

TABLE 15.2

Wise & Well-Crafted Responses to Parallel Teaching Objections

Objections to parallel teaching	Wise and well-crafted responses to parallel teaching objections
<p>“We don’t have enough room for two teachers to conduct two different lessons in my room.”</p>	<p>Many teachers use a parallel model inside the classroom, but this is not necessarily the way you need to engineer your parallel teaching model. You might use a parallel teaching model when you have another classroom space available, when you can go outside, when the library or computer lab is open or when the lesson is conducive to working in the hallway.</p> <p>Having shared that, some teams find that teaching two groups in the same classroom can work effectively if simple guidelines are followed. For instance, share rules about voice volume and adapt seating so learners can sit in close proximity to one another. Young children can sit on the floor and older students can abandon desks and pull up chairs.</p>
<p>“My co-teacher doesn’t know the material well enough to teach a lesson on it.”</p>	<p>Teachers using a parallel teaching model do not need to be equal experts on the targeted content. Sometimes one educator may be willing to increase his or her knowledge base to teach the material. If there is a significant gap between the expertise levels of the team members, however, simply use parallel teaching to engage students differently in the two groups.</p> <p>One half of the class might be working on review problems with a partner while the other group learns a new concept. After an agreed-upon time period, students switch groups. In this version of parallel teaching, the teacher facilitating the review need not have the same level of content expertise as the one teaching the new material.</p>
<p>“Pacing is a problem. We struggle to finish our lessons at the same time. Therefore, when we come back together, groups may not have received the same content.”</p>	<p>This is a fixable problem. It does take some practice to learn to time lessons with your co-teaching partner, but those who do acquire this skill so often find that it helps them to improve their teaching. Teams who pace their lessons together must learn to stick to their plans, manage their time and be very concise about their goals and expected outcomes.</p> <p>Use tools such as timers, detailed lesson plans and cell phones/texting to keep your plans in sync as much as possible. You can also teach students to begin another activity (e.g., flashcard practice, journaling) while they wait for the other half of the class to return and be ready for the next part of the lesson.</p>
<p>“It is disruptive to move students and desks. We lose valuable instructional time during the transitions.”</p>	<p>This is a reasonable objection, but should not be a reason to throw parallel teaching “out with the bath water.” Instead, work with students on more seamless transitions. Tighten up the process by presenting clear directions, demonstrating how you want students to move their materials and/or transition to new spaces and starting and ending lesson segments on time. Or make it into a game; use a timer and see how fast students can transition and challenge them to beat their previous transition times.</p>
<p>“It’s easier to teach one whole-class lesson than to divide the students and teach the same content twice.”</p>	<p>It may indeed be easier to teach whole-group lessons, but the question should not be, “Which model is easier?” The question should be, “Which model is best for students?”</p> <p>The answer, of course, is “all of them,” meaning that teachers in the best co-taught classrooms use a wide range of structures including parallel teaching. The reason teachers should be tapping into parallel teaching—at least occasionally—is because it offers some benefits that the others do not.</p>