

# Perpendicular Co-Teaching

## Introduction

- Creates a universal learning foundation before dividing students into groups.

- Increases the number of approaches and concepts that can be covered.

- Can be used to provide preteaching, reteaching, or peer tutoring opportunities.

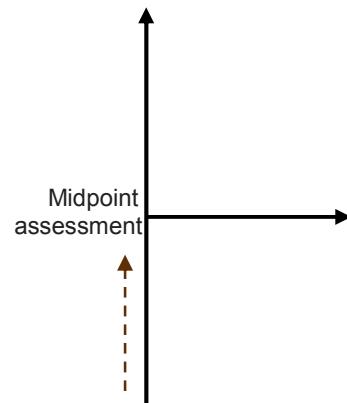
- Differentiates instruction dependent upon evidenced learning.

Most co-teaching pairs are familiar with the parallel teaching strategy, where two teachers present different lessons or oversee separate activities on the same skill or concept. This can, of course, be a highly effective model. It allows for teachers to work with multiple learning styles, and to create the illusion of a small group setting in even the most populated classrooms.

Perpendicular co-teaching, by comparison, is a process which lays a universal group foundation before splitting the class and sending the two sections off in very different directions.

This can serve several different purposes. Consider the example in Figure 1. Halfway through working with a concept, an assessment has shown that a handful of the group already meets or exceeds the teacher's intended goal. In response, another directing arrow has been branched off the main unit representing alternate curriculum.

The deviating line follows the students who have already met the stated goals (Figure 2). Exactly what that deviation represents can depend on what you deem important. It can of course be a separate lesson which pushes the same skill further into the stratosphere, in which case the figure might be better represented with a different, not so perpendicular line.

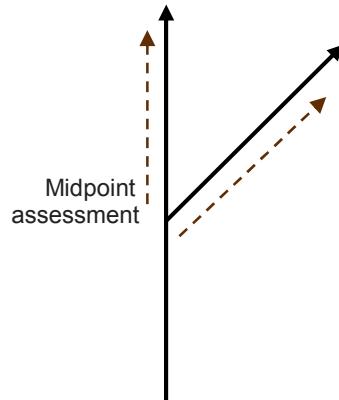


**Figure 1**

## Perpendicular Planning

Depending on what your goals or concerns, the perpendicular line branching off the main unit may represent any number of other skills or themes. Some possible approaches are listed on the following page. There are reasons to tread carefully when approaching this type of teaching. By removing those students who are already showing mastery of a skill set from a classroom, you do risk eliminating some of the social learning that occurs. If handled professionally and delivered using appropriate lessons and activities, it absolutely can produce remarkable results.

Please feel free to look through the following resources available on our site:



**Figure 2**

## Uses for Perpendicular Co-Teaching

- **Preteaching the next unit**

This is generally done as preparation for student-led group activities. It's not news to anyone that giving each student in a group a specific role ensures greater participation. But by taking this provided opportunity to provide leaders with additional background knowledge, you can ensure a better final product and improved learning among all members of the group. Furthermore, by doing so you will validate the leadership status of each group's guiding member. It's amazing just how significantly students respond to the notion that another student knows more than they do. This helps prevent devolution into chaos and even makes the very idea of 'roles' seem more significant to the students.

- **Teaching a skill or concept you normally aren't able to**

This is an opportunity for you to work with interesting skills or concepts that may connect to your curriculum but for which your regular class schedule does not provide time. We've all had "Man, I wish I could teach this," moments. What better chance will you have? Nobody will ever claim that everything valuable to your subject matter is included in your pacing guide, or content standards, etc. Perpendicular co-teaching can provide an opportunity to appreciate that.

- **Reteaching something that proved difficult**

It's nearly impossible to predict which concepts students will have the hardest time with, and we don't always feel like we have the time to go back and reteach to the degree that we'd like to. This option is pretty self-descriptive, but one side-note: one of the trickiest aspects of teaching is returning to previously taught material. Too often, our curriculum and testing schedules force us to push ahead with relentless determination, leaving each skill or concept coughing in the dust. Taking this time to reflect on previous concepts, successful or otherwise, can be highly valuable.

- **Peer tutor training**

This is typically done so that you can bring those students back into the regular classroom near the end of the unit to help others. Especially at the Middle level, social skill-related training can be a game changer. Spending the first half of the unit teaching the handful who already have the skill how to appropriately handle the responsibility (see our peer-tutoring related materials) can be academically valuable to all students. When you return them to the classroom for the second half of the unit that training will make peer tutoring activities far more cognitively lucrative than they otherwise might be...and promote higher learning among tutors as well as their peers.