the content. The general education teacher does not view the students with special needs as belonging only to the specialist, nor does the specialist view the students with special needs as his/her only responsibility. The two teachers must form a partnership in which both are responsible for meeting all students' educational needs by teaching and assisting every student in the classroom.

### Co-Teaching Is:

- Co-teaching involves a general education teacher and a specialist. The specialist may be a special education teacher, a Title 1 teacher, a speech and language pathologist, a math/reading coach, an ESL teacher, a gifted education teacher or other certified personnel.
- Co-teaching classes should be heterogeneous. Co-teaching is designed to meet the educational needs of students with diverse learning abilities and styles. Careful consideration should be used when scheduling students into co-taught classes. (see *Scheduling* on pages 11-21)
- Co-teaching involves shared delivery of instruction and accountability. Both teachers work together to provide instruction to **all** students in the classroom.
- Co-teaching requires shared physical space. Both teachers use a single classroom to instruct the students. Both teachers are actively involved and remain in the classroom for the entire period of instruction.

### Co-Teaching Is Not:

- Co-teaching is **not** inclusion. Inclusion is a philosophy that all students are part of the general education environment. Co-teaching is **one** part of a good inclusion program. For example, there may be a student with an IEP that is "included" in general education classes, but does not need the support of a co-taught class.
- Co-teaching is **not** "tag teaming." For example, while one teacher instructs the class, the other teacher should not sit and wait for "his/her turn."

### Co-Teachers Need:

- Co-teachers need to be proficient in effective interpersonal skills. These skills include the ability to listen, actively observe, ask questions, compromise, negotiate to resolve differences, and provide feedback.
- Co-teachers need time to reach their "comfort zone."
- Co-teachers need to be patient, remain flexible and stay positive.

\*L. Cook and M. Friend, "Co-Teaching: Guidelines for Creating Effective Practices," *Focus on Exceptional Children*, no. 28 (1995), p. 1-16.

## CO-TEACHING EXPERTISE

When general education teachers and specialists collaborate, they combine the expertise of each individual teacher. They bring together the knowledge and skills each possess. The benefits to the students are innumerable. Students learn from the expertise of two professionals. In addition, administrators play a key role in the success of co-teaching.

### General Educator's Expertise

- Content area
- Scope and sequence of curriculum
- Management strategies for large groups
- Objective view of academic and social development
- Pacing of curriculum
- Knowledge of content standards
- Maintain high expectations
- Knowledge of state testing
- Knowledge of additional resources for the content area

### Specialist's Expertise

- Learning styles
- Behavior modification techniques
- Learning strategies
- Diagnostic/prescriptive teaching
- Educational accommodations/modifications
- Identifying specific needs
- Special education law
- Knowledge of Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Monitoring and documenting student progress

### Administrator's Expertise

- Creates the culture to collaborate and communicates expectations to staff
- Plays key role in problem solving process by providing support and/or acting as a neutral third party
- Creates logistics in school (i.e. scheduling, planning time)
- Arranges for staff development
- Schedules heterogeneous groups of students in co-taught classes
- Recommends co-teaching partners
- Observes co-teaching (see co-teaching observation forms pages 45-49)
- Meets with co-teaching support groups on a regular basis (see pages 8-9)



***Together these professionals ensure a creative, high-energy classroom where the needs of all students can be met. Students benefit from the expertise of two teachers. Co-teaching improves skills in students and teachers.***

## BENEFITS OF CO-TEACHING

**These benefits were acquired through experience and numerous interviews with co-teachers, students and administrators.**

- More student enthusiasm and involvement
- Increases individual instruction for students
- Less student excuses – students are held more accountable and a teacher is always available to assist
- Reduces stigma of a pull-out class, students are now included in a regular classroom
- Academic and social success for “at-risk” students
- Students appreciate having a variety of teaching styles
- Students transfer strategies such as note-taking and test-taking skills from one content area to another
- Increases teacher satisfaction in terms of the ability to meet the needs of more students in the classroom/less teacher burnout
- Shared teacher responsibility and accountability
- Reduces discipline problems
- More excitement and creativity for teachers
- More classroom grouping options (see pages 23-26)
- Professional growth for teachers
- Willingness to take more risks with grouping options, instructional methods and classroom management strategies
- Shared paperwork, phone calls, etc.
- Better and more positive communication between general education teachers and specialists
- Co-teachers provide a positive role model of cooperation for the students
- Provides enrichment, pre-teaching and re-teaching opportunities