

Competitive Co-Teaching

Using parallel teaching to turn traditional lessons into an exciting learning game



Introduction

Competitive co-teaching is a parallel strategy that can be used during a single lesson, a group of lessons, or even an entire unit with dramatic results.

As in regular parallel teaching, the class is divided up into two groups. Each co-teacher takes one of the groups and works to help them master the concepts or skills for that particular lesson. However, in this case each group is considered a “team.” Co-teachers act as coaches, training and preparing their group for one or more competition-style assessments.

There are innumerable variations on this premise, ranging from single day match-up to unit-long “seasons.” Rules can be sport-like, game show inspired, or involve a more role-playing design. Victory can be decided in a single assessment or be tallied from a number of match-ups. The possibilities are literally too many to mention. However, we provide a variety of materials and even a few examples on our website.

Unusual Opportunities

The nature of your “competition” should be made extremely clear to students ahead of time, but can be adjusted to incorporate any issues you may feel need addressing in your classes. Is homework not being turned in efficiently? Award points to each team for every assignment turned in by an individual. Are tardies a problem at your school? Bonus points at the end of the week to the team with the fewest. Using an in-class review game (with points subtracted for talking out of turn) can be a great way to train classes in the art of raising their hand.

Is homework not being turned in? Award points for completed work.

Are tardies a problem? Grant bonus points at the end of each week for the team with the fewest.

Are students blurting out answers? Review games with points lost for not raising your hands can help create the climate you want.

Team Time

One of the most important components to playing on a team is feeling like a team. Optimizing competitive co-teaching for success requires that you commit some of your instructional time to allowing students to take ownership of their group identity. In the case of a “build your own business”-style Math simulation, for example, this might mean naming their company, creating a logo, and even deciding what it is their company does. In the case of a fictitious sports “rivalry,” it may mean nominating their own captains or decorating their side of the room...their “home field.” Allowing a little time for creative preparation (and incorporating update opportunities in the event of a longer-term competition) can mean the difference between excited success and pseudo-indifference.