


2017

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Coteaching

Geeta Gupta Kadakia
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

 Part of the [Educational Psychology Commons](#), [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#), [Elementary Education and Teaching Commons](#), [Special Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Geeta Gupta Kadakia

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Lucian Szilzewski, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Elizabeth Warren, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Paul Englesberg, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2017

Abstract

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Coteaching

by

Geeta Gupta Kadakia

MEd, University of Houston, 2008

BBA, University of Houston, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2017

Abstract

In response to the low passing rate of its students with disabilities, administrators at a small urban elementary school in south Texas implemented coteaching. Guided by Nonaka and Takeuchi's collaborative learning framework, this qualitative instrumental case study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of collaborative teaching in the elementary education setting. Data collection consisted of a group interview and classroom observations with a purposeful sample of 4 general education teachers and 2 special education teachers of Grades 3-5 math and language arts who were coteaching at the time of the study. Teachers' perceptions regarding the effects of their professional relationship on collaboration efforts and of the effectiveness of coteaching in meeting the needs of students with disabilities were examined. Emergent themes were identified from the data through open coding and verified through NVivo and a peer reviewer. The findings showed that participants perceived coteaching to be an effective teaching strategy for working with students with disabilities. They suggested the following areas for improvement in their school's current coteaching program: parity among teachers, administrative support, shared planning time, relevancy of training, collaboration, and follow through regarding the roles and responsibilities of teachers. Based on the results, a professional development workshop was developed to improve the overall effectiveness of the coteaching program and better meet the needs of students with various disabilities in general education classrooms. The provision of training through the workshop may positively affect teachers' perceptions and implementation of coteaching. An improved academic environment in cotaught classrooms may benefit students with disabilities.

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Coteaching

by

Geeta Gupta Kadakia

MEd, University of Houston, 2008

BBA, University of Houston, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2017

Dedication

First and foremost, all praise, honor, and glory go to God, who has given me the courage and strength to stay focused on my goal of earning a doctoral degree. Without His help, I could not have achieved this distinguished honor. This paper is dedicated to my husband, Ankur, and my daughter, Jasmine. They have supported me through this process and have been the inspiration and motivation for all of my endeavors. I hope I have set an example to my daughter of how perseverance, determination, goal setting, and hard work are keys to achieving any dream at any age. Praise goes to my dear sister and brother-in-law, who believed in me and supported my dream of completing a doctoral program. Honor goes to my wonderful parents who instilled in me a love for learning from a very young age and who continue to motivate me to be the best person I can be. I would also like to give honor to my chairperson, Dr. Lucian Szlizewski, who has been with me from day one of this doctoral study providing encouragement and support while I completed the program.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the staff members at Walden University who have been instrumental in helping me complete this study. I express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Lucian Szlizewski, Dr. Elizabeth Warren, and Dr. Paul Englesberg for their ongoing support and commitment to mentoring me through the doctoral writing process and the eventual completion of a scholarly study. I would also like to acknowledge and express heartfelt appreciation to the faculty and staff of the participating school district for their assistance and support during my research. Thank you to all my family and friends who have been with me on this journey and remained a reliable presence in my life.

Table of Contents

Section 1: The Problem.....	1
Definition of The Local Problem.....	1
Rationale.....	2
Definition of Terms.....	4
Significance of the Study.....	5
Research Questions.....	6
Review of the Literature.....	6
Collaborative Learning Environments.....	7
Teacher Collaboration and Student Achievement.....	10
Teachers' Perceptions of Coteaching Practices.....	12
Indicators of Successful Implementation and Challenges.....	13
Implications.....	17
Summary.....	18
Section 2: The Methodology.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Qualitative Research Design and Approach.....	20
Ethical Protection of the Participants.....	21
Role of the Researcher.....	22
Participants.....	23
Data Collection.....	24
Focus Group Interview.....	24
Participant Observations.....	26

Data Analysis	27
Evidence of Quality	29
Discrepant Cases.....	29
Findings.....	30
Focus Group Interview	31
Observation Data	40
Conclusion	42
Research Limitations	45
Project as an Outcome	46
Section 3: The Project.....	48
Introduction.....	48
Description of Proposed Project	48
Project Goals.....	50
Rationale	51
Scholarly Rationale for Project Genre	52
Rationale Based on the Problem	52
Review of the Literature	54
Professional Development and Coteaching	55
Professional Learning Communities and Coteaching.....	58
Project Description.....	61
Description of the Project	61
Potential Resources and Existing Supports.....	62
Potential Barriers	62

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable.....	63
Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Others.....	66
Project Evaluation Plan.....	66
Project Implications	67
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	69
Project Strengths	69
Recommendation for Remediation of Project Limitations	70
Scholarship.....	71
Project Development and Evaluation.....	72
Leadership and Change.....	72
Analysis of Self as a Scholar	73
Analysis of Self as a Practitioner	73
Analysis of Self as a Project Developer.....	73
Reflection on Importance of the Work	75
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research.....	76
Conclusion	77
References.....	79
Appendix A: The Project	92
Appendix B: Group Interview Questions	123
Appendix C: Observation Matrix.....	125
Appendix D: Sample Field Notes	126

List of Tables

Table 1. Professional Development for Improving Coteaching Program in the Study

School 64

Section 1: The Problem

Definition of The Local Problem

I conducted this qualitative instrumental case study to gauge teachers' perceptions of their collaborative teaching or coteaching practices within an elementary school in a small school district in Houston, Texas. At the time of the study, the district was in the process of implementing coteaching as an inclusion model for educating students with disabilities. Researchers have defined coteaching as a classroom arrangement that brings general education and special education teachers together to strategize, execute, and evaluate instruction in general education classroom settings (see Brinkmann & Twiford, 2012; Brown, Howerter, & Morgan, 2013; Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & Mcculley, 2012; Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012).

Students in the study district have not met their adequate yearly progress (AYP) benchmarks in the subgroup area of special education. According to district administrators, this failure is partially due to the significant changes that assessment in special education has undergone since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; 2002). In addition to requiring the implementation of a variety of mandates regarding school accountability, NCLB also included requirements concerning measurement of yearly progress for students with disabilities (NCLB; 2002). In order to enhance the academic progress of students with disabilities, legislators focused NCLB on improving the quality of teaching and learning (NCLB; 2002). As a result, policymakers and education leaders in school districts across the United States have continued to explore a variety of legal mandates and best practices to improve special education

programs and facilitating higher-quality teaching and learning for these students (NCLB; 2002).

Since the passage of NCLB in 2001, the study district has continually revised its special education programs to meet the mandated requirements for accountability and measurement of progress. The implementation of coteaching as an inclusion program was one strategy that administrators and teachers used in an effort to address the requirements of NCLB. To understand the impact of NCLB mandates on teachers in an inclusion setting, I examined district teachers' perceptions of their coteaching practices.

Rationale

In this case study, I examined district teachers' perceptions of coteaching to explore why they did not meet the requirements of NCLB as measured by the AYP of students with disabilities. The measured progress for students with disabilities was below the 87% passing rate in both math and reading for the 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 school years (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2011, p. 1; TEA, 2012, p. 1). Failure to meet AYP for 2 consecutive years in both content areas led administrators to revise the district's existing improvement plan. The revised improvement plan included the implementation of several new programs that emphasized special education. The revised plan also included the use of coteaching to integrate students with learning disabilities into the general education classrooms.

A closer examination of TEA's (2011, 2012) AYP data on district performance from 2010 to 2012 led me to the identification of a gap between the passing rates of general education and special education students on all standardized assessments. For

instance, in 2011 the passing rate for students in special education was 65%, which was 23% below that of general education students (TEA, 2012, p. 1). In 2012, the passing rate for students in special education was 64%, which was 25% below that of general education students (TEA, 2012, p. 1). The low passing rates for special education students concerned district administrators as this demonstrated a widening achievement gap between general education and special education students over time and across grade levels.

Administrators in the district recognized that closing the performance gap was necessary for the district to meet its AYP. To close the gap and satisfy NCLB requirements, district administrators decided to implement a district-wide coteaching program. Coteaching was a new scenario for the district, as the district had previously only provided math, reading, and writing instruction for students with special needs in an alternate setting that was designed to maintain a small student-teacher ratio. Researchers have found that coteaching can be an operative method for increasing teacher productivity and student achievement, assuming that it is implemented properly (Brown et al., 2013; Routman, 2012; Walsh, 2012). As a result, I expected that my investigation would be helpful in determining whether coteaching had been effective in increasing teacher productivity in the district.

In spite of their intentions to improve student outcomes through coteaching, administrators did not know about the effectiveness of coteaching, as measured by coteachers' perceptions of their teaching relationships. Current research indicates that the goal of improving student outcomes through coteaching is dependent on an effective

relationship between teachers (Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, & Blanks, 2010; Sileo, 2011; Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013). Because teachers in the district have worked autonomously until recently, they found the notion of a blended classroom with two teachers to be a new concept. Researchers have identified factors including communication skills, preparation time, instruction, and conflict resolution that improve collaboration between coteachers (see Brown et al., 2013; Ploessl et al., 2010). By addressing the relationship between coteaching and student outcomes, I sought to add to the existing knowledge base on coteaching effectiveness and the influence of this teaching strategy on teacher collaboration and student outcomes.

Definition of Terms

I used the following terms and definitions throughout this study to describe collaborative practices and inclusion programs:

Adequate yearly progress: An annual evaluation system used by public schools, school districts, and states to determine progress in meeting the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (TEA, 2013).

Coteaching: The teaming of a general and a special education teacher to plan, deliver, and assess instruction in the general education classroom (Friend & Bursuck, 2012).

Collaboration: A professional relationship based on shared expectations and outcomes that create a community of trust and respect (Friend & Cook, 2010).

Inclusion model: A term used to describe instructional options for educating all students, including those with and without disabilities, in the general education classroom (Austin, 2001).

Individualized education program: A document written by the IEP team to describe the instructional design and process for meeting student needs based on individual assessment (Dixie, 2000).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: A U.S. federal law that was enacted to improve the education of all students through increased accountability in schools, research-based instruction performed by quality teachers, and parental options for underperforming schools (Smith & Kovacs, 2011). NCLB was replaced on January 1, 2016, with Every Student Succeeds Act (2015-2016).

Significance of the Study

The objective of this qualitative instrumental case study was to explore perceptions concerning collaborative practices among a group of special and regular education teachers. I conducted a group interview and observed teachers to gather data at an elementary school in the district. At my study site, students with disabilities received instruction in an inclusive setting that required teachers to use collaborative practices in the general education classrooms. Two general education teachers and two special education teachers participated in the group interview, and four general education teachers and two special education teachers participated in the observations. The information I collected in this study may provide district administrators with insight about teachers' attitudes toward coteaching. The data could also be used by

administrators to develop an action plan to promote successful collaboration in classrooms.

Research Questions

Many researchers have examined teachers' perceptions of coteaching (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, & Patterson, 2016; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017), but according to the literature, only some research has been done on the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their coteaching practices and the academic outcomes of students with disabilities. If district administrators wish to enhance special education programming in order to increase student achievement, they as well as their teachers need research on the local practices currently used in classrooms, particularly with respect to the roles and relationship between general education and special education teachers. The knowledge gained by this study may help teachers to better understand how to close the education gap by making the connection between classroom practices and student outcomes. I developed the following research questions based on these lines of thought:

RQ1: How do teachers perceive collaboration as a teaching strategy?

RQ2: How do coteachers perceive the effectiveness of the coteaching program to meet the various disability types among the special education population?

Review of the Literature

The purpose of the literature review was to explore the relationship between coteaching and student outcomes through an examination of the following themes: impact of teacher collaboration on student achievement, teachers' perceptions of coteaching practices, and indicators of successful implementation. In composing the

literature review, I also considered subtopics such as the effects of teacher collaboration on student achievement to understand the achievement-related implications of coteaching's bringing together the knowledge and expertise of two individuals. In the literature review, I describe how various teacher experiences influence teacher perceptions. An overview of the extant research on successful coteaching concludes the review of the literature.

Walden University Library databases were the primary means by which I accessed the source used in the literature review. The databases I searched included the following: Education Resource Information Center, ProQuest Central, Education Research Complete, and Academic Search Complete. I also incorporated literature which I obtained from Google Scholar, textbooks, and the state department of education website. While conducting the literature review, I used key terms such as *collaborative teaching*, *coteaching*, *special education*, *teachers' perceptions*, and *student achievement outcomes*. Although I wanted to limit research to the past 5 years, I had to delve further back into the literature for additional relevant information due to a lack of available sources.

Collaborative Learning Environments

In this case study, I relied on Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) framework of collaborative learning environments as a theoretical lens for examining the coteaching of students with disabilities in the study district. Because coteaching involves the bringing together of teachers so that they may use their individual expertise for a common goal (Murawski & Swanson, 2001) I felt it was important to draw from a framework that

addresses workers' competency in a joint relationship to meet a common organizational goal.

A thorough examination of Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) framework on collaborative learning environments reveals that successful collaboration involves intellectual growth among workers' ongoing communication, a joint working environment, and an opportunity for reflection. In their study of Japanese companies, Nonaka and Takeuchi identified four dimensions of learning that produce success in a collaborative setting. The four dimensions—socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization—involve using collaboration to build new knowledge among individuals, which then affects the productivity of the group (p. 62).

The first dimension of Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) framework is *socialization*, or how one's tacit knowledge may be enhanced through shared experiences achieved by way of observation and practice. Coteachers who begin developing the skills needed for collaboration often engage in professional development and on-the-job training (Friend & Cook, 2010). The second dimension is called *externalization*, which involves turning tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Learning often occurs when workers who spent time together sharing their experiences, beliefs, and ideas. Once coteachers have a foundation of what coteaching is and how it operates, they often begin conversing more successfully about their learning beliefs and ideas regarding how to instruct a diverse group of learners. *Combination*, the third dimension in the framework, refers to the transfer of explicit knowledge shared with others to form new knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Coteachers can demonstrate this dimension through their

sharing of time, space in the classroom, and lesson plans to deliver instruction to students through a common platform. *Internalization*, the last dimension, refers to the process of turning explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge through shared activities. Coteachers demonstrate internalization in their practice when they come together to teach a group of students, reflect upon their experiences, and implement changes as needed to meet the needs of their learners (see Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) found that the culture of an organization changed as members shared in similar mental models. Similarly, coteachers often experience this same shift in thinking as they continuously work together to meet the needs of their students, absorb feedback, and improve the common ground on which they build their teaching practices. For this reason, I selected Nonaka & Takeuchi's (1995) framework on collaborative learning environments to serve as a guide for my qualitative instrumental case study.

U.S. educational reform seems to be dominated by a continuing focus on increasing teacher performance and improving student outcomes rather than on collaboration among the individuals responsible for achieving these outcomes. A collaborative framework could be a key factor in successfully meeting the shared goals of teachers. In addition, a collaborative learning environment often requires a mindful effort on the part of participants to work together through knowledge dissemination to meet the outcomes of an organization (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). To determine if district administrators were fully using the knowledge each teacher brings to the classroom, I

used the collaborative learning environment framework as a guide to examine collaboration efforts among teachers and coteaching team objectives.

Teacher Collaboration and Student Achievement

A recurring theme in the literature was that student performance improved when two individuals brought their expertise together through collaboration. Coteaching has been found to be an effective means of collaboration that increases student achievement and professional growth among teachers (Brown et al., 2013; Eccleston, 2010; Moolenaar, Slegers, & Daly, 2012; Routman, 2012; Walsh, 2012). Effective collaboration was described by Murawski and Hughes (2009) as the self-directed efforts of colleagues with different skillsets to produce research-based lessons that had the following aspects: (a) the lessons were geared toward the various types of learners in the classroom, (b) the lessons provided students with special needs access to the general education curriculum, (c) the lessons allowed for the continual collection of data so as to allow for progress monitoring, and (d) the lessons provided more individualized small-group instruction. Teachers who were able to use these four elements in their teaching practice often found that their collaboration efforts were improved.

An example of how effective collaboration leads to improved student outcomes can be found in the work of Kinzer and Taft (2012). In their examination of optimal leadership practices in an elementary school, the authors found that the leading quality among successful teachers in the school was their focus on engaging in a “professional learning community” that was predicated on teacher collaboration (p. 18). Kinzer and Taft found that when the school provided a common planning time for grade-level

teaching teams to meet with the special education teachers to write lessons, examine formative assessments, review student achievement data, and plan student interventions, the teachers were able to narrow the gap in test scores among students.

Several other researchers found results that were in alignment with the work of Kinzer and Taft. For instance, Murawski and Swanson (2001) conducted a metasynthesis that included six studies looking at the effectiveness of coteaching models for the time period of 1991 to 1998. After analyzing the results of the six studies, Murawski and Swanson found that coteaching had a significant and positive impact on student outcomes in language arts scores and a moderate impact on student outcomes in math scores. Their recommendations for further research on coteaching involved a suggestion to look specifically at the areas of coteaching and student outcomes “as a function of gender, grade, disability type, severity of disability, and subject matter” (p. 265). Hang and Rabren (2009) looked at these recommended factors, as their research compared the outcomes of students with special needs who were pulled out of regular instruction classrooms for instruction in remedial or special education resource rooms the previous year with student outcomes associated with being in a cotaught classroom. Their findings indicated that students with special needs in a cotaught classroom scored significantly higher on standardized tests, as compared to the previous year when they were pulled out for instruction in an alternative setting. In other words, coteaching special needs students could help to increase student achievement.

Wischnowski, Salmon, and Eaton (2004) conducted a study in the Geneseo Central School District in New York that supported the idea that coteaching and

formative assessment could close educational gaps and increase student achievement.

The study occurred over a 2-year period and monitored the progress of special needs students in coteaching classrooms at the elementary and middle school levels.

Wischnowski et al. showed that students with special needs made greater progress through the curriculum when teachers cotaught. On the basis of the evidence, coteaching is found to be successful in improving the educational outcomes of students. But what do teachers themselves think of coteaching practices?

Teachers' Perceptions of Coteaching Practices

The use of collaborative teaching in schools appears to be a growing phenomenon, so evaluating and understanding teachers' perceptions of coteaching practices to enhance their relationships is imperative. Researchers have highlighted discrepancies in teachers' understanding of what coteaching is and how to properly implement coteaching. For example, in one study, Scruggs and Mastropieri (2017) used a short vignette about a pair of coteachers to describe the challenges they faced in the initial stages of coteaching. In the vignette, the general education teacher had been teaching for 15 years and viewed the new special education teacher as a support member whose role was to come into the classroom and work one-on-one with students in need or to work with a small group of students in one corner of the classroom on their independent work. Despite the special education teacher being a highly qualified teacher, the general education teacher appeared to not understand their role in a coteaching setting. During the general education teacher's planning period, the special education teacher was teaching in the resource classroom. Scruggs and Mastropieri (2017) used this

example to highlight how many coteachers often see themselves when assigned to coteaching. Pratt et al. (2016) also spoke to this point concerning the challenges that are present in a collaborative teaching setting. Pratt et al. (2016) stated that teachers lack of planning time may have been a reason why they utilized the one teach, one assist model in the classroom with the special education teacher assisting the general education teacher. Pratt et al. (2016) wrote that for coteaching relationships, different philosophies, different instructional approaches, and different priorities are often foundational challenges to coplanning.

Panscofar and Petroff (2013) examined how properly implemented coteaching might contribute to successful coteaching and whether teacher training played a part. The authors concluded that teachers' confidence levels, attitudes toward coteaching, and ability to coteach were positive when they engaged in both preservice and in-service training. In other words, veteran teachers responded with less enthusiasm about their ability to coteach due to a lack of preservice training and feelings of a lack of preparedness when compared with less-experienced teachers who had received preservice training. In addition, the general educators in the study tended to be less engaged in coteaching and more likely to have a negative attitude toward coteaching. These combined factors determined whether respondents in the study found coteaching to be successful.

Indicators of Successful Implementation and Challenges

Researchers have identified several practices that meet the needs of all students and support high student achievement. For instance, Guise, Habib, Robbins, Hegg,

Hoellwarth, and Stauch, 2016 found three key components to coteaching that lead to successful implementation: coplanning, coconstructing, and coassessing. Not only was the collaboration effort in the classroom important, but preplanning and post-assessment by teachers were equally important for effective teaching. Friend and Cook (2010) noted that effective coplanning takes place when planning meetings are specifically structured to have an agenda that addresses the curriculum, coteaching approaches, and what is required to meet students' needs. If coteachers do not address one of these components, then the implementation of coteaching in the classroom may not be as effective compared with teachers who spend time together in the planning phase.

After coplanning, teachers apply their plans during coinstruction. *Coconstructing* describes the six distinct instructional approaches developed by Friend and Cook (2010). These coconstructing approaches include: (a) one teaching, one observing; (b) station teaching; (c) parallel teaching; (d) alternative teaching; (e) teaming; and (f) one teaching and one assisting (Friend & Cook, 2010). Teachers use one or more combinations of these instructional approaches in the classroom to best meet an instructional objective. As Conderman and Hedin (2012) noted, successful coinstruction was designed so that teachers could use their expertise as part of their instructional role. By incorporating their instructional role into the planning stages, teachers were equally involved in the teaching process, and students view teachers as equals in the classroom.

To identify whether teachers met the needs of each student through coplanning and coconstructing, teachers use coassessments. Conderman and Hedin (2012) described coassessment as a collaborative effort that uses multiple sources of teacher reflections to

determine the effectiveness of instruction. Conderman and Hedin (2012) articulated a four-step process of coassessment that included the following: (1) an initial discussion of assessment philosophies between teachers, (2) a review of available progress monitoring data before coplanning, (3) having teachers monitor student learning through the various coteaching arrangements, and (4) concluding with a formative assessment during instruction and then a summative assessment after instruction. This detailed process of assessing teacher and student outcomes provided an effective tool for teachers to make data-informed decisions regarding their instructional approach to teaching. Ploessl et al. (2010) supported this practice and noted that by following a descriptive process teachers were able to focus on the individual needs of students while eliminating opinion-driven decision making.

Researchers also identified several factors that impeded coteaching. These included compatibility of teachers, a teacher's confidence in his or her knowledge base, a lack of preparation, and the influence of high-stakes standardized testing (Mastropieri et al., 2005; Pugach & Winn, 2011; Shin, Lee, & McKenna, 2016). One example of this was the work of Pugach and Winn (2011). They found that teachers who volunteered to be coteachers showed mutual respect for one another and worked well together, but compatibility and ownership issues of the classroom arose among teachers who were put together without their consent. Because the foundation of coteaching is the relationship between the two teachers, administrators should seek to develop coteaching teams on a volunteer basis that encourages a pleasant arrangement.

Similar to the work of Pugach and Winn (2011) was that of Shin et al. (2016), who addressed various challenges among coteaching roles and found that special educators did not always feel confident in their ability to teach content matter to students. Their work emphasized the need for teachers to have an open relationship with one another in which both teachers feel safe to voice their concerns. For example, to address the issue of confidence and engage both the general education teacher and the special education teacher in the lesson, it may be important for teachers to have this discussion during a planning session. In the planning session, the teachers could decide which instructional model of coteaching they would use so that both teachers are equally prepared and confident in their roles.

Another factor identified that impedes coteaching was high-stakes standardized testing. The amount of time teachers allocated to teaching test concepts may have affected the services received by special education students. For example, special education students may have had an individualized education program (IEP) that was being sidelined due to a focus on testing. Mastropieri et al. (2005) found that the emphasis on high-stakes standardized testing had the greatest negative impact on collaboration efforts among teachers. This was important for teachers and administrators to recognize, because if special education teachers were not able to collaborate with their team teachers, then the responsibility was left on one teacher to ensure that every child with an IEP was being instructed properly. Having only one responsible teacher did not meet the expectation of coteaching.

Implications

The information collected as part of this qualitative instrumental case study was expected to help increase administrator and teacher knowledge of collaborative teaching and create positive perceptions of inclusive education for students with disabilities. The aims of the current study were accomplished in part by identifying the key aspects influencing teachers' attitudes (either positive or negative) toward collaboration. Once identified, the gathered information could be used as the basis for devising strategies for implementing effective teacher collaboration programs within the district. In addition, the findings associated with this study were expected to help create greater teacher awareness of their own perceptions of working with students who have disabilities. In other words, informing teachers of their attitudes toward their students may help them to be more effective in terms of educating their own students.

This study suggests that information on systematic instruction and collaborative planning for those who work directly with students with disabilities should be provided at the local level to effect needed change. For example, collaborative planning by teachers (i.e., working together to achieve optimal teaching techniques) should help teachers to discover the best methods of instruction for their students. Collaborative planning should also allow teachers to share knowledge and incorporate that shared knowledge into their IEP, thereby allowing teachers to more easily meet mandated local standards through the use of a standardized instruction plan (Storey & Miner, 2017). An investigation of current teachers' instructional planning could also yield findings that

would provide teachers with useful data on how systematic instructional planning can meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Some implications for social change may be informing researchers, educators, and administrators who are searching for information as they start a coteaching program, or who are looking for ways to improve the current coteaching programs to meet the needs of students with disabilities. For example, this study may provide information on effective coteaching strategies, offer an honest look at how collaborative relationships may affect teacher performance and student outcomes, and bring to light the role that administrators may play in providing an environment for coteaching to thrive for everyone involved.

Summary

This qualitative instrumental case study examined the views of teachers' collaboration efforts and effectiveness in meeting the needs of students with disabilities through data collected through a single group interview using a predetermined list of questions that guided the interview, and teacher observations. Another aspect examined was the effectiveness of coteaching as a service delivery model to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Data were gathered from one elementary school in the district where coteaching has been implemented to improve the academic success of students with special needs. To address possible factors contributing to the problem with collaboration and student achievement, I explored the topics of teacher collaboration and student achievement, teachers' perceptions of their coteaching practices, and challenges and indicators of successful implementation in inclusive classrooms.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The aim of this qualitative instrumental case study was to identify and better define teachers' perceptions of the collaborative practices they used in instructing students with disabilities. As Horn (2008) noted, in an era where teacher interdependence is becoming the normal structure in schools, it is the case that teachers are becoming the perfect candidates to provide inquiry into their particular arrangements and daily experiences. One way I found to access the daily experiences and particular arrangements of teachers was via qualitative inquiry. Qualitative researchers often use a wide variety of "interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject at hand" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 4).

Throughout the literature review, relevant data regarding teacher collaboration efforts and student achievement, qualitative data on teachers' perceptions of their coteaching practices, and challenges and indicators of successful implementation were presented. To add to the knowledge base of coteaching and teacher perceptions that I discussed in the literature review, I examined the professional collaborative relationship between teachers and explored teachers' ratings of their effectiveness to meet the various needs of students in special education as part of my project work. The data I collected in this study were expected to help inform teachers of ways to effectively work together in a collaborative teaching setting to improve instruction for all students.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

I used a qualitative instrumental case study design to attempt to gain insight regarding the perceptions of coteaching practices among general education and special education teachers. Teachers' perceptions were the central phenomenon, or key concept of inquiry, for my investigation. Data on teachers' perceptions were collected through a focus group interview and participant observations. Then, I conducted a document analysis as a way of achieving triangulation of data. Teachers were given an opportunity to review the transcription and observation notes to comment and affirm the authenticity of the data as well as to correct any misstatements on their part.

When exploring and understanding the topic of teachers' perceptions thoroughly, I drew upon the methodological arguments of Bromley (1986) -- namely, that a qualitative method should be used when a researcher seeks to gain access to individuals' thoughts, feelings, and desires. Therefore, I used multiple methods (focus group interview and participant observations) in the hope that each method would add insight into my understanding of teachers' perceptions. Stake (2000) further supported the use of a qualitative instrumental case study because, he noted, it is a technique that "provides insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization" (p. 437). I began the case study with a big issue in mind, but then I delved into a deeper exploration of the issue under investigation.

I reviewed several different qualitative data collection techniques before choosing a combination of focus group interview and participant observation as my means of gathering data. My decision to use these data collection techniques was compelled by the

understanding that these techniques would allow for the gathering of broader data as compared to “data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group” (Morgan, 1997, p.2). Kitzinger (1995) asserted that the data collection technique of focus groups was valuable “for exploring people’s knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way” (p. 299). Participant observation was also selected as a data gathering technique to supplement the data collected through the focus group interview. Polkinghorne (2005) describes participant observations as a method to gain clarity of the data collected via focus group interviews. Therefore, focus group interviews and participant observations appeared to be the best combination of methods for collecting in-depth data on teachers’ perceptions.

Ethical Protection of the Participants

I obtained written consent from the community partner, thereby allowing the research to be conducted within my target district. I did not contact any potential participants for this study until I received Walden University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (IRB # 03-17-15-0177935). I met with the director of curriculum for special education and the community partner to discuss which teachers met the selection criteria and which administrators might allow me to enter their schools and work with their teachers.

Once I received Walden IRB approval to conduct the study, three administrators were contacted by the community partner. One campus administrator permitted me to enter her school and contact potential participants. To begin the informed consent

process, I contacted potential participants individually via the e-mail that was listed on the staff page of the district website. This was done to notify prospective participants of the purpose of the study, their possible role in it, and the potential benefits of study participation. Once we established a meeting time, I met with the teachers at the interview site to inform them of the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, selection criteria, measures to ensure confidentiality, participant expectations, and the voluntary nature of the study. I informed the participants that they could refrain from answering any question and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Then, I addressed any questions individual participants had regarding the study.

Finally, an informed consent form was given to each participant, thereby allowing the interview to be recorded. Each participant was asked to sign the informed consent form after being given time to thoroughly review the form. All participants agreed to participate and signed the consent form. I provided each participant with a signed copy of the consent form. None of the participants had an adverse reaction due to his or her participation; as such, I believe that participation in the study did not harm participants. I kept the identity of participants and all data collected confidential, and I did not share this information with others.

Role of the Researcher

Characteristics of a qualitative instrumental case study include researcher-participant relationships that maintain a balance between the two. Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden (2001) described a balanced relationship as one that “encourages disclosure, trust, and awareness of potential ethical issues” (p. 93). Therefore, I created a climate

where others would be willing to share their experiences, and I sought to address issues that might arise during my investigation. For example, to maintain a positive rapport with participants throughout the study, I examined any possible threats to internal validity by examining environment and participant variables within the work setting. As a former teacher of students with disabilities in the district, I had a working relationship with some of the participants in either an instructional or a professional capacity. However, during my research, I was no longer employed at the district, which limited this possible threat to the internal validity of the study. To address potential bias, I did not share personal opinions about coteaching with participants. Instead, I portrayed the thoughts and opinions of participants in such a way as to maintain accuracy and individualism.

Participants

Nonprobability sampling is the ideal method for qualitative studies (Merriam, 2009); therefore, it was used to enroll participants in the study. A form of nonprobability sampling called purposeful sampling (Patton, 2001) was used to select participants in this study. Purposeful sampling assumes that the researcher wants to “discover, understand, and gain insight, and therefore, must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Teachers who were currently coteaching across various grade levels in the school were purposefully sampled. Teachers were invited to participate in the research study in three ways: by being a participant of the focus group interview only, by allowing for a participant observation in their classroom, or by being both a participant in the focus group and by allowing for a participant observation in their classroom. Four general education teachers and two special education teachers were

included in the sample, for a total of six participants from the school. Six teachers were observed, four of whom also participated in a group interview. This sampling methodology allowed for in-school comparisons concerning what was occurring in the coteaching program, the implications for student success, and data saturation (i.e., the point at which responses within the data became similar).

Data Collection

Focus Group Interview

An invitation to participate in the study was sent to two special education teachers and 11 general education teachers currently working in coteaching classrooms. A total of six teachers responded, with two of the teachers noting that they would only consent to participant observations due to other commitments during the time of the focus group. I followed up with these two teachers to attempt to secure other arrangements for interviews outside the focus group; however, having them commit to individual interviews was not an option due to their scheduling commitments. More specifically, I was unable to conduct an individual interview with either of the two teachers because their schedules and my schedule would not align. The focus group consisted of two special education teachers who cotaught in third and fourth grade, and two third grade general education teachers. The members of the focus group were asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions designed to allow participants an opportunity for dialogue with me and the teachers provided information that was rich in detail as well as a way to explore new ideas.

The questions used in this group interview came from the guiding research questions, literature review, and conceptual framework. A preliminary list of interview questions is contained in Appendix B. These questions were reviewed before their use in accordance with the procedures outlined by Turner (2010). To provide feedback on the content validity of the interview questions, I selected an expert panel of two general education specialists and two special education specialists who examined the interview questions to ensure the questions captured the intent of the study. The four panelists provided feedback as to possible revisions and modifications to the questions. None of these panelists participated in the focus group. After the expert review, the final interview questions were developed; these final questions were used in the group interview.

The focus group interview lasted 60 minutes and took place in a private room at the participants' school of employment with all the respondents. I was responsible for helping the respondents feel comfortable sharing their experiences freely. To ensure accuracy of the participants' views, the following measures were taken. First, the interview was audio recorded and transcribed by a third-party company. I then reviewed the transcript, and afterwards necessary changes were made to the transcription to ensure that it faithfully matched the audio recording. After the interview was transcribed, the participants were provided with a transcript of the interview to review for accuracy. To maintain the confidentiality of the participants in this study, the respondents were referred to as P1 through P4 (i.e., Participant 1 through Participant 4). All excerpts from the transcript presented in this paper were written verbatim from the respondents.

When creating codes, I looked for patterns or responses that appeared to be significant to the question being asked. When several respondents answered in similar ways, the data was coded for future reference. If a response was in disagreement with what the other respondents had answered, it was included in the analysis as a way of providing a counterpoint to the codes that were developed.

Participant Observations

I felt that participant observation could provide an excellent opportunity to obtain an accurate picture of what the participants described in the interview. Observing the events in the classroom helped me to verify the information provided in the interview and to note any inaccuracies in the descriptions provided by the participants. In addition to the four participants from the focus group, I observed one general education teacher from fourth grade, and one general education teacher from fifth grade during a coteaching session. The special education teachers each collaborated with two of the general education teachers, accounting for a total of four teacher pairs. Four classroom observations were conducted in the areas of math and language arts for a minimum of 20 minutes each. I took the role of a complete observer (Gold, 1958) by not participating or engaging in the classroom setting, only taking notes during the course of the observations in the setting. Note taking encompassed a record of the physical space and events that took place during the observation. To document aspects of coteaching and collaboration that occurred during the observation, I created and used an observation matrix (see Appendix C), as there were no locatable matrices in the literature that could easily be adapted to the needs of the research.

Data Analysis

In this study, I used a grounded theory approach to the data analysis as described by Berg and Lune (2012), Glaser and Strauss (1967), Neuman (2000), and Strauss and Corbin (1990) to gain insight into the perceptions of coteaching practices by general education and special education teachers. The first method I used in the analysis of the data was open coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Through the process of open coding, I conducted an initial reading of the transcript and observation notes to categorize and analyze the data to identify key words, phrases, and themes that were directly connected to the research questions. As Neuman (2000) has described, open coding “brings themes to the surface from deep inside the data” (p. 422). I reviewed the transcription and made any necessary corrections or changes to the transcript. I pulled out several noteworthy quotations to include as a memo in a separate document for future use. As I continued through the transcript, I identified key words and phrases that were relevant to answering the research questions. I sought to develop connections between the identified themes during the open coding step via the process of axial coding. As part of the axial coding process, connections were made among the words, ideas, statements, and phrases that were developed in the open coding stage (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Examples of these themes include the definition of coteaching, years working in a coteaching arrangement, participation grade levels for coteaching, participation in coteaching, and planning instruction. The codes developed during the axial phase of coding were then examined for any similar or contrasting ideas and compared among themes to examine how these codes related to one another.

Once the process of axial coding was complete, I then turned to selective coding, which is an examination of the data to identify whether codes previously developed in the open and axial coding stages are applicable to the literature and whether or not links between the two can be created (Berg & Lune, 2012). Neuman (2000) argued that selective coding can be used to see if the major themes and concepts either (a) are relevant within the context of the research or (b) can be used to build up an explanatory framework. By using Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded method of open, axial, and selective coding, I was able to identify relevant themes in the group interview data and bring together larger themes from the observation information to create an overarching explanatory framework relevant to the scope of the investigation.

The interview data yielded several themes and keywords through the coding process, but the various themes that were developed did not cleanly fit into an overarching explanatory framework during the first coding attempt. As a way to double check the codes that were developed and to see if any patterns could be identified from the interview data, I used the NVivo software package for analyzing data, which resulted in the development of several more tightly focused open and axial codes. These codes were used as a basis for the final selective codes that were ultimately developed.

To effectively confirm that the coding patterns within the data were sound, a third coding pass was conducted by a peer reviewer (Janesick, 2004). The peer reviewer was a colleague with experience in qualitative research and the coding process. The peer reviewer was able to offer themes and patterns that stood out within the data; these themes and patterns were consistent with what was developed in NVivo and during that

particular coding pass of the data. Janesick (2004) has found that an outside reader brings a fresh viewpoint to the data, and it is wise for a researcher in training to use an outside reader for all field notes and the interview transcript. Janesick's advice proved sound in the current analysis scenario.

Evidence of Quality

In a qualitative study, the procedures to address accuracy of the data are outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Lincoln and Guba proposed that establishing trustworthiness of data occurred through the following criteria: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. To address evidence of quality, I used triangulation to validate the accuracy of themes and other findings in the study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Hussein, 2009). I also used triangulation of interview and field data to identify similarities and validate the accuracy of the developed codes within the data. Then, I incorporated member checking by asking participants to review the transcribed interview to ensure that it accurately reflected their thoughts and words (Creswell, 2012). By using various methods to triangulate the data, the trustworthiness and quality of the data is established.

Discrepant Cases

To further test the validity of the data, a few other measures to analyze the data objectively were used. Maxwell (2012) described checking for discrepant cases as a key factor for ensuring the research is sound and not just a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (p. 126). To verify the accuracy of the statements made by coteachers in the interview, I conducted participant observations in the classroom during the coteaching sessions. Because the

current study was limited to a single group interview and only involved six participants from the same setting, this may have contributed to a lack of discrepant cases and variations. Discrepant cases may have been more evident if there were additional participants within the school or from various schools. Discrepant cases may have also been more evident if individual interviews had been part of the design. Nonetheless, some discrepancies between the experiences and views of special education teachers and general education teachers were found within the data. For example, Participants 1 and 4 noted that without a conference period with their coteachers, they were unable to plan in-depth even though they had access to the general education teacher's lesson plans online. During participant observations, Participant 1 was observed conducting a small group lesson with her students that was separate from the general education teacher's lesson. Participant 4, on the other hand, was observed teaching the same group lesson as the general education teacher using the same material as well. These minor discrepancies suggest that better planning and communication concerning coteaching practices would have been of use to the teachers themselves.

Findings

The research findings were analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers perceive collaboration as a teaching strategy?
2. How do coteachers perceive the effectiveness of the coteaching program to meet the various disability types among the special education population?

Focus Group Interview

The raw data from the participants' transcribed interview was analyzed to note specific themes that link back to the research questions in this study. The themes developed from the data are as follows: (a) lack of parity; (b) administrative support; (c) shared planning time; (d) relevancy of training; (e) collaboration and meeting the needs of students with various disabilities, and; (f) instructional challenges to coteaching. Each theme is explored in the following sections.

Lack of parity. Implementing coteaching that meets the definition was a missing element in the school as evident in the data. Friend, Embury, and Clarke (2015) described the coteaching relationship as one that relies on equality. All participants described coteaching as occurring when a general education and a special education teacher come together with their areas of expertise and put their ideas together to help reach students with special needs. Friend et al. (2015) went on to describe the relationship in more depth by explaining that coteachers are aware that they bring complementary skills to the classroom and use their knowledge to build instruction and plans that utilize the two teachers in the class instead of conducting instruction in a classroom with one teacher. Teachers, however, noted that inequality existed in their coteaching relationship while in the classroom. Participant 2 reported,

I usually just be quiet. If what we've planned has suddenly changed, and they want to take more ownership of their class, I back off. I don't say, "Well, I think I could probably go through the grammar lesson better than you." I don't say anything. It's just what I'm thinking.

Participant 4 had similar sentiments when describing her experience in the classroom.

Some teachers actually did not want to follow through with the coteaching program. They just wanted to teach their classroom. That's their classroom. This is what I want to do. There are times when on the lesson plan, we were going to do this, but then I went in there and it was totally different. Of course, I was not prepared.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) described in the second dimension of their collaborative learning framework that turning one's tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge requires workers to spend time together and share their experiences, beliefs, and ideas. Yet, this was not the case for teachers in the study. Teachers reported that the disparity between the general education and special education teacher was likely caused by several factors, including: a lack of willingness to coteach, the short duration of coteaching sessions, lack of planning time, and the lack of content knowledge or special education knowledge by teachers. Teachers felt that coteaching was challenging for the special education teachers who worked across grade levels and subjects and also for first year teachers who were also assigned to a coteaching role. Participant 4, described her experience in the classroom where there was a lack of content and special education knowledge by the paired teachers:

Last year, I was working with 4th grade, and I had never worked with 4th grade before. I wasn't familiar with the curriculum. The coteach thing, the whole concept was horrible, to be honest about it. My teacher (partner in co-teaching)

had the same issues. He was new. He was a new teacher, and he was looking for ideas too.

The lack of parity described above in the coteaching relationship led to the following comments made by teachers. Participants' comments included both positive and negative aspects, such as "Some teachers are for it, and some are just not," (P4) "It's great when it works, but can be problematic when it doesn't" (P1), and "If we've been together for a while. We have a husband and wife relationship. She gets on my nerves at times. I get on her nerves at times. We come together to get the work done" (P2). The participants expressed a need for collaboration but felt that a feeling of equality was important to achieve this goal. In the end the students seemed to always come first and this was consistently alluded to or expressed by all of the participants.

Administrative support. The fourth theme developed as teachers suggested that the administrative support for the coteaching program from campus principals to district leaders was limited. Respondents indicated that the principal selected the teachers to coteach. There were comments throughout the focus group transcript that this process could be an issue, especially when teachers were not really interested in coteaching and were forced to coteach. Participant 1 was able to sum up the thoughts of the other participants: "We were just pre-selected by our principal. She kind of just let us know that that would be our assignment for the following year." Also, teachers noted that the lack of knowledge of special education, and having to know the content materials for multiple grades, especially when they had never taught in that grade before, could pose a challenge to coteaching. This was even more true when the general education teacher was

new. Participant 2 described a previous experience: “My teacher had the same issues too, to be honest about it. He was new. He was a new teacher, and he was looking for ideas too.” To address the needs of new teachers and teachers new to coteaching, Pratt (2014) described that administrators have to provide initial training, and continuing education that addresses the present needs of the teachers. Pratt also noted that training should equip teachers with information on how to use their individual specialization to come together and effectively address topics of coteach models, roles and responsibilities, and communications styles.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) described the third dimension of their collaborative learning framework as the transfer of explicit knowledge shared with others to form new knowledge. Yet, the data revealed that special education teachers were not sharing their time or classroom space to deliver instruction together as coteachers. The teachers stated that they were not as willing to share their opinions on the general education teachers’ teaching choices. This included changing lesson plans, as well as certain teaching style choices, even when coteachers were thinking that something could have been stronger or different. Teachers attributed this to the time constraints on teaching, entering someone else’s classroom, and whether the coteacher wanted to be teaching. The participants’ responses indicated that administrative support for coteachers and possibly a deeper knowledge of coteaching by administrators in these areas are necessary to foster an effective coteaching program.

Lack of shared planning time. The lack of shared planning time was apparent in hindering collaboration. The participants’ responses indicated that a consistently shared

planning time was missing at the school. To account for the lack of shared planning time, the special education teachers would access the general education teachers' plans and look at the scope and sequence so they knew what skills and content for which they needed to implement/prep (P2 and P4). The participants frequently noted special education teachers are unable to attend the meetings and plan with their general education teachers due to other meetings scheduled during the same time. Participant 4 reported,

It is not always possible to plan during our shared planning time due to outside factors. District leadership comes in at least twice a week to tell us what we need to teach and how we should be teaching it.

Overall, both special education and general education teachers felt a shared planning time would positively effect coteaching, but the lack of a shared planning time was hindering collaboration. Pratt et al. (2016) described coplanning as the basis to any successful coteaching team and support from administration and district-level was necessary to the success of the teachers and students. Despite the research supporting coplanning, teachers noted that their coplanning time was decreasing or taken away to fulfill other responsibilities. Participants 2 and 4 added, they did not feel their expertise was utilized in an instructional role when using coteaching in the classroom. The participants frequently expressed a need for collaboration, but they felt that a shared planning time was necessary for it to occur.

Relevancy of training. According to the data, relevancy of training was an important factor affecting the implementation of coteaching. Referring to Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) framework of collaborative learning environments, the first dimension

of learning includes enhancing one's tacit knowledge through shared experiences involving observation and practice. The coteaching program was viewed as having insufficient training because there were few training activities, and what training had occurred was geared toward general education. Special education training activities and training to address the needs of coteachers was reported as minimal or non-existent.

Respondents noted that there were meetings after school for fourth and fifth grade, and that training involved watching YouTube videos on how to teach. Respondents also noted that there were two Saturday trainings in September or October and no follow-up after that. Participants 4 and 2 emphasized the focus of professional development. According to Participant 4, "They do focus on pushing general ed, because the TEKS have changed, and because they brought in the TEKS from seventh-grade math and dropped them in fourth and fifth grade." According to Participant 2,

Most of the trainings we've been receiving is basically general ed trainings.

Because they're saying that students do so much better mainstreamed into the classroom, that they're preparing us more so to work with the kids by teaching us the general ed curriculum.

A shared belief amongst the participants was the need to have training that is relevant and unique to their coteaching program. Walsh (2012) observed through his experiences that effective professional development had the qualities of being continued, rigorous, and shared. Also, Walsh found that professional development occurring at the school level through professional learning communities addressed issues pertaining to coteaching

such as providing on-going support to coteachers. In general, all of the participants in the focus group felt that the training they received had little relevance to coteaching.

Collaborative practices. Collaborative practices as a means to meet the needs of all students with various disabilities in the general education was a common theme amongst the teachers. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1991) described the last dimension of their collaborative learning framework as the process of turning explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge through shared activities. That through shared activities of teaching, reflecting, and implementing changes as needed, coteachers were collaborating (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The consensus was that there were two different teaching styles among coteachers, but that the styles often meshed well to help the students. Participant 1 described her collaborative efforts as the following:

They get two different teaching styles. Where they may not get it with me, I'm very visual. The coteacher might be very tactile. They get different teaching styles. That helps all the students, actually. They all need all different ways of learning.

The data showed that overall teachers were not averse to having another teacher in the classroom, and that for most students the different teaching styles is a strength of collaboration. Loertscher (2014) described the collaborative partnership as one where both participants actively contribute to meeting students' needs and share joint assessment measures. Loertscher (2014) continued that successful collaboration involves more than two adults in a classroom, it involves the expertise of both adults being used in the classroom together.

In reference to meeting the needs of all students with disabilities, participants reported that coteaching and small group work were not effective for those students who also needed life skills help, had issues focusing, or were years below grade level. Participants stated that those students needed very different instruction, but they felt like they were supposed to treat everyone the same, even though there were clear differences. Participant 4 described a barrier to meeting students at their present level of performance: “Teach them all the same, because they’ve got to take that STAAR test. Everybody’s going to take the same one.” Teachers also noted that they were starting to pull out those with a much lower reading level to try to work with them, but those students still had to take the standardized test, even though they were far below grade level. The data revealed that participants perceived collaboration to be promising for students with disabilities. Yet the respondents also felt that in the general education classroom, collaboration was a less effective teaching strategy to address the needs of various disability types among the special education population.

Instructional challenges to coteaching. Instructional challenges were a common theme described by teachers impacting the overall effectiveness of the coteaching program. Friend (2008) recommended that coteachers approach their principals with solutions to their challenges, as principals are more likely to provide support in that situation instead of when given a list of problems to solve themselves. The data revealed teachers’ frustration with instructional challenges came from not being able to control their working environment both inside and outside of the classroom. The participants reported concerns with not being able to commit to consistent attendance in the

classroom due to outside responsibilities. Participants reported a lack of coteaching in the classroom as the special education teachers were pulled out often and unexpectedly or just did not show up at their scheduled time. The special education teachers reported that they try their best to let the general education teachers know when they cannot be in the classroom, but that achieving this goal was not always possible. The special education teachers supported this sentiment by saying, they had lost their conference time, so they were trying to have quick meetings after school. The data revealed that participants perceived coteaching in the classroom as being inconsistent and infrequent. The data showed that although teachers had scheduled for coteaching to occur, systems were not in place to set the time slots only for coteaching.

Teachers noted that there were instructional challenges that could not be addressed in a single coteaching session once the special education teacher entered the class. Participant 4 reported,

Instructional challenges when you have your walk-throughs. This is one is not going that great, and you know you're going to take a hit. Your supplemental aids aren't out there. You've given them out 50 thousand times. Kids stuck them in the desk, and then you take a hit because your stuff is not there. Then your lesson is not going right, and because you're in a group, you don't have a throw down lesson to change gears, because you don't have total ownership of the class. If you change, it's going to affect her. If she tries to change, which she can't because she doesn't have anything else to do except what you all have decided to do, because that's what's in the scope and sequence. That's a hard one to dig.

Both the general education and special education teachers also noted that implementing a planned lesson was difficult if classroom supplies and materials were not available at the time of a lesson. Participant 2 said, “When the equipment doesn't work in the classroom. You come in with ideas. Some kids are visual. The equipment is not working. The computer is not working. It's like, okay.” The data also revealed the special education teachers' negative attitudes resulted from not being able to control their situation because they did not feel ownership of the classroom. To address the challenges mentioned, Friend (2008) discussed the importance of coteachers coplanning and examining their roles and responsibilities on regular basis, which can eliminate some of the adversities in the classroom. These practices can ensure that both teachers are aware and prepared for specific instructional activities.

Observation Data

Observations of teachers occurred in the classroom using the coteaching observation matrix. The categories identified in the matrix were used to verify the information provided in the interview and note any inaccuracies or variations in the descriptions provided by the participants. Coteachers provided the schedule of days and times when they were available for observations, and appointments were scheduled. Observations were held in four cotaught classrooms. The 20-minute sessions provided adequate time for the coteachers to demonstrate their role in the respective classrooms.

The results of the observational data indicated that all pairs of teachers observed exhibited shared instructional duties. At times, there was anywhere between five to ten minutes of lag time between when the teachers split into their small groups, which

usually occurred because the general education teacher was completing a whole group lesson when the special education teacher entered the classroom. During this time, the special education teacher was observed walking around the classroom monitoring students' behavior or work. Both teachers were observed assisting students, answering questions and redirecting student attention. Even though the teachers were sharing instructional duties in the four classrooms, the sharing of instructional duties was not equal, and it was evident that the general education teacher was delivering the bulk of the instruction and was the one in charge of the classroom. A common theme in both the group interview and the coteaching observation matrix was that coteachers were not working together as equals: instead, the special education teachers appeared to be a visitor in the general education teachers' space.

The coteaching model was evident in the four classrooms. In one of the four classes, the special education teacher and the general education teacher discussed briefly what the assignment was for the small groups, while students were being released from the whole group lesson to prepare for small group work. In two of other three classes, the teachers were actively engaged in coteaching, using the station teaching model. This demonstrated that the teachers had planned what they would teach as they had their material ready for their groups. In the fourth class, the special education teacher was leading instruction within a small group while the general education teacher was observed to be walking around and helping the rest of the groups.

The four pairs of teachers were observed in station teaching. The stations were easily identifiable, and once the students' group was called they knew where to go. The

groups were formed by need. Those needing special instruction or those who needed extra help were placed together and started their station teaching with the special education teacher. I observed that one special education teacher would keep her group for two rotations to complete her activity. The other special education teacher was observed working with mixed ability groups that included students with special needs.

The special education teachers were observed bringing their material with them to the classroom. One carried a shoulder bag with her material, while the other used a rolling cart. There was not a distinct desk space in the classrooms for the special education teachers. This observation supported teachers' feelings of inequality in the classroom, as they were responsible for bringing their material to and from the classroom during each coteaching session.

The data from the interviews indicated that relevant training on special education and coteaching was little or non-existent. During the observations, teachers were observed engaging in the one teach, one assist model or in station teaching. Possible limitations to the use of more coteaching strategies could be attributed to the small number of observations. Nonetheless, the lack of seeing more coteaching models used in the classroom aligns with the findings in the interview data that revealed how teachers do not feel adequately trained in coteaching models.

Conclusion

The process of gathering data on teachers' perceptions of coteaching provided me with the opportunity to address the research questions not only through an analysis of the findings, but also through the process of identifying the connections between the

conceptual framework and the findings. The research questions were designed to investigate teachers' perceptions of collaboration as a teaching strategy and the effectiveness of the coteaching program to meet the various disability types among the special education population. Each dimension of the framework correlated with a theme in support of the findings. The results of the findings dovetailed with the two research questions, but with specific respect to research question 1 which examined teachers' perceptions of collaboration as a teaching strategy, I concluded that teachers perceived (a) lack of parity, (b) lack of shared planning time, and (c) relevancy of training as hindering collaboration efforts in the classroom. For instance, some of the participants revealed that they did not feel comfortable voicing their ideas with their peers for developing lessons, or did not voice their concerns when they felt something could have been done differently in the classroom. Furthermore, all of the participants shared a concern for their limited coplanning time. Either the coplanning time was being reduced or cut back completely due to other teacher responsibilities during the day. All participants also indicated that professional development was limited to general education training throughout the year and training on coteaching was sparse.

Question 2 examined how coteachers perceived the effectiveness of the coteaching program to meet the various disability types among the special education population. I concluded that teachers found the coteaching program to be mildly effective due to constraints in: (a) administrative support; (b) instructional challenges to coteaching, and; (c) collaborative practices. For example, all of the participants were pre-selected by the principal to coteach and were told of their upcoming assignment. Some of

the participants had reported that this can create challenges to coteaching when teachers who were not interested in coteaching were forced to coteach. In addition, teachers noted instructional challenges due to a lack of knowledge of special education, and having to know the content materials for multiple grades, especially when they had never taught in that grade before. Participants also reported that collaborative practices were improved with two different teaching styles being used among coteachers. Collaborative practices such as small group work and coteaching did not meet the needs of students who also needed life skills help, or who were years below grade level. All participants perceived collaboration to be promising for students with disabilities, yet less hopeful of collaboration in the general education classroom as being an effective teaching strategy to address the needs of various disability types among the special education population.

The findings discussed in this section were used to identify the successes and challenges of the current coteaching program. The findings also shed light on coteachers' perceptions of collaboration as a teaching strategy to support instruction for students with various disabilities. A small number of participants were involved in the data collection, but the results might be advantageous to district leaders and campus administrators when implementing or refining any current coteaching program. The findings revealed that coteachers were in support of the concept of coteaching, and therefore may benefit from professional education aimed at coteachers. According to Stormont, Thomas, and van Garderen (2012), to grasp the essence of coteaching and embrace change in teaching practices from solo teaching to shared teaching, teachers need the proper skills to implement coteaching. Therefore, to address the findings covered in this section, a

professional development workshop aimed at coteachers and administrators along with on-going support to coteachers from the professional learning community (PLC) is recommended.

Research Limitations

Even though careful preparation went into the research study, a few limitations existed within the study that could have affected the integrity of the findings, and potentially, my efforts to effectively answer the research questions. First, access to people was limited. Creswell (2012) referred to the individuals aiding researchers as the “gatekeepers.” The gatekeepers, in this case the community partner and director of special programs, assisted me with the identification of potential schools to study. Although two schools were recommended initially, one of the campus principals declined to participate. Therefore, I was provided entrance into only one school.

Also, another potential limitation to the study was that there was only one research site and six participants studied at that research site. Even though a larger sample size may have allowed for the finding to be generalized to other populations, Creswell (2012) noted that an increase in sample size “can become unwieldy and result in superficial perspectives” (p.209). Furthermore, Creswell noted that in a qualitative study, the range of the sample may vary. Specifically, Creswell observed that it is more common to study a few individuals or cases, but also not unusual to study one person or one site. Therefore, the smaller sample size of this study may have provided a more accurate picture of the workings of one site through the information provided by the participants.

Another potential limitation to the study was that a single focus group interview was conducted instead of individual interviews. The lack of information gathered using a focus group interview method indicates a need for future researchers to use another method for collecting data. Although, I originally perceived the focus group interview as a potential limitation, I believed that the quality of the data collected achieved saturation. As Fusch and Ness (2015) note, data saturation is achieved when one or more of the following conditions is met: either (a) “there is enough information to replicate the study, (b) the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, or (c) when further coding is no longer feasible” (p. 1408). Given that there is enough information to replicate this study, and given that no further coding could be done from the existing information gathered, I concluded that saturation was achieved for this study. Therefore, the study was continued notating the potential limitations and possible effects these limitations had on the study.

Project as an Outcome

After analyzing the data, drawing conclusions from the data, relating them back to the research questions, and interpreting the results in the context of the conceptual framework and literature, I concluded that coteachers and administrators at the school could benefit from a professional development workshop focused on the needs of coteachers along with the on-going support of a PLC to improve the overall effectiveness of the coteaching program to meet the needs of students with various disabilities in the general education classroom. Musanti and Pence (2010) stated that through “collaborative professional development” (p. 87) teachers may experience changes in

their thinking to reflect a more collective thought process that may come about through the interactions between teachers in their learning community. The data analysis showed that teachers felt the coteaching program in the school must be adapted to remove the barriers to collaboration, and include professional education and administrative support. For example, participant 4 stated,

Opportunity is not there during the team meetings to discuss coteaching. We find time afterwards. Sometimes, my teachers will go ahead and do their lesson plans. When we get this busy in the school year, and all the benchmark, DA teaching and such, they go ahead and do theirs. I have access to the scope and sequence, so I know where we are and what to pull for my group.

Participant 2 expressed similar sentiments. “They have us go to general ed after school meetings from 3:30 to 5:00, 3:45 to 5:30. If you teach multiple grade levels, then you are responsible for going to... all of them.” The lack of time to plan during their team meetings, and the lack of effective professional education in the after school meetings could be seen as negatively influencing teachers’ perceptions towards coteaching.

In an effort to deliver a project that may improve and strengthen the coteaching program, I created a professional development workshop focused on the needs of coteachers along with creating an on-going support system through a PLC. Teachers may improve their perceptions of coteaching if they have opportunities for coteaching training, collaboration, and support of their administration. In Section 3, I will discuss the details of the project developed from the research findings.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The design of this case study relied on understanding the perceptions of general education and special education teachers working together in a coteaching program. Teachers described their experiences with the coteaching process and with meeting the academic needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. I first conducted a focus group interview to gauge teachers' perceptions of their experiences. Then, I performed classroom observations in general education classrooms to determine if the perceptions identified in the focus group could be confirmed in classroom teaching.

The professional development was designed for teachers to gain a better understanding of the practice of coteaching in the classroom, particularly with respect to the roles and relationship between general education and special education teachers. The professional development includes a summer coteaching institute consisting of 3 days of training on PLCs, special education, and coteaching strategies. These 3 days of training will provide teachers and administrators with the foundational knowledge and skills needed to implement coteaching along with an ongoing method to keep teachers engaged and informed through the PLC.

Description of Proposed Project

Participants revealed that at the beginning of the school year, district administrators provided a 2-day training on coteaching to teachers along with a few in-services throughout the year covering portions of the general education curriculum. No further training on coteaching or follow-up was provided for teachers after this point.

Based on this information from study data, I concluded that in order to provide teachers and administrators in the school with continuous training in coteaching practices, professional development should be provided in the form of a 3-day summer coteaching institute. The purpose of the institute will be to introduce the PLC and refresh participating members on special education and coteaching. The first day will cover PLCs, and the second day will cover special education. The third day will conclude with coteaching strategies. I believe that this 3-day curriculum will allow teachers to develop an action plan for targeting areas of improvement in coteaching based on the findings from my study.

The leadership team, along with coteachers, will receive training on implementing PLCs during the professional development training. The information gained from the PLC training will advise the leadership team to facilitate and provide ongoing assistance during bimonthly PLC meetings that strictly focus on coteaching to address the challenges identified in the study. Although special education teachers had been gathering for team meetings with their grade-level on a weekly basis, the meetings were not addressing the needs of coteachers. Creating a systematic process where teachers can work together on a regular basis to address the questions that arise in their practice may result in the development of shared learning and, subsequently, increased student achievement (DuFour, 2004). The principal will delegate who the responsible person will be for facilitating these meetings to ensure that the meetings are structured and purposeful. The members of the PLC may find the professional development advantageous in addressing the needs identified in my research, such as implementation

of coteaching models, maintaining parity in the classroom, working with students with low cognitive ability, and strengthening the relationship between coteaching strategies and student achievement.

Project Goals

The main goal of this project is to target the areas of improvement identified as part of my research to create an effective coteaching program. By having opportunities for training and ongoing support, coteachers may be open to discussing topics of teaching and learning that impact their daily work with students. Also, coteachers will have an opportunity to engage their peers in dialogue, reflect on their practices, and become more effective in the classroom (see Woodland, 2016). Dialogue between teachers is beneficial in finding creative solutions to address student needs.

A second goal of this project is to involve the leadership team as a supportive entity that will allow coteachers to provide feedback and organizational help, as well as cultivate an atmosphere of trust within the PLC. Including the leadership team in the PLC will reinforce the notion to coteachers that they are working collaboratively to “improve teaching and learning, nurture relationships, increase job satisfaction, and provide a means for mentoring and supporting new teachers and administrators” (Sparks, 2013, p. 28). These goals will aid in the design of the professional development and guide the development of the PLC. The attainment of these goals will be measured by using data collected from evaluations conducted before and after the summer coteaching institute and at the midyear and end of year, the latter as part of a summative evaluation (see Appendix A).

Rationale

Scholarly Rationale for Project Genre

The selection and development of this project was based on my study findings, which indicated that coteachers need support in addressing organizational needs such as planning, scheduling, training, and improving the quality of work to meet the needs of students with disabilities. As result, the professional development genre was selected for the project to equip coteachers with the knowledge to improve their coteaching practice and student achievement through the implementation of an effective PLC. Participants in the study described a coteaching program designed around the wishes of administrators and developed around accessibility to services. For instance, the study revealed that all participants were preselected by the principal and told of their coteaching assignment for the school year. Many respondents noted that not all teachers selected for coteaching want to collaborate, and that this fact tends to make it difficult for the partnering teacher to do his or her job effectively.

The professional development workshop is also intended to provide participants an understanding about what coteachers know about coteaching as a teaching strategy, as well as where there is a lack of knowledge so that the gaps can be addressed. For example, participants noted that there was little coteaching training done at the beginning of the school year and none thereafter. Researchers have found that special education and general education teachers reported being underprepared for inclusive practices such as coteaching, and those who did receive training identified an ongoing need for skill development in coteaching (Cramer & Nevin, 2006; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Scruggs,

Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). Therefore, the professional development workshop will prepare teachers for coteaching by providing them with the foundational training they need to effectively coteach.

Developing a PLC focused on coteaching can increase collaboration by allowing teachers to share knowledge and expertise as well as find solutions to support students in the classroom (Butler & Schnellert, 2012). For instance, participants in my study who were special education teachers noted that they do not have time to plan because they do not have a conference period, but that they did have access to the general education teacher's plans. In addition, special education teachers said that they did not feel their expertise was being used in the classroom. This particular finding indicates that there is a need for professional development. The PLC will include ongoing, job-embedded learning related to teachers' current coteaching needs in order to increase their positive attitudes toward coteaching and increase student achievement (see Musanti & Pence, 2010).

Rationale Based on the Problem

The main research problem for this study was that the school district did not meet the requirements of NCLB (2002) as measured by the AYP of students with disabilities despite using coteaching to increase student scores. Participant responses to the interview questions suggested that collaboration can work as a teaching strategy, but that challenges identified during implementation were disadvantageous to the goal of increasing academic achievement. During the focus group interview, some participants noted that despite being in cotaught classrooms, some students with disabilities could not

pass the state formative assessment with accommodations. Also, participants reported challenges with the implementation of coteaching that affected academic achievement. Limited training and a lack of support were noted in the interview by participants as challenges to coteaching effectively. The findings from the interview were also supported by the work of Pratt (2014) who found that coteachers lacked training on applying their content specialty and interpersonal skills to build relationships with their coteach partners. Also, Pratt found that coteachers did not receive additional support after the initial training for coteachers addressing needs specific to their situations. Therefore, the recommendation of a 3-day professional development workshop for coteachers along with the PLC to overcome the challenges with coteaching is sound to teacher learning and student achievement.

The professional development project is comprised of a 3-day workshop occurring at the beginning of the school year for administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers at their school, and the formation of a PLC providing on-going monthly support for effective coteaching implementation and monitoring. Schools that have staff members who adopt a shared responsibility for student learning and who are focused on instructional improvement are more likely to yield higher levels of student learning (Little, 2012).

The design of the workshops and PLC are in line with the stated goals of the project to prepare professional development activities for training teachers in the implementation of coteaching. The purpose of the project is to make effective use of coteaching based on the teachers' views of their experiences in the classroom. Solis et al.

(2012) found that a teacher's beliefs can play an influential role in a teacher's motivation and impact the quality of his or her work in a collaborative setting. Therefore, the focus of this professional development is to improve a teacher's skillset of coteaching and promote a reflective community through conversations about teaching and learning which would involve revisiting past experiences and figuring out how to address present issues (Kuijpers, Houtveen, & Wubbels, 2010).

The PLC will bring opportunities for teachers to engage in a reflective community that allows them to move beyond the practice of implementing coteaching and grow as a teacher and practitioner in their field (Graziano & Navarrett, 2012). The challenges reported by participants were (a) lack of parity, (b) lack of administrative support, (c) lack of shared planning time, (d) relevancy of training, (e) collaborative practices, and (f) instructional challenges to coteaching. The professional development project will target these issues through the PLC and strengthen the relationship between coteaching and student learning.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review was to support the professional development genre as a guide to develop the project by connecting the experiences of teachers to the literature on coteaching practices. Specifically, the focus of the literature was on coteaching strategies and the professional learning community to data concerning the processes that influence teacher coteaching practices and student achievement.

The Walden University Library database was the primary source used for the literature review. The database research included the following: SAGE, ProQuest,

Education Research Complete, and PsycInfo. Google Scholar and textbooks were added to this review. Throughout the literature review, Boolean phrases such as *professional development and coteaching*, *professional learning community and coteaching*, *special education and coteaching*, and *strategies and models of coteaching for school improvement* were used to conduct the research.

Professional Development and Coteaching

The current project genre was selected based on the needs of the teachers along with the literature addressing needs of coteachers. The overarching idea from the literature was that teaching is still an isolated profession, and teachers have limited opportunities to learn from one another, specifically in the capacity of their work (Lieberman, 2000; Little, 2003; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Smylie & Perry, 2005). This sentiment was evident in the findings from this study as well. For instance, teachers noted the loss of a planning period and the lack of parity in the classroom kept the special education teachers from voicing their ideas in the development of lessons. The district has conducted professional development through workshops to train teachers in coteaching, yet teachers reported feeling ill-equipped to meet the demands of coteaching due to a lack of effective training and support. Stormont et al. (2012) stressed the importance of providing the appropriate training to teachers that enhances coteaching relationships as crucial to changing the landscape from an isolated profession to a shared profession. Pancsofar and Petroff (2013) found that the timing of training was critical to addressing or alleviating problems. For example, Pancsofar and Petroff (2013) found that training provided to coteachers before the start of the school year can create a supportive

relationship conducive to collaboration. In this section, I delved deeper into the literature to find out how researchers described effective professional development and how this could be used to address teachers concerns.

A recurring theme in the literature was that student performance improved when teachers engaged in on-going job training. Professional development has been found to be an effective means of engaging teachers in on-going job training as a way to increase professional growth among teachers and increase student achievement (Elmore, 2007; Fullan, 2007; Guskey, 2002). Effective professional development which benefits the growth of the educator and increases student achievement is described by researchers as training that extends over time, relates to the current academic need, includes active participation, improves teacher relationships, involves active learning, and strengthens the relationships in the working environment among teachers (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Desimone, 2011; Kuijpers et al., 2010).

Teachers who had access to on-going training often found that their teaching improved, which in turn increased student achievement. An example of how effective professional development leads to improved self-reported teacher outcomes can be found in the work of Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001). In their case study of best practices, the authors compared various aspects of professional development and their effect on teachers' learning. The authors found that there were "structural components" essential for an effective professional development. For example, the structural components compared were "(a) the format of the activity, (b) the span of time or duration the activity took place, and (c) the school's collective participation of

teachers” (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, p. 919-920). The results of the study indicated that a focus on these components along with on-going professional development would impart changes within their teaching practice versus a shorter duration of professional development. Also, given opportunities for active learning through day-to-day interactions with staff and students, the experiences will lend themselves to an improvement in the skills of teachers.

Other researchers found results that were in alignment with the work of Garet et al. (2001). For instance, Bayar (2014) conducted a study in a sample of Turkish students over a 12-month period that included examining teachers’ experiences of their professional development activities. After analyzing the results of their experiences, Bayar found two key aspects influencing teachers participation in professional development. Although the study involved students in a country other than the United States, the key aspects of this study are relevant as they address whether professional development was significant to the teachers’ needs in the classroom and the duration of the professional development.

Blank and de las Alas (2009) found similar results in a meta-analysis study that was commissioned for the Council of Chief State School Officers concerning the effects of teacher professional learning on raising student achievement. The study occurred over a 2-year period and identified research that showed which characteristics of professional development positively impacted both teacher learning and student learning in the classroom. After an analysis of the research, Blank and de las Alas found that well-organized professional development focused on the needs of the teachers had a greater

likelihood of increasing teacher learning and impacting student achievement than environments where teachers did not have well organized professional development. On the basis of this evidence, it can be concluded that effective professional development in the school may enhance teachers' professional growth and increase student achievement.

Professional Learning Communities and Coteaching

The concept of PLCs in the school environment developed from the theory of situated learning by Lave and Wenger (1991). As coteaching continues to be the method of inclusion used in the district, it is imperative to identify a guiding theory behind a professional development project that may increase professionals' competency in a shared role to meet a common goal; namely, student achievement. Lave and Wenger's framework on situated learning describes learning as a social process where one evolves through shared practices at work and the copartners develop similar thought processes. Loertscher (2014) had similar sentiments when describing that a coteaching classroom brings together the expertise of both adults, which serves to increase the collaborative efforts of both teachers.

PLCs have been described by researchers as an organized method of bringing people together to collaborate, investigate, and reflect on their work to enhance their classroom practice (DuFour & DuFour 2013; Stewart 2014). Hord and Tobia (2012) noted how a PLC shares five key features that assist in the implementation: "(a) shared and supportive leadership; (b) shared values and vision; (c) collective learning; (d) shared practice, and; (e) support in maintaining the learning community" (p. 38-39). The idea supporting shared leadership is that instead of a traditional arrangement where the

principal manages the teachers, the teachers teach, and the students learn, the principal is seen as an “instructional leader” (p. 40). The role of the instructional leader is to work together with teachers to ensure that students are learning (Lynch, 2012). Shared values and visions means a school vision is created that takes into account what is important to the school leader and the faculty members (Owens, 2014). For example, Owens (2014) examined key factors of a PLC across three schools and found that the teachers and principals in the PLC had shared vision and values about the responsibilities for students’ learning and teachers’ learning. The shared visions and values in turn are used by PLC members to guide decision-making. Pella (2011) found that through collective learning which was teacher-driven, teachers focused less on their students’ deficiencies and more on collaborating to create a rich learning environment. In a community of shared practice, the teachers display certain traits such as “trust, mutual engagement, and a sharing of roles” (Schuck, Aubusson, Kearney, & Burden, 2013, p. 4). Principals play a crucial role as the school leader to motivate teachers to engage in collaborative practices as they have an impact in teachers’ instructional practice (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010).

Despite this research, coteachers in the district were not utilizing a variety of coinstructional practices that demonstrated their expertise in the classroom. Instead, two coteaching models were observed in the classroom and reported as being used most of the time. The *One teach, one observe* model and *station teaching* model used were viewed more as the teachers working independently of one another than working together. Friend and Cook (2010) identified six coconstructing approaches that when used in combination offered teachers flexibility in the classroom to meet instructional objectives. Several

coconstructing approaches were included, such as one teaching/one observing, station teaching, alternative teaching, team teaming, and parallel teaching, as well as one teaching and one assisting (Friend & Cook, 2010). A PLC would be instrumental in providing teachers an opportunity to plan and work together while utilizing their expertise to provide authentic instruction to children. Several researchers have noted the benefits of implementing a PLC which utilizes the defining characteristics identified above. These benefits include improved teaching and learning, as well as increased academic outcomes for all students (Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999; Vescio et al., 2008). However, barriers to successful implementation of a PLC have also been noted in the research. For example, Vescio et al. found the term PLC overused in schools without a learning community being present and reflective. DuFour (2004) also noted that schools put energy in the design of curriculum, but had little to no follow up to know how teachers were teaching the curriculum and how students were receiving the information. Vescio et al. found that teachers were quick to dismiss the notion of collaboration and noted a lack of time, a lack of support from other teachers, and needing more training in collaboration as reasons against collaboration. To overcome these barriers to a successful PLC, DuFour recommended that educators get back to the goals of a PLC – to create a community of adult learners in the school who inevitably increase student learning within their classrooms.

Project Description

Description of the Project

The professional development project will be implemented at the school to address the concerns identified in this study (see Appendix A). The design of the program is as follows: prior to the start of the school year, teachers involved in a coteaching assignment will participate in a 3-day summer coteaching institute held in the district. Presenters at the institute will review the findings of the study through addressing the major topics, including PLCs, special education, and coteaching strategies. The format for each day of the institute will include a slideshow presentation, various group activities, and an open session for questions and answers. The institute is designed for campus administrators and coteachers as they will be working together in the school to meet the needs of their students. Although the focus of this study is not on administrators' perceptions of coteaching, they were found to play a crucial role in the support of coteachers both in the study's findings and in the research. Therefore, including them in the professional development will allow for the administrators to participate in the open question and answer sessions to alleviate and concerns they may have. Also, administrators and coteachers will have the opportunity to engage in self-directed professional growth after the institute. This includes reading professional literature. A suggested reading list of relevant literature will be provided at the end of the institute. Once the school year begins, all coteachers will have twice a month PLC meetings with their grade assigned team for approximately 1.5 hours with the help of a facilitator. During these meetings, the facilitator can refer to the suggested reading list for literature

the teachers can read and then discuss at the meetings to further their knowledge.

Additional topics covered in these meetings will vary based on the current needs of the learning community.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The district has a variety of resources to support the implementation of a PLC within the school. For instance, the summer learning institute can be taught by the district special education specialist who is trained in collaboration to address working with students with special needs in the general education setting. School A has access to media rich classrooms that may be used for interacting with the audience during the summer institute. In addition, the use of interactive white boards, laptops for viewing videos and laptops for presenting information to teachers will be used to enhance the summer institute. The teachers at the PLC meetings may also benefit from these resources and supports as they share teaching material, assessment information and any other information with one another.

Potential Barriers

The potential barrier that could impact the implementation of a PLC is lack of buy-in from the principals. A high interest level along with participation from the principals is necessary when making instructional changes, such as those anticipated in a PLC. Also, scheduling and upholding PLC meeting dates and times where all members attend is important for uplifting morale and showing support for one another. Furthermore, if any teachers are unwilling to commit to the time required to attend

training and meetings, then this would pose as a potential barrier as they will lack the commitment to their team.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Initially, coteachers will engage in a 3-day summer coteaching institute to familiarize them with special education, PLC, and coteaching. Then, the professional development will continue through ongoing job-embedded training as the result of a PLC at the school site. Therefore, the proposal for implementation begins prior to the start of the school year with an in-depth training on coteaching. Then, the training will be supplemented with monthly or bi-weekly PLC meetings occurring over the next 10 months to address the need for ongoing support of coteachers. This idea is fully articulated in Table 1.

Table 1
Professional Development for Improving Coteaching Program in the School

Timeline/schedule of meetings	Duration	Activities	Participants	Facilitator
August	3-days	Training	Principals, Teacher leaders, Coteachers	Special Education Coteaching Specialist
September	90 minutes/2x a month	Meeting	Coteachers	Principal or Teacher leader
October	90 minutes/2x a month	Meeting	Coteachers	Principal or Teacher leader
November	90 minutes/1x a month	Meeting	Coteachers	Principal or Teacher leader
December	90 minutes/1x a month	Meeting	Coteachers	Principal or Teacher leader
January	90 minutes/2x a month	Meeting	Coteachers	Principal or Teacher leader
February	90 minutes/2x a month	Meeting	Coteachers	Principal or Teacher leader
March	90 minutes/2x a month	Meeting	Coteachers	Principal or Teacher leader
April	90 minutes/1x a month	Meeting	Coteachers	Principal or Teacher leader
May	90 minutes/1x a month	Meeting	Coteachers	Principal or Teacher leader
June	90 minutes/1x a month	Meeting	Coteachers	Principal or Teacher leader

In Table 1, I present the timeline, duration, and activities for conducting the professional development training along with the schedule for on-going professional development through the PLC. The PLC meetings will continue during the year to support coteachers in improving the implementation of coteaching strategies. After the summative evaluation, any updates and feedback will be incorporated into the next workshop training for the following summer for all new teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators. On-going training of coteachers through the PLC within the school year will continue and will be facilitated by the teacher leaders and administrators within the school.

The first day of the summer coteaching institute will cover the details of a PLC and will be led by the campus administrator. The second day of the institute will focus on the roles and responsibilities of educating children with disabilities in the general education classroom, and the third day of training will focus on coteaching strategies and best practices. The purpose of the training is for the professional learning community at School A to spend time together; this will deepen their understanding of collaboration, roles and responsibilities, and coteaching strategies. The knowledge gained from the workshop may motivate the community to revisit their vision and goals for the school year. Furthermore, the job-embedded professional development may be scheduled after school or during the teachers' planning period if one is provided. Teachers mentioned that their planning period was taken away so that teachers could spend more time in the classroom. The PLC meetings will last approximately 90 minutes and follow a structured agenda (see Appendix A). On-going evaluation of the program will be critical for

stakeholders to make decisions on areas of program continuity and sustainability. A discussion about student academic achievement for students with disabilities will also be a focus of the PLC.

Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Others

For this project, I took the role of creating an appropriate professional development for coteachers in School A as identified by the study. The facilitator for the professional development occurring in the summer will be chosen by the administrator of School A. The professional development will begin the week before school starts in August 2017. Any pertinent training in conducting a PLC for administrators and campus leaders will be conducted prior to the summer institute by an approved consultant who will be identified by the district. The school administrators, district special education coteaching specialist, campus leaders, and coteachers will be invited to attend the summer institute. Monthly or bi-weekly PLC meetings will be facilitated either by the principal or principal appointed facilitator, with the idea of keeping the facilitator the same each month as to build trust within the members of the PLC. All coteachers will be expected to attend and participate in the meeting.

Project Evaluation Plan

It is imperative to document the effects of professional development, especially with respect to the PLC, as it will be an on-going effort by several stakeholders to create change in the current organization. Therefore, an outcome-based evaluation (Schalock, 2001) will be used to measure whether professional development has benefited the teachers and students. The outcome-based evaluation will include several aspects of

professional development, including impact on teachers, coteaching program, and student outcomes. A self-developed pre-evaluation questionnaire on coteaching will be administered at the beginning of the summer institute to gauge teachers' awareness and knowledge of coteaching in their present practice. At the end of the summer institute, teachers will receive a post-evaluation to compare their knowledge before and after the training. In December, a mid-year self-evaluation will provide stakeholders with program information, as teachers have had ample time to work with their paired partner to identify how coteaching is progressing through the semester (a copy of the evaluation form that can be used is found at Parrott, n.d.). This will also serve as a blueprint for teachers to assess how they are doing and what changes they can make in the upcoming semester. Along with evaluating professional development, further data analysis of student academic achievement and teacher observations can be used to evaluate the professional development. At the end of the school year, the same self-evaluation will be administered to identify the role professional development has played in meeting the goals of increased teachers' professional growth and student achievement.

Project Implications

The data collected as part of this study was beneficial in providing a frame of reference that would provide administrators and teachers with knowledge of their collaborative teaching efforts and identify the perceptions of inclusive education for students with disabilities. By identifying the key aspects influencing teachers' attitudes (either positive or negative) toward collaboration, I created a project that can be used to

address teachers' perceptions and provide a strategy for implementing an effective teacher collaboration program within the district.

The findings of this study may encourage the campus leadership team and coteachers to work together to address organizational concerns affecting the implementation of coteaching. For example, creating a learning community that includes the administrator and teachers as equals provides the best opportunity for teachers to cocreate the best methods of instruction for their students. The learning community should also provide teachers a safe place to share the happenings in their classroom and get advice from their peers.

Another impact may be that the coteaching program is offered at other schools within the district to address the concerns with academic achievement for students with disabilities. For example, this project may interest the district in investing in district-wide professional development, thereby providing more insight into how collaborative relationships may affect teacher performance and student outcomes. This project may also bring to the forefront the crucial role that administrators play in impacting the successful implementation of coteaching.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

In the final section of this study, I reflect on the strengths and limitations of the project by addressing the problems of collaboration and student achievement. I also examine alternate solutions for addressing the problems based upon my analysis of the data I collected during the study. This section includes an analysis of what I learned about project development and about myself as a scholar practitioner while developing the project. The section concludes with a discussion on the implications for social change resulting from the study and recommendations for the future direction of research on collaboration and student achievement.

Project Strengths

This project has several strengths, one of which is the design of professional development aimed at addressing the needs of coteachers. This strength dovetails with the literature and the reported needs of teachers involved in coteaching. The initial literature review revealed that teachers' confidence levels, attitudes toward coteaching, and ability to coteach were positive when teachers engaged in both preservice and in-service training (Panscofar & Petroff, 2013). Based on this finding, I concluded that the provision of professional development prior to when their coteaching assignment begins, along with ongoing job-embedded training, should serve to improve teachers' outlooks on coteaching and consequently improve student outcomes. Another strength of the project is minimal funding will be required to provide job-embedded training as all trainers and facilitators are employees of the school district. Teachers may receive a stipend from the district if the principals consider doing so as a way to compensate

teachers for their after-school commitment to the PLC. Another strength is that professional development can be incorporated into the school improvement plan for addressing the area of meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

Recommendation for Remediation of Project Limitations

This project may have had a few limitations during the implementation phase of professional development. During the focus group interview, participants mentioned a lack of time as a major constraint to planning for coteaching. The special education teacher participants in my study mentioned they had lost their planning time due to an increase in the number of students requiring special education services. Lack of planning time for all teachers is also a common concern in the literature as well. For example, Vescio et al. (2008) found that one reason teachers were quick to dismiss the idea of collaboration was due to a lack of time. I expect that the PLC will be a helpful resource teachers who feel they do not have enough time to plan; these issues can be worked out with the support of teachers and administration.

Another limitation to implementing this project may be pushback from teachers who are unwilling to embrace the idea of collaborating and sharing with other teachers to improve their practice. This limitation is similar to the research findings of Pugach and Winn (2011), as their work found that compatibility issues arose when teachers were put together without their consent, but that those who volunteered for coteaching mirrored respect for one another. Therefore, principals may have to visit again with their coteaching teams in order to determine whether they should keep currently assigned teachers as coteachers or ask for volunteers to take their place.

Scholarship

Through this study, I had the opportunity to choose a topic for exploration that was pertinent to my field of work. Examining the topic from a researcher's point of view, I feel that I was able to let go of any personal views I had on the subject and define my study problem based on statewide testing data (TEA, 2011, 2012). Doing so allowed me to design a study that, I feel, addresses the educational needs of students with disabilities. In the initial stage of this study, I spent a majority of time investigating the topic using various keywords to search the Walden Library and Google Scholar databases. This research allowed me to conduct a thorough review of the literature addressing the identified problem. Both of these databases provided me with access to scholarly databases that aided me in the review of the literature and also provided saturation of literature.

The next portion of the study involved data collection, which required much effort on my part to gain entry into the school site and then collect the necessary information to dissect the problem. Analyzing data and generating themes that resonated between the interview and observations were examples of the ongoing commitment I had towards scholarship and building my understanding of a group of teachers' views to create local change. The positive effects came about through the project of professional development designed to address teachers' needs, provide ongoing job-embedded training to support teachers in their professional growth, and influence the academic outcome for students. The effort put into this study demonstrates that scholarship requires dedication and

commitment on the part of participants to affect social change at the local level and at the level of the larger community.

Project Development and Evaluation

Upon completion of the data analysis for this study, I designed a project to address teachers' needs and provide teachers with a method of evaluating the goals for the project. In creating the project, I examined various project development models and considered participants' concerns in order to create a feasible project that could be implemented quickly and monitored over time. The information led me to design a professional development training on coteaching with ongoing support through the PLC to address the problem. With the professional development in place, assessing the effectiveness of it should occur through evaluations targeted at teachers' professional growth through participation and learned knowledge demonstrated in classrooms and through student achievement.

Leadership and Change

The culmination of this project came about through a deep awareness and understanding of a group of people's perceptions who are operating in a unique setting. Throughout the project I was dedicated to not only examine the role of an educator, but also to understand the roles others share in the learning community as well as how creating equality and parity in the learning community makes all of our voices count and each of us can be viewed as leaders. Through the leadership efforts of PLC members, I believe organizational and systematic changes will occur based on project implementation and will be beneficial to students and impact the way the district designs

professional development across schools. The project does require changes on many levels and will require ongoing assessment to ensure that collaboration is feasible for teachers and beneficial for students.

Analysis of Self as a Scholar

At the end of this doctoral journey, I can see the scholarly skills I have developed over time through the project study. These skills include the ability to search for relevant literature, conduct meaningful research, follow a systematic research design and analysis method, create a project to evoke social change, and write an academic paper that follows APA guidelines. I hope that the knowledge I have gained will allow me to grow as a professional and also continue to develop the character building skills I have polished through the ups and downs of completing this project. The process has taught me the significance and importance of research past and present and how research is used to support reform and change in an organization. My content knowledge of special education as it relates to coteaching and collaboration was also enhanced through my research. As I move forward, I hope to continue to build upon these skills as a scholar and use them to promote positive social change in the local community and on a larger scale.

Analysis of Self as a Practitioner

As an elementary school teacher who has taught a variety of special education classes, through this doctoral study, I have an increased awareness and knowledge about organizational change theory and collaboration efforts in schools. As a practitioner, I have spent ample time working on this study to identify a problem within the district,

conduct a literature review, design a research method, conduct research, and then create a project to tackle the problem. This process has taught me that through a collective community of practitioners, we can work together to address problems within an organization instead of trying to do things alone and passively. I look forward to using the inspiration and momentum gained from the completion of this study to make an impact not only in the local community, but to create change that impacts a larger group of people as well.

Analysis of Self as a Project Developer

The formation of this project study required many project development tasks to meet the objectives outlined in each section. For example, the project study involved planning, organizing, and setting short-term and long-term goals, to name a few. To create the project, I first had to plan how I would gain the trust of teachers as I needed their support as participants in the study. Communication skills are essential in project development, and I could use my prior experience as a coteacher to break the ice and explain to teachers that I was here for one purpose only as was stated in the consent forms.

Another character trait of a project developer is doing the research needed while planning a project. In addition to using the data collected on coteachers' perceptions to create the project, I delved into the literature to find scholarly research that supported the coteachers' views to add credibility to the project. The professional development was created in a way to involve teachers by connecting research and practice to promote their

collaboration efforts. With the completion of the project study, I have demonstrated the role of a project developer who has met the goals and objectives outlined for this study.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The doctoral work that I have completed comes at a time when the district is embracing the strategy of collaboration to make education inclusive for all students. By writing about the importance of meeting the needs of students with disabilities who are being mainstreamed into general education through push-in services such as coteaching, it is helpful to find the research that shows the advantages and disadvantages to this reform effort. It is also important to see how as practitioners we can create an environment for student achievement.

Through this study, I have an increased understanding of what coteaching entails and how an organizational theory can influence the work done by a group of professionals to meet a goal. I have also learned the importance of professional development done through an on-going basis to support teachers working in a coteaching environment where the needs of their students vary from others. I have also learned how on-going support can provide opportunities for teachers to learn and try new methods in the classroom to meet student needs. I am hopeful that this project will serve as a key piece of information in future planning on coteaching in the district, and I hope that this work will inform other educational organizations who are looking to implement a coteaching program in their district.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The findings from the analysis respond to the study's research questions and help to achieve the goal of understanding teachers' perceptions of coteaching and the impact of their coteaching relationship on student outcome. These findings have significant implications for coteaching implementation, particularly for school districts that are experiencing a high number of students with special needs and are seeking to revamp their current special education programs. Findings from the study can be used to provide stakeholders and practitioners with an examination of teachers' perceptions from one elementary school that can be valued as scholarship along with examining the outcome of the professional development measured throughout the year. Also, these findings can be extended to researchers for review through scholarly online journal publications. These examples suggest a need for increased teachers' knowledge of working with students with special needs, along with increased district and campus support for coteachers.

The limitations of the study can be seen as a form of recommendations for future research. First, this study is limited in scope. The participating school has a diverse group of teachers that added value to the current data on coteaching, but a larger group of participants over several schools in the district would help to widen the scope and yield comparable findings that can broaden and validate a set of defining characteristics for coteaching. Also, only teachers were included in this study. Examining the perceptions of principals on coteaching would provide stimulating data, as a researcher would have a better understanding of how they view coteaching in relation to their teachers.

Conclusion

Coteaching was implemented in the district not only to address the requirements of NCLB, but also to provide teachers with a different instructional method for helping students with disabilities. This chosen topic for the project study came about from a personal desire to improve the learning environment for the students I work with along with other students in the school. I used the literature review and the results of section 2 as a framework for the development of this project. In section 3, I outlined the project of a professional development program focused on a PLC. In section 4, I included personal reflections about this doctoral journey and the conclusions of the study.

The path to becoming a special education teacher was evident by the commitment I have to serve others and by the passion I have for helping children thrive from an early age. Being a self-contained special education teacher for several years granted me the opportunity to work with the same students over multiple years and use a variety of teaching methods to create a learning environment where they could learn at their own pace and excel. Moving from a self-contained classroom to a resource teacher and then a coteacher, I was provided the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers. This transition not only increased the knowledge I have of the general education curriculum, but also provided the support and confidence to help a larger group of students meet their academic needs. Although I am not currently teaching in a school, the commitment to serve and improve the life of children is what energizes me to do work locally to help children all over the world.

This project study has created a gateway for me to live what I love, which is to follow my passion of helping children, and as a result, make a difference in the community I live in and beyond. Since completing this learning process, I have gained many useful skills that will help me navigate the world around me and make a difference in the lives of others. Ultimately, my study reveals that incorporating on-going job-embedded professional development can add value to the work coteachers do on a daily basis. These findings may prove valuable for stakeholders in the district as they work to improve their coteaching program. Further research in the areas of coteaching and student outcomes may also add to the knowledge base of coteaching and serve as indicators of whether or not coteaching serves its goal of increasing academic achievement for students with special needs.

References

- Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Walumbwa, F. O., Luthans, F., & May, D. R. (2004). Unlocking the mask: A look at the process by which authentic leaders impact follower attitudes and behaviors. *Leadership Quarterly, 15*(6), 801–823. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2004.09.003
- Bayar, A. (2014). The components of effective professional development activities in terms of teachers' perspective. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences, 6*(2), 319-327. doi:10.15345/iojes.2014.02.006
- Berg, B. L., & Lune, H. (2012). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Blank, R. K., & De Las Alas, N. (2009). *The effects of teacher professional development on gains in student achievement: How meta analysis provides scientific evidence useful to education leaders* (Report). Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.
- Brinkmann, J., & Twiford, T. (2012). Voices from the field: Skill sets needed for effective collaboration and co-teaching. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 7*(3), 1–13. Retrieved from <http://www.ncpeapublications.org>
- Bromley, D. B. (1986). *The case-study method in psychology and related disciplines*. Chichester, United Kingdom: Wiley.
- Brown, N. B., Howerter, C. S., & Morgan, J. J. (2013). Tools and strategies for making co-teaching work. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 49*(2), 84–91.

doi:10.1177/1053451213493174

- Butler, D. L., & Schnellert, L. (2012). Collaborative inquiry in teacher professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 28*(8), 1206–1220.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.07.009>
- Cohen, D. K., & Hill, H. C. (1998). *Instructional policy and classroom performance: The mathematics reform in California* (RR-39). Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.
- Conderman, G., & Hedin, L. (2012). Purposeful assessment practices for co-teachers. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 44*(4), 18–27. doi:10.1177/004005991204400402
- Cramer, E., & Nevin, A. (2006). A mixed methodology analysis of co-teacher assessments. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children, 29*(4), 261–274. doi:10.1177/088840640602900406
- Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Wei, R. C., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). *Professional learning in the learning profession*. Washington, DC: National Staff Development Council.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Desimone, L. M. (2011). A primer on effective professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(6), 68–71. doi:10.1177/003172171109200616

- Dixie, S. H. (2000). The risks and opportunities of the IEP requirements under IDEA '97. *The Journal of Special Education, 33*(4), 195.
doi:10.1177/002246690003300402
- DuFour, R. (2004). What is a “professional learning community”? *Educational Leadership, 6*(18), 6–11. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/>
- DuFour, R., & DuFour, R. (2013). *Learning by doing: A handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Eccleston, S. T. (2010). Successful collaboration: Four essential traits of effective special education specialists. *Journal of International Association of Special Education, 11*(1), 40–47. Retrieved from <http://www.iase.org/>
- Elmore, R. F. (2007). *School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice, and performance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Pub. L. No. 114-95, 115, Stat. 1177 (2015).
- Friend, M. (2008). Co-teaching: A simple solution that isn't simple after all. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction, 2*(2), 9-19. Retrieved from <http://www.joci.ecu.edu/>
- Friend, M., & Bursuck, W. D. (2012). *Including students with special needs: A practical guide for classroom teachers* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2010). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Friend, M., Embury, D., & Clarke, L. (2015). Co-teaching versus apprentice teaching: An analysis of similarities and differences. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 38*(2), 79-87. doi:0888406414529308

- Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(9), 1408-1416.
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 915.
doi:10.3102/00028312038004915
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing.
- Gold, R. L. (1958). Roles in sociological field observations. *Social Forces*, 36(3), 217–223. Retrieved from <http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/>
- Graziano, K., & Navarrett, L. (2012). Co-teaching in a teacher education classroom. Collaboration, compromise, and creativity. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 21(1), 109–126. Retrieved from <http://www.itejournal.org/>
- Guise, M., Habib, M., Robbins, A., Hegg, S., Hoellwarth, C., & Stauch, N. (2016). Preconditions for success and barriers to implementation: The importance of collaborative and reflective dispositions to foster professional growth during a coteaching clinical experience. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 43(4), 55. Retrieved from <http://www.teqjournal.org/>
- Guskey, T. T. (2002). Professional development and teacher change. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 8(3), 381–391.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/135406002100000512>

- Hancock, D., & Algozzine, B. (2011). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hang, Q., & Rabren, K. (2009). An examination of co-teaching: Perspectives and efficacy indicators. *Remedial and Special Education, 30*(5), 259–268.
doi:10.1177/0741932508321018
- Harris, A. (2013). Distributed leadership friend or foe? *Educational management administration & leadership, 41*(5), 545-554. doi:10.1177/1741143213497635
- Hord, S. (2004). Professional learning communities: An overview. In S. Hord (Ed.), *Learning together, leading together: Changing schools through professional learning communities* (pp. 19–59). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hord, S. M., & Tobia, E. F. (2012). *Reclaiming our teaching profession: The power of educators learning in community*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Horn, I. S. (2008). The inherent interdependence of teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan, 89*(10), 751–754. Retrieved from <http://pdkintl.org/>
- Hussein, A. (2009). The use of triangulation in social sciences research: Can qualitative and quantitative methods be combined? *Journal of Comparative Social Work, 1*, 1-12.
- Janesick, V. J. (2004). *Stretching exercises for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research. Introducing focus groups. *BMJ: British Medical Journal, 311*(7000), 299. Retrieved from <http://www.bmj.com/>
- Kinzer, C., & Taft, L. (2012). What’s best for our students? Outcomes are the driving

- force at one high-achieving elementary school. *Journal of Staff Development*, 33(5), 18–23. Retrieved from <http://www.learningforward.org/>
- Kuijpers, J. M., Houtveen, A. A. M., & Wubbels, T. (2010). An integrated professional development model for effective teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(8), 1687-1694. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.06.021
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Lieberman, A. (2000). Networks as learning communities: Shaping the future of teacher development. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 221–227. doi:10.1177/0022487100051003010
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Little, J. W. (2003). Inside teacher community: Representation of classroom practice. *Teachers College Record*, 105(6), 913–945. Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecord.org/>
- Little, J.W. (2012). Professional community and professional development in the learning-centered school. In M. Kooy & K. van Veen (Eds.), *Teacher learning that matters: International perspectives* (pp. 22-41). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Loertscher, D. V. (2014). Collaboration and coteaching. *Teacher Librarian*, 42(2), 8-19. Retrieved from www.teacherlibrarian.com
- Lynch, J. (2012). Responsibilities of today's principal: Implications for principal preparation programs and principal certification policies. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 31(2), 40-47. Retrieved from <http://acres-sped.org/>

- Mastropieri, M. A., Scruggs, T. E., Graetz, J., Norland, J., Gardizi, W., & McDuffie, K. (2005). Case studies in co-teaching in the content areas: Successes, failures, and challenges. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 40*(5), 260–270.
doi:10.1177/10534512050400050201
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage.
- McLeskey, J., Waldron, N. L., & Redd, L. (2012). A case study of a highly effective, inclusive elementary school. *The Journal of Special Education, 48*(1), 59-70.
doi:10.1177/0022466912440455
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Morgan, D. L. (1996). *Focus groups as qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage.
- Moolenaar, N. M., Slegers, P. J. C., & Daly, A. J. (2012). Teaming up: Linking collaboration networks, collective efficacy, and student achievement. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 28*(2), 251–262. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2011.10.001
- Murawski, W. W., & Hughes, C. E. (2009). Response to intervention, collaboration, and co-teaching: A logical combination for successful systemic change. *Preventing School Failure, 53*(4), 267–277. doi:10.3200/psfl.53.4.267-277
- Murawski, W. W., & Swanson, H. L. (2001). A meta-analysis of co-teaching research. *Remedial and Special Education, 22*(5), 258–267.
doi:10.1177/074193250102200501
- Musanti, S. I., & Pence, L. (2010). Collaboration and teacher development: Unpacking

- resistance, constructing knowledge, and navigating identities. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 37(1), 73–89. Retrieved from <http://www.teqjournal.org/>
- Neuman, W. L. (2000). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (5th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115, Stat. 1425 (2002).
- Nonaka, I., & Takeuchi, H. (1995). *The knowledge-creating company: How Japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 33(1), 93–96. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/>
- Owen, S. (2014). Teacher professional learning communities: Going beyond contrived collegiality toward challenging debate and collegial learning and professional growth. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 54(2), 54-77. Retrieved from <https://www.ajal.net.au/>
- Pancsofar, N., & Petroff, J. G. (2013). Professional development experiences in co-teaching associations with teacher confidence, interests, and attitudes. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, 36(2), 83–96.
doi:10.1177/0888406412474996
- Parrott, P. (n.d.). *Co-Teaching: Self-Evaluation Checklist*. Retrieved from laspdg.org/files/teacherselfeval.pdf

- Patton, M. Q. (2001). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pella, S. (2011). A situative perspective on developing writing pedagogy in a teacher professional learning community. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 38(1), 107–125. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/
- Ploessl, D. M., Rock, M. L., Schoenfeld, N., & Blanks, B. (2010). On the same page: Practical techniques to enhance co-teaching interactions. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 45(3), 158–168. doi:10.1177/1053451209349529
- Polkinghorne, D.E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 137. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.137
- Pratt, S. (2014). Achieving symbiosis: Working through challenges found in co-teaching to achieve effective co-teaching relationships. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 41, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.02.006>
- Pratt, S. M., Imbody, S. M., Wolf, L. D., & Patterson, A. L. (2016). Co-planning in co-teaching: A practical solution. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 1-7, doi:10.1177/1053451216659474
- Pugach, M. C., & Winn, J. A. (2011). Research on co-teaching and teaming. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 24(1), 36–46. Retrieved from <http://www.casecec.org/>
- Routman, R. (2012). Mapping a pathway to schoolwide highly effective teaching: Raising achievement is the by-product of a comprehensive plan linking strong

principal leadership, higher teacher expectations, and a focus on literacy—all held together by trusting relationships. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 93(5), 56–61. Retrieved from <http://pdkintl.org/>

Schalock, R. L. (2001). *Outcome-based evaluation*. New York, NY: Plenum Publishers.

Schuck, S., Aubusson, P., Kearney, M., & Burden, K. (2013). Mobilising teacher education: A study of a professional learning community. *Teacher Development*, 17(1), 1-18. doi:10.1080/13664530.2012.752671

Scribner, J. P., Cockrell, K. S., Cockrell, D. H., & Valentine, J. W. (1999). Creating professional communities in schools through organizational learning: An evaluation of a school improvement process. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(1), 130–160. doi:10.1177/0013161X99351007

Scruggs, T. E., Mastropieri, M. A. (2017). Making inclusion work with co-teaching. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 49(4), 284–293. doi:10.1177/0040059916685065

Scruggs, T. E., Mastropieri, M. A., & McDuffie, K. A. (2007). Co-teaching in inclusive classrooms: A metasynthesis of qualitative research. *Exceptional Children*, 73(4), 392–416. doi:10.1177/001440290707300401

Sileo, J. M. (2011). Co-teaching: Getting to know your partner. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 43(5), 32–38. doi:10.1177/004005991104300503

Shin, M., Lee, H., & McKenna, J. W. (2016). Special education and general education preservice teachers' co-teaching experiences: A comparative synthesis of qualitative research. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(1), 91-107. doi:10.1080/13603116.2015.1074732

- Smith, J. M., & Kovacs, P. E. (2011). The impact of standards-based reform on teachers: The case of “No Child Left Behind.” *Teachers and Teaching, 17*(2), 201–225. doi:10.1080/13540602.2011.539802
- Smylie, M., & Perry, G. (2005). Restructuring schools for improving teaching. In M. Fullan (Ed.), *Fundamental change: International handbook of educational change* (pp. 308–340). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Solis, M., Vaughn, S., Swanson, E., & Mcculley, L. (2012). Collaborative models of instruction: The empirical foundations of inclusion and co-teaching. *Psychology in the Schools, 49*(5), 498–510. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/>
- Sparks, D. (2013). Strong teams, strong schools. *Journal of Staff Development 34*(2), 28-30. Retrieved from <https://learningforward.org/>
- Stake, R. E. (2000). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 435–454). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stewart, C. (2014). Transforming professional development to professional learning. *MPAEA Journal of Adult Education, 43*(1), 28-33. Retrieved from <https://www.mpaea.org/>
- Storey, K., & Miner, C. (2017). *Systematic instruction of functional skills for students and adults with disabilities*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Stormont, M., Thomas, C. N., & van Garderen, D. (2012). Introduction to the special issue: Building capacity to improve student outcomes through collaboration-- Current issues and innovative approaches. *Psychology In The Schools, 49*(5), 399-401. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/>

- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Strogilos, V., & Tragoulia, E. (2013). Inclusive and collaborative practices in co-taught classrooms: Roles and responsibilities for teachers and parents. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 35*, 81–91. Retrieved from <https://www.elsevier.com/>
- Supovitz, J., Sarindas, P., & May, H. (2010). How principals and peers influence teaching and learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46*(1), 31–56. doi:10.1177/1094670509353043.
- Texas Education Agency. (2011). *2010–2011 academic excellence indicator system district reports*. Retrieved from <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/2011/district.srch.html>
- Texas Education Agency. (2012). *Adequate yearly progress district data table*. Retrieved from <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/ayp/2012/district.srch.html>
- Texas Education Agency. (2013). *Adequate yearly progress (AYP)*. Retrieved from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ayp/>
- Turner, D. W. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *The Qualitative Report, 15*(3), 754–760. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-3/qid.pdf>
- Van Garderen, D., Stormont, M., & Goel, N. (2012). Collaboration between general and special educators and student outcomes: A need for more research. *Psychology in the Schools, 49*(5), 483–497. doi:10.1002/pits.21610

- Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(1), 80–91. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2007.01.004
- Walsh, J. M. (2012). Co-teaching as a school system strategy for continuous improvement. *Preventing School Failure, 56*(1), 29–36. doi:10.1080/1045988X.2011.555792
- Wischnowski, M. W., Salmon, S. J., & Eaton, K. (2004). Evaluating co-teaching as a means for successful inclusion of students with disabilities in a rural district. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 23*(3), 3–14. Retrieved from <http://acresped.org/>
- Woodland, R. H. (2016). Evaluating PK–12 professional learning communities: An improvement science perspective. *American Journal of Evaluation, 1098214016634203*. doi:10.1177/1098214016634203

Appendix A: The Project

Professional Development: Improving the Coteaching Program in School A

Project Goals

1. Provide administrators and coteachers with the basic knowledge of PLCs, Special Education, and coteaching strategies.
2. Create a PLC for coteachers to have conversations about teaching and learning that are directly related to their daily work with students.
3. Involve the leadership team as a supportive entity to coteachers to provide feedback and cultivate an atmosphere of trust in the PLC.
4. Provide opportunities for the sharing of article reflections and pedagogical practices through the use of small group and then large group discussion.

Summer Coteaching Institute

The summer coteaching institute will provide an abundance of coteaching information along with special education and introduce the idea of a professional learning community to enhance the coteaching program in place in School A.

Agenda for Summer Coteaching Institute Day One Professional Learning Communities August, 2017

8:00-8:30-Welcome and pre-evaluation survey
 8:30-8:45-Session goals and introduction of PLC members (Slide 3)
 8:45-9:15-Group Discussion (Slide 4)
 9:15-9:30-Guiding Principles (Slide 5)
 9:30-10:00-Activity-Create guiding principles (Slide 6)
 10:00-10:15-What is a PLC? (Slide 7)
 10:15-10:30-Activity- Discuss other pertinent members of the PLC team (Slide 8)
 10:30-11:00-Activity Establish PLC goals, vision, and values (Slide 9)
 11:00-11:30-Presentation of PLC statements-whole group
 11:30-12:30-Lunch

12:30-1:00-Discuss effective and successful PLCs (Slide 10&11)
1:00-1:30-Whole group discussions-share examples of effective PLCs (Slide 12)
1:30-1:45-Discussion on Principal Leadership and PLCs (Slide 13)
1:45-2:30-Activity-Create job description for PLC members (Slide 14)
2:30-3:00-Reflection/Q&A

Note: The format for the workshop and presentation will include slides, activities, and an open session for questions and answers as noted in the agenda. A copy of this presentation will be provided to each attendee for note-taking during the workshop. A suggested reading list of relevant literature is provided after the slides to all participants as a way to further their engagement in self-study activities after the end of the workshop. The campus staff can use this list for further study during the PLC meetings.



Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Training Session 1

Goals

- Develop a set of guiding principles for the PLCS
- Learn about the factors that make a PLC effective
- Create a vision statement
- Identify the duties and responsibilities of each PLC member

Group Discussion

- Take a few minutes to read the journal article provided at your table
- Discuss the article at your table
- One person will present a summary or reflection of the article
- Come up with a discussion question based on the article that each group will discuss and then share their response with the whole group

Activity

- Gather together with your peers
- Principal will be the facilitator
- Volunteer will write between 8-10 guiding principles agreed upon by peers on a chart paper
- Guiding principles will be taken back to your school where all members can view them during every PLC meeting

What is a PLC?

- A professional learning community (PLC) is a group of educators who meet regularly to share expertise and works interdependently to improve teaching skills and learning for all students (DuFour, 2004)
- In School A, the PLC will include administrators and teacher leaders along with coteachers

Activity

- At each table, discuss any additional members who may be part of the learning community
- A volunteer will write the names down on chart paper

Activity

Gather with your school members and come up answers to the following questions.

- What are our goals for coteaching?
- What is our vision for all students to succeed?
- What are our values about coteaching, student learning, and collaboration?

Activity

- How can job-embedded training be implemented in your day-to-day activities?
- How can we adjust our mindset to seek out solutions to problem using our learning community?
- What activities can we engage in for teacher growth in the area of coteaching?

Job Responsibilities

- What are my responsibilities as a leader of this school, organization, community, class, etc.?
- What are my responsibilities as a general education teacher?
- What are my responsibilities as a special education teacher?

Reflection/Q&A

- Please turn to the person on your right and discuss 3 new things you learned today.

Group discussion

- What questions do you have about the PLC?
- Any other thoughts?

CO-TEACHING: PRE- EVALUATION CHECKLIST

I developed the Pre-Evaluation Checklist for the purpose of this workshop.

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below to measure your awareness and level of knowledge of your current coteaching practice.

1. I have used one or more of the six co-teaching models developed by Marilyn Friend (Yes/ No).
2. The six models of co-teaching are (list below):
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
3. My knowledge of co-teaching prior to attending the summer coteaching institute can be described as (choose one below):
 - **Proficient**-I have a solid understanding of co-teaching.
 - **Emerging**- I am aware of co-teaching and what it is.
4. I am aware of what a PLC is and how it works (Yes/No).

Agenda for Summer Coteaching Institute Day Two Special Education August, 2017

- 8:00-8:30-Welcome and review of PLC (Slide 1)
- 8:30-8:45-Session goals (Slide 2)
- 8:45-9:15-Special Education (Slide 3)
- 9:15-9:45-IDEA (Slide 4)
- 9:45-10:30-Activity-Special Education Categories (Slide 5)
- 10:30-11:00-Break
- 11:00-11:30-Activity-Accessing the general education curriculum (Slide 6)
- 11:30-12:30-Lunch
- 12:30-1:00-Benefits of an Inclusive Classroom (Slide 7)
- 1:00-1:30-Discussion-Inclusion (Slide 8)
- 1:30-1:45-Activity-Inclusive Schools (Slide 9)
- 1:45-2:00-Collaboration (Slide 10)

2:00-2:30-Activity-Collaboration (Slide 11)

2:30-3:00-Reflection (Slide 12)

Note: The format for the workshop and presentation will include slides, activities, and an open session for questions and answers as noted in the agenda. A copy of this presentation will be provided to each attendee for note-taking during the workshop. A suggested reading list of relevant literature is provided after the slides to all participants as a way to further their engagement in self-study activities after the end of the workshop. The campus staff can use this reading list for further study during the PLC meetings.



Goals

- Develop awareness of Special Education law
- Understand the various categories of disabilities
- Understand the components of an Individual Education Program (IEP)
- Increase awareness of inclusion - special education students in the general education classroom
- Develop awareness of coteaching as a strategy to educate kids with disabilities in the general education classroom

What is Special Education?

- A service provided to eligible students with special needs that provides specialized instruction or related services necessary to access and make progress in the general curriculum
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation.
- Let's visit this website for more info: <http://idea.ed.gov/>

Activity

- At your table, please answer the following questions. A volunteer will write the answers on the chart paper, and another volunteer will read the responses to the group
- Thinking through each category, what are some accommodations a child would need to access the general education curriculum? Please list accommodations for each category

Special Education Categories

Students eligible for special education are served under at least one of the thirteen categories

- Autism
- Deaf
- Deaf-blindness
- Emotional disturbance
- Hearing impairment
- Intellectual disability
- Multiple disability
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment including blindness
- (<http://idea.ed.gov/>)

Inclusion - Discussion

- What is the best placement for a child to receive a specially designed instruction that meets his/her specific learning needs?
- What is the teacher(s) role in educating students with special needs in the general education classroom?
- What accommodations may the students' need?
- Are students participating in the classroom activities and functioning as a member of the classroom?
- How can coteaching be used to address the students' needs in the general education classroom?
- (<http://idea.ed.gov/>)

Activity

- As a group, please discuss the following. A volunteer will write the responses on chart paper.
- What image do you have in your mind about what an inclusive school is like?
- What challenges do you foresee?
- What possible solutions are there to make education more inclusive?
- Is your school an inclusive school?

Collaboration

- Collaboration of experts is key to an inclusive environment (think of members in the PLC)
- Provides opportunities for learning between regular education and special education teachers to increase their skillset in coteaching
- Teachers self-efficacy improves when they are part of a team with the same vision and values and when they feel supported by administrators
- Collaboration efforts include working with various therapists and team members to make the best decision for students with disabilities regarding their education outcomes.
- (Hord, 2009)

Activity

At your table, please discuss the following and post responses on chart paper.

- What can we do as members of a PLC to increase collaboration?
- How can intentional collaboration effect our coteaching?

Reflection

- What is the purpose of inclusive education?
- How do we know if student is receiving the appropriate special education services needed?
- What is the role of the PLC in meeting the needs of all students?
- Final thoughts or questions?

PLC Meeting – Bi-Weekly Agenda

Introduction (5-10 minutes)

Aim of meeting is established by the PLC members.

How Are Things Progressing? (30-50 minutes)

Each participant details what he/she has tried in the classroom and identifies what is working and what is not. Participants seek support from group to fill in missing pieces.

New Learning about Formative Assessment (25-40 minutes)

Teachers will engage in a shared activity such as grading student work, watching and discussing an instructional video, and role-playing to name a few.

Personal Action Planning (10-15 minutes)

This is a plan for teachers to come up with that details what they plan to do and achieve in the upcoming month(s).

Review of the Meeting (5 minutes)

At the end of the meeting, the facilitator will assess if the original meeting objectives have been met and each teacher leaves with an action plan.

Agenda for Summer Coteaching Institute Day Three
Co-teaching Strategies
August, 2017

- 8:00-8:15-Welcome and review of Special Education (Slide 1)
- 8:15-8:30-Session goals (Slide 2)
- 8:30-8:45-Activity- write a personal definition of co-teaching (Slide 3)
- 8:45-9:15-Discuss what co-teaching is (Slide 3)
- 9:15-10:00-Review Six Models of Coteaching (Slide 4)
- 10:00-10:30-Break
- 10:30-11:00-Discuss three models of coteaching (Slide 5,6, & 7)
- 11:00-11:30-Activity-Review of first three coteaching models (Slide 8)
- 11:30-12:30-Lunch
- 12:30-1:15-Discuss the next three models of co-teaching (Slide 9, 10, & 11)
- 1:15-1:30-Activity-Review of last three coteaching models (Slide 12)
- 1:30-2:00-Coteaching outcomes (Slide 13)
- 2:00-2:30-Discussion on student success (Slide 14)
- 2:30-2:45-Reflection (Slide 15)
- 2:45-3:00-Conclusion, complete post-evaluation survey (Slide 16)

Note: The format for the workshop and presentation will include slides, activities, and an open session for questions and answers as noted in the agenda. A copy of this presentation will be provided to each attendee for note-taking during the workshop. A suggested reading list of relevant literature is provided after the slides to all participants as a way to further their engagement in self-study activities after the end of the workshop. The campus staff can use this list for further study during the PLC meetings.

Coteaching Strategies

Summer Coteaching Institute
Training Session 3

Goals

- What is coteaching?
- Coteaching models.
- Best practices for co-taught classroom.
- How can we determine which model is best?
- How can we ensure success for all students?

Discussion - Coteaching

Before we begin, take a moment to write your definition of coteaching on the paper provided at your table.

Now, let us discuss.

Coteaching is:

- Shared responsibility between a general education and special education teacher for all students in the classroom
- Two experts with different educational backgrounds to provide their knowledge
- Parity between teachers
- Allows for differential instruction to meet individual student needs
- (Friend, 2008)

Coteaching Models

Friend (2008) developed six models for coteaching

- One teach, one observe
- One teach, one assist
- Parallel teaching
- Station teaching
- Alternative teaching
- Team teaching

One Teach, One Observe

- One teacher leads instruction, and one teacher observes and collects data
- Purpose is to collect data to make the classroom run smoothly such as noting inappropriate behaviors or documenting how students' respond to instructional activities
- At times the same teacher may lead and the same teacher may collect data
- May cause the teacher collecting data to be viewed as an assistant instead of a teacher
- May cause negative perceptions of coteaching and affect teachers perceptions of their role as coteachers

One Teach, One Assist

- One teacher provides the lesson to the whole class while one teacher circulates the room providing assistance to students
- Students may receive individual support
- Least effective coteaching model and assisting teacher may be viewed by students as a helper
- Lack of parity for teachers resulting from unequal sharing of classroom responsibilities

Parallel Teaching

- Students are split into two groups and receive teacher-led instruction
- Provides smaller student teacher ratio
- Allows for differentiation of instruction
- Disadvantage may be one teacher works with a set of students and does not interact with the other students in the classroom

Activity

- At your table, please review the first three coteaching models.
- Which models have you used before?
- Are you open to trying new models?
- How would you format the space in the classroom for these models?

Station Teaching

- The students are divided into three or more heterogeneous or homogenous groupings
- Allows for teachers to provide instruction to individualized groups or monitor student progress
- Allows for smaller student teacher ratio
- A disadvantage may be that students do not rotate and stay at their station with the same teacher

Alternative Teaching

- One teacher leads the majority of instruction while one teacher re-delivers instruction to a small group of students still having difficulty with their previous taught content
- Allows for differentiation based on students' unique learning needs
- Allows one teacher to provide remediation in a small group to address misconceptions of struggling students
- Allows accelerating of content to the rest of the class
- A disadvantage could be assigning the same teacher to provide remediation instruction

Team Teaching

- Teachers share the role of lead teachers in providing instruction and support to students in the cotaught classroom
- Allows both teachers to share in teaching responsibility
- Two teachers actively lead instruction
- Disadvantage may be that whole group instruction doesn't provide differentiation for students
- Requires planning time and preparation for teachers to engage in team teaching

Coteaching Outcomes

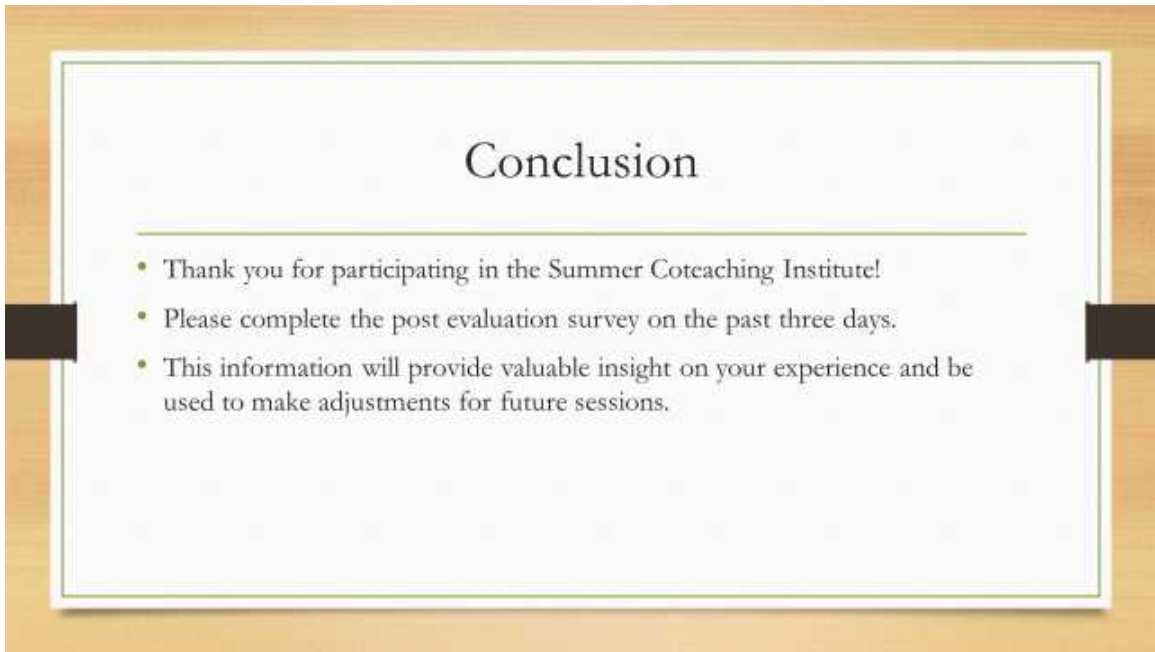
- The PLC is groomed for a culture of collective responsibility
- PLC members receive meaningful and job-embedded training related to their current practice
- Coteachers have time set aside to learn from one another
- Special Education teachers have a more active role in student learning
- PLC members are up-to-date on special education law and mandates for special education
- Students succeed
- (Friend, 2008)

Discussion

- A volunteer will be needed to write responses down on chart paper and another volunteer can share responses with the group. At your table, discuss the following question:
- What immediate changes can you make in your current role (administrator, general education teacher, special education teacher) to ensure success for all students?

Reflection

- What questions or final thoughts do you have on coteaching?
- Do you see the PLC as being an asset to your coteaching assignment? Please explain.



Suggested reading list:

Cook, L., & Friend, M. (1995). Co-teaching: Guidelines for creating effective practices.

Focus on Exceptional Children, 28(3), 1-16.

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Karhanek, G. (2004). *Whatever it takes: How professional learning communities respond when kids don't learn*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Ferriter, W. M., & Graham, P. (2002). *Making teamwork meaningful: Leading progress-driven collaboration in a PLC at work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Hord, S. M. (2009). Professional learning communities: Educators work together toward a shared purpose. *Journal of Staff Development*, 30(1), 40-43.

Kohler-Evans, P. A. (2006). Co-Teaching: How to make this marriage work in front of the kids. *Education*, 127(2), 260-264.

CO-TEACHING: POST- EVALUATION CHECKLIST

I developed the Post-Evaluation Checklist for the purpose of this workshop.

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below to measure your level of knowledge of coteaching after the summer coteaching institute.

1. I feel more aware and knowledgeable about using coteaching in the classroom. (Yes/ No).
2. The six models of co-teaching are (list below):
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
3. My knowledge of co-teaching after attending the summer coteaching institute can be described as (choose one below):
 - **Proficient**-I have a solid understanding of co-teaching.
 - **Emerging**- I am aware of co-teaching and what it is.
4. I am aware of what a PLC is and how it works (Yes/No).

CO-TEACHING: MID-YEAR SELF EVALUATION CHECKLIST

(original form can be found at Parrott, n.d.)

Below is a list of questions that may assist you in evaluating the effectiveness of your collaborative efforts.

Collaborative Presence:

1. Have you both volunteered to collaboratively teach together? YES/NO
2. Is collaborative teaching a part of your scheduled time? YES/NO
3. Are you both simultaneously present in the same classroom? YES/NO
4. Are you both actively involved when working together? YES/NO

Collaborative Planning:

1. Do you have scheduled time for co-planning? YES/NO
2. Do you view planning as a process rather than an event? YES/NO
3. Do you both have input into the unit/lesson plan? YES/NO
4. Do you both readily accept each other's ideas? YES/NO
5. Are your plans publicly displayed? YES/NO
6. Are you both involved in planning for all students? YES/NO
7. Is your planning on-going throughout the week? YES/NO
8. Is your planning teacher-directed and student-centered? YES/NO
9. Is inclusive language (us, our, we) used during the planning process? YES/NO

Collaborative Presenting:

1. Are both of your voices heard during the teaching/learning process? YES/NO
2. Is the instruction significantly different when you both are present? YES/NO

3. Is the instruction presented in a variety of ways? YES/NO
4. Are research-based strategies used during the teaching/learning process? YES/NO
5. Is interjecting of ideas a frequent behavior by both of you? YES/NO
6. Is the entire physical space being utilized in the classroom? YES/NO
7. Do you both move around and come in contact with all students? YES/NO
8. Is inclusive language (us, our, we) used by both during class? YES/NO

Collaborative Processing:

1. Do you set aside time to talk about your teaching relationship? YES/NO
2. Do you amicably resolve issues related to your relationship? YES/NO
3. Are adults relating their planning/teaching strategies to student outcomes? YES/NO

Collaborative Problem Solving:

1. Do you use a process for solving problems? YES/NO
2. Is negotiation a skill that is used when solving a problem? YES/NO
3. Are problems readily solved? YES/NO

CO-TEACHING: END OF YEAR SELF- EVALUATION CHECKLIST

(original form can be found at Parrott, n.d.)

Below is a list of questions that may assist you in evaluating the effectiveness of your collaborative efforts.

Collaborative Presence:

1. Have you both volunteered to collaboratively teach together? YES/NO
2. Is collaborative teaching a part of your scheduled time? YES/NO
3. Are you both simultaneously present in the same classroom? YES/NO
4. Are you both actively involved when working together? YES/NO

Collaborative Planning:

1. Do you have scheduled time for co-planning? YES/NO
2. Do you view planning as a process rather than an event? YES/NO
3. Do you both have input into the unit/lesson plan? YES/NO
4. Do you both readily accept each other's ideas? YES/NO
5. Are your plans publicly displayed? YES/NO
6. Are you both involved in planning for all students? YES/NO
7. Is your planning on-going throughout the week? YES/NO
8. Is your planning teacher-directed and student-centered? YES/NO
9. Is inclusive language (us, our, we) used during the planning process? YES/NO

Collaborative Presenting:

1. Are both of your voices heard during the teaching/learning process? YES/NO
2. Is the instruction significantly different when you both are present? YES/NO

3. Is the instruction presented in a variety of ways? YES/NO
4. Are research-based strategies used during the teaching/learning process? YES/NO
5. Is interjecting of ideas a frequent behavior by both of you? YES/NO
6. Is the entire physical space being utilized in the classroom? YES/NO
7. Do you both move around and come in contact with all students? YES/NO
8. Is inclusive language (us, our, we) used by both during class? YES/NO

Collaborative Processing:

1. Do you set aside time to talk about your teaching relationship? YES/NO
2. Do you amicably resolve issues related to your relationship? YES/NO
3. Are adults relating their planning/teaching strategies to student outcomes? YES/NO

Collaborative Problem Solving:

1. Do you use a process for solving problems? YES/NO
2. Is negotiation a skill that is used when solving a problem? YES/NO
3. Are problems readily solved? YES/NO

References

- DuFour, R. (2004). What is a “professional learning community”? *Educational Leadership*, 6(18), 6–11. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/>
- Friend, M. (2008). Co-teaching: A simple solution that isn't simple after all. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 2(2), 9-19. Retrieved from <http://www.joci.ecu.edu/>
- Hord, S. M. (2009). Professional learning communities: Educators work together toward a shared purpose. *Journal of Staff Development*, 30(1), 40-43. Retrieved from <https://learningforward.org/>
- Parrott, P. (n.d.). *Co-Teaching: Self-Evaluation Checklist*. Retrieved from laspdg.org/files/teachersselfeval.pdf
- U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Building the Legacy: IDEA 2004. Retrieved from <http://idea.ed.gov/>

Appendix B: Group Interview Questions

Introduction

1. How would you define coteaching?
2. How long have you been working in a coteaching arrangement?
3. In what capacity have you been working in a coteaching arrangement?
4. Can you describe in detail how your participation in the co-teaching program began?

Preplanning/Coplanning

5. How often does your team get together to plan instruction, and do you share a common planning time?
6. What does a planning meeting for coteachers entail? (follow-up as necessary) Are the following included: discussion of curriculum; coteaching approaches; modifications or accommodations for the kids with special needs?
7. What types of professional development have you received in preparation for teaching students with disabilities in the general education setting?

Coinstructing

8. What coteaching approaches do you use to deliver instruction to all of your students?
9. Do you feel your expertise is being utilized in an instructional role when using coteaching approaches in the classroom?
10. Is there shared decision making when planning instruction with your coteacher?
11. What types of professional development have you received in the areas of coteaching?

Coassessment

12. How often do you assess students' learning in a coteaching arrangement, and what types of assessment do you use?
13. How do you assess what is, and what is not, working within your coteaching team?
14. Can you describe your perspective on collaboration as a teaching strategy for student achievement?

Other

15. What benefits do you think collaboration has for teachers?
16. Are there any challenges to coteaching your team has faced from a relationship standpoint?
17. Are there any challenges to coteaching your team has faced from an instructional standpoint?

Appendix C: Observation Matrix

Coteaching Classroom

General Education Teacher:

Special Education Teacher:

School:

Grade Level:

Subject Area:

Time:

Date:

Component	Observed	Not Observed	Notes
Coteaching approach evident			
2 teachers sharing instructional duties			
Instructional strategy varied for students' needs evident			
Formative assessment evident			
Full integration of students with special needs evident			

Appendix D: Sample Field Notes

[Redacted]

Observation Matrix

[Redacted]

Co-Teaching Classroom

General Education Teacher: [Redacted]

Special Education Teacher: [Redacted]

School: [Redacted]

Grade Level: [Redacted]

Subject Area: [Redacted]

Time: [Redacted]

Date: [Redacted]

Component	Observed	Not Observed	Notes
Lesson plans evident	✓		On chalk board,
2 teachers sharing instructional duties	✓		SPED w/ 1 grp. GenEd moving around class from grp to grp
Instructional strategy varied for students' needs evident	✓		kids needing help placed w/ SPED SPED ① control bx by keeping kid w/ attn issues close to her.
Formative assessment Evident	✓		SPED ① asked questions to review understanding of story, characters, plot, theme, reviewing kids responses
Full integration of students with special needs evident	✓		All reading same book in small grp All kids in class working on ME (MI) (Theme) Teacher led
Co-teaching approach evident	✓?		SPED ① in small grp (5) All kids in small group working on different topics (theme, author's purpose, context clues), Gen Ed T working w/ 3 small grps (moving grp to grp)

SPED ① kids did not switch after 20 min.
SPED ① changed topics activities to game (working on letter sounds) segmenting/blends

-GenEd will work in small grp when c/c comes in 9:10 am
4 kids reading