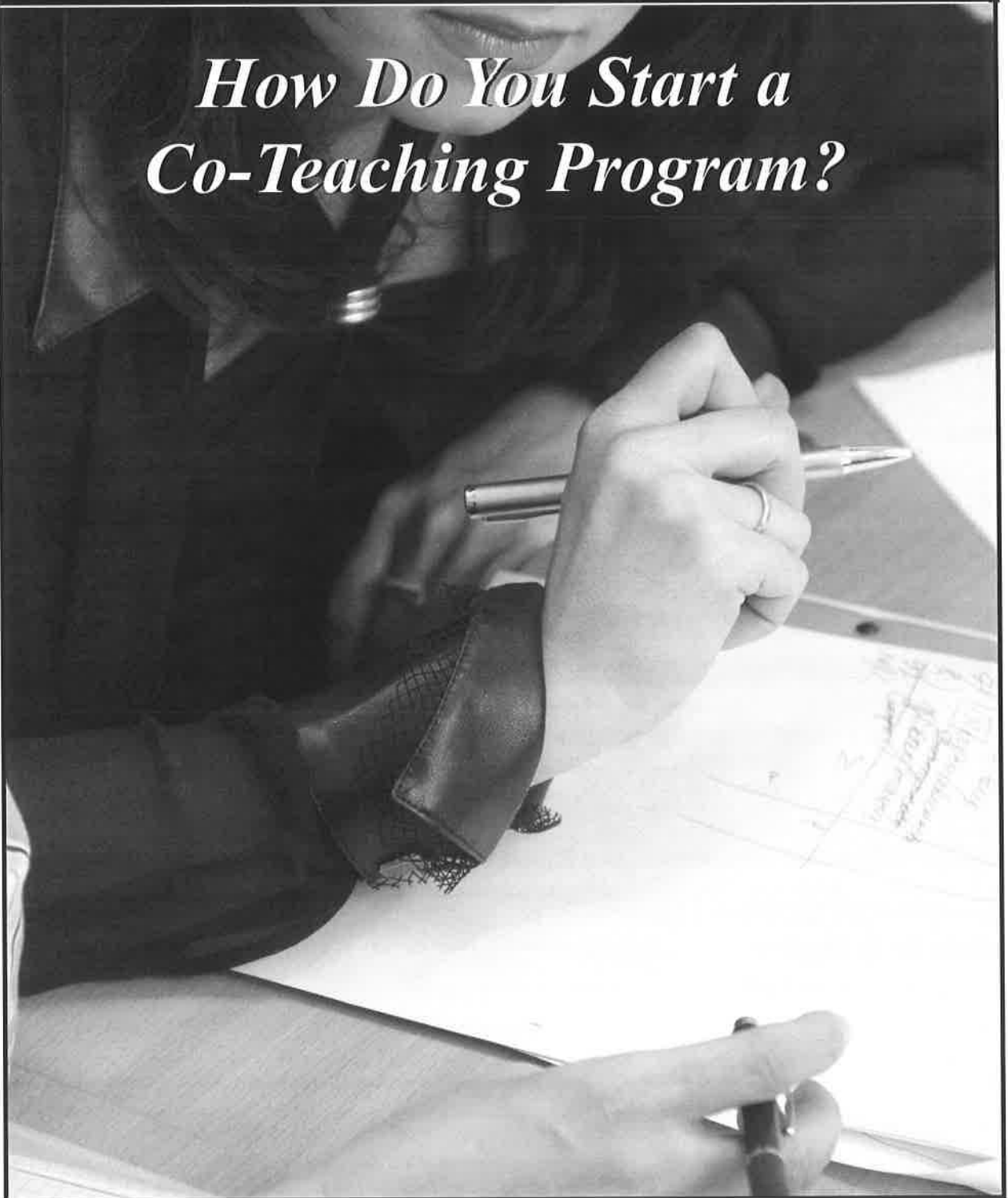


# Section II

## *How Do You Start a Co-Teaching Program?*



## DEVELOPING A CO-TEACHING PROGRAM

### **A. Study the current program and determine the needs of your students.**

To develop a program that best suits the students' needs, read and study co-teaching articles, books and videos. Examine your current special education program and ask:

1. Could more of our special education students in pull-out and self-contained classes be served in the general education classroom *if* they had the support of a co-teacher?
2. In what areas (subjects) do the special need's students need this additional support?

### **B. Provide training to educate faculty and administration about co-teaching.**

Training of faculty and administration increases awareness and support of co-teaching. The training should include principals and other administrators, the teaching faculty and guidance counselors. Administrators' participation in co-teaching training allows for the development of a common vocabulary base. Administrators will learn about the many aspects of inclusion and co-teaching, and will be able to anticipate the kinds of support that will be needed to implement such a program.

The administrators can provide teachers with the support they need as well as provide release time for planning and problem solving. For the co-teaching program to succeed, everyone must be flexible, willing to try something new, and be committed to the concept of inclusion and co-teaching. They will play a key role in developing the culture to collaborate and will facilitate in the problem solving process by acting as a neutral third party.

Co-teaching training for administration and faculty should include a brief overview of the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB 2001) and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) on special education. These laws mandate that students, including those with disabilities, have access to the general education curriculum, are taught by highly qualified teachers and receive research based instruction. Other topics to cover are:

- Co-teaching definition
- Benefits of co-teaching
- Co-teaching expertise
- Ways to co-teach
- Co-planning
- Lesson plans
- Scheduling

**Lack of administrative training and support is often a major factor in the inability to start and sustain a successful co-teaching program.** Support is vital from parents, students, teachers, administration, district staff, and the school board.

### **C. Find other districts in your area with co-teaching programs and enlist their assistance.**

Begin the search by calling your State Department of Education to find schools that have successful co-teaching programs in your area. Arrange a time for co-teachers and administrators from your school to visit and observe co-taught classes. Stay as long as you can, observe several co-taught classes and talk with the co-teachers, the students in the classes and other designated staff. Discuss the successes and challenges and ask for any material that the site-visit school has to offer. Maintain contact with teachers and administrators at that school as a support source when questions arise.

### **D. Schedule co-taught classes.**

It takes time to develop co-teaching relationships and build successful co-teaching programs. When beginning a co-teaching program, it is important to start with teachers interested in co-teaching. (See the Co-Teaching Interest Inventory, page 74.) For example, based on students' needs, choose one or two grade levels or subject areas to co-teach the first year. Gradually, you will build upon the program's success by adding additional co-taught classes.

**For more specific scheduling information, refer to Section III, How Do You Schedule, beginning on page 10.**

### **E. Discuss grading policy.**

Co-teachers and administrators should discuss a grading policy for co-taught classes. Questions to address should include:

- What is the district and school grading policy for all students?
- What is the district and school policy for assigning and recording modified grades?
- How do the students' IEPs affect grading?
- How will the final grade be determined for all students, including those with special needs?
- How will the grading policy (including any modifications) be communicated to parents?

### **F. Organize a co-teaching support group.**

Support groups are important for the ongoing success of a co-teaching program. Co-teaching support groups are made up of all co-teaching pairs and an administrator in the school. The group meets at least four times a year for problem solving and monitoring the program's overall effectiveness.

**For specific support group topics please refer to page 9.**

## SUGGESTED AGENDA TOPICS FOR ONGOING CO-TEACHING SUPPORT GROUP

*All participants of the support group should have an agenda in advance so they can be prepared to discuss the specific topic(s). Additional staff may be invited as needed (guidance counselor, school psychologist, etc.) These suggested topics may serve as a guide to facilitate open discussion in your support groups. Assign a recorder to take notes.*

1. Share successes and challenges.
2. Discuss ways to provide modifications/accommodations.
3. Discuss behavior management/discipline.
4. Share lesson plans and/or techniques that have used the six ways to co-teach effectively.  
Provide specific examples used for grouping.
5. Explain how co-teaching has helped the student that is struggling with academic and/or behavior problems.
6. Describe techniques for providing re-teaching in the co-taught classroom.
7. Describe strategies for providing enrichment in the co-taught classroom.
8. Discuss any ongoing concerns such as scheduling, planning and other issues that arise in the current year or as you think about planning for the next school year.
9. Provide time for the co-teachers to independently complete the **Co-Teaching Evaluation Form** on pages 72-73 and then discuss together.
10. Assess the effectiveness of the school's co-teaching program by analyzing results using curriculum-based instruction and other measurable activities.
  - A. *Compare student achievement data* of students (with and without disabilities) in a co-taught classroom with a comparable class of students with and without disabilities that is not receiving co-teaching services.
  - B. *Compare the discipline records* of students (with and without disabilities) in the co-taught class who have been in the same school for two or more years for longitudinal information. Compare current discipline records of students (with and without disabilities) in a co-taught classroom with a comparable class of students with and without disabilities that is not receiving co-teaching services.
  - C. *Gather information* from student/teacher/parent surveys.
  - B. *Decide:*
    - What data will be gathered?
    - Who will do it?
    - How it will be done?
    - When will it happen?