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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine, through quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, current special educator and general educator perceptions of inclusion and collaboration as compared to similar perceptions examined in 1995 (Tarpley, 1995). A self-made survey was implemented to explore educator perceptions. Quantitative selective response items were analyzed using a Chi Square procedure. Methods of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were used to analyze qualitative open-ended questions. Significant values were noted based on the Chi Square analysis across four demographic areas: (a) current teaching assignment, (b) area of training, (c) number of years teaching experience, and (d) gender. Commonalities among special and general educators were observed based on participant responses to the open-ended questions. Limitations of this research and suggested topics for future research were discussed.

# Current Special Educator and General Educator Perceptions of Inclusion and Collaboration as a Service Delivery Model in a Middle School Educational Setting

Educators uphold a philosophy of commitment to the success of all students. That philosophy incorporates ideals of diversity, the exploitation of students' strengths and interests, and the perception of the differences in learning all students possess (Villa & Thousand, 2003). Inclusive education challenges that philosophy and requires dramatic change in many important aspects of education.

## *Historical Aspects of the Service Delivery Model*

The conceptualization of students with disabilities being educated in a general education setting has recently evolved as a result of several pieces of benchmark legislation. The most significant piece of legislation affecting special education was the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142). Prior to Public Law 94-142, children with disabilities were excluded from the public education system. Before 1975, the public education system also lacked adequate resources needed to provide students with disabilities an appropriate education. As a result, parents and caregivers were required to look outside the public education system for alternative education options (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act stated that children with special needs are entitled to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in their least restrictive environment (LRE) (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; McGrath, Johns, & Mathur, 2004). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act also provided schools with funding based on the number of students served. Interpreters of the public law assumed that only students with mild disabilities should be mainstreamed into the general education curriculum. As a result, minimal

support and few accommodations were provided to students with disabilities participating in general education classrooms (Villa & Thousand, 2003).

A subsequent reauthorization of the Education for All Handicapped Children was initiated in 1990 and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Public Law 101-476). IDEA (1990) provided students with disabilities a wealth of resources and services within the public education system. More intense support for students with moderate to severe disabilities included in the general education classroom was provided as a result of the 1990 reauthorization. IDEA (1990) emphasized the need to put the person first and the disability second. An extension of related services including therapeutic recreation, social work services, and rehabilitation counseling also came as a result of IDEA (1990). Transition services were mandated to become part of the Individualized Education Program beginning at age sixteen (fourteen when appropriate), which included rehabilitative services such as supported employment and independent living beyond the school years. The disability categories of Autism and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) were added to the list of populations eligible to receive special education services (Henley, Ramsey, & Algozzine, 2002). Following these amendments, the interpretation of educating students with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers was often referred to as inclusion (Villa & Thousand, 2003).

Subsequent amendments of IDEA were made in 1997, which allowed students with disabilities more academic, physical, and social access into the general education curriculum (Villa & Thousand, 2003). With the focus on participation in the general education curriculum (Henley, Ramsey, & Algozzine, 2002), students with disabilities are required to participate in high stakes assessment. Students with disabilities, specifically in the state of Virginia, are required to participate in the Virginia accountability system either through the Virginia Standards

of Learning (SOL) or the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) (Guidelines for the Participation of Students with Disabilities, 2004).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) is the most recent reauthorization. These amendments, along with three decades of research, have increased access for students with disabilities into the general education curriculum. Access into the general education classroom will hopefully allow students with disabilities to achieve developmental goals and be challenged to meet the same expectations as those of their non-disabled peers (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

Beginning with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), a continuum of alternative placements and services, from restrictive to inclusive, has been a part of the subsequent amendments ensuring that no student is denied the right to an education on the basis of his/her disability (McGrath, Johns, & Mathur, 2004). The rapid growth and change underlying the principle of special education is a main factor in determining whether or not there is a universal resolve in educating students with special needs. The 2004 reauthorization of IDEIA emphasizes inclusion and collaboration as the primary service delivery models with regards to integrating students with disabilities into the general education curriculum. While the terms inclusion, collaboration, and mainstreaming are often used interchangeably, the history of integration of students with special needs defines these terms separately. The subsequent discussion will begin with mainstreaming, followed by an historical and contemporary view of inclusion and collaboration as they relate to current educational practices.

*Mainstreaming*

Mainstreaming is a term that came about early in the history of Special Education. It refers to the temporal, physical, instructional, and/or social integration of students with

disabilities with their non-disabled peers. Mainstreaming is effective when benefits are shared among general educators, special educators, and students. A student with a disability is mainstreamed into a general education classroom assuming his/her disability will present few impediments to the environment as a whole. Mainstreaming requires minimal accommodations to students in the general education classroom; however, special education services are likely to be provided outside the mainstream environment (Henley, Ramsey, & Algozzine, 2002; Heron & Harris, 2001).

Definitions of mainstreaming differ in terms of the educational philosophy of the individual school system (Wilcox & Wigle, 1997). In their article, Wilcox and Wigle (1997) outlined a 1974 study completed by Birch regarding the mainstreaming of students with mild mental retardation. In the preface of that study, Maynard C. Reynolds acknowledged mainstreaming to be "based on the principle of educating most children in the same classrooms and providing special education on the basis of learning needs rather than categories of handicaps" (p. iii).

Mastropieri and Scruggs (1996) provide an alternate definition of mainstreaming that states, "Mainstreaming, (and more recently inclusion) describes the process of integrating students with disabilities into general education classes in order to address the requirement of [least restrictive environment] mandated by the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142; now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)" (p. 1). The notion of mainstreaming as a service delivery model has evolved into the more recent concept of inclusion.

*Inclusion*

Inclusion has become a more contemporary term used to incorporate past ideas of mainstreaming and current issues related to specific pieces of legislation. Kauffman and Hallahan (1997) define the goal of special education as, "offering effective instruction in academic and social skills areas, as well as the opportunity to foster social networks that induce and sustain desirable social behavior and lead to satisfying relationships" (Pivik, McComas, & LaFlamme, 2002, p. 105). In relation to Kauffman and Hallahan's definition, Pivik, McComas, and LaFlamme (2002) denote that a fully inclusive educational environment would provide educators and administrators the opportunity to develop such an environment that reflects the notion of "equality without discrimination" (p. 105). Ferguson's (1996) definition of inclusion states that it is "…a movement seeking to create schools that meet the needs of all students by establishing learning communities for students with and without disabilities, educated together in age-appropriate general education classrooms in neighborhood schools." Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) describe inclusion as being a process wherein students with special needs are educated primarily in the general education classroom alongside their non-disabled peers, with the necessary special education supports they require to ensure success.

The inclusive movement and the passionate discussions that accompany the movement continue to persist in that its philosophy not only focuses its attention on students with disabilities, but also on those without (Kavale & Forness, 2000). The philosophy of inclusion also includes the attitudes and perceptions of teachers from both general education and special education backgrounds. Teacher collaboration plays a functional role in the success of inclusion classrooms, and ultimately the success of the students participating in such educational environments

*Collaboration*

The movement toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom leads to the redefinition of teacher roles. Villa and Thousand (2003) suggest that school personnel clarify new responsibilities teachers must undertake when participating in an inclusive environment. General educators now have legal responsibilities for meeting the needs of the exceptional learners included in their classroom As of the 1997 IDEA Amendments, general educators are now required to be a member of a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team. Prior to 1997, they were not required to do so (IDEA Law and Resources, 2005). Schools must provide adequate opportunities to allow their teachers to assimilate into their new role. In-service opportunities, professional support groups, co-teaching, and other coaching and mentoring activities are services schools can provide to ensure effective collaboration among general and special education teachers participating in inclusion/collaborative teaching environments (Villa & Thousand, 2003). Both special educators and general educators have a shared responsibility in the education of students with disabilities who are included in the general education classroom. Teacher collaboration has become more prominent as a result of the re-authorization of the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) (2004). Friend and Cook (1992) developed a general definition of collaboration which takes into account, "interpersonal collaboration as a style of direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal" (p. 5). Although definitions of collaborative arrangements indicate positive ideals, inadequacies do exist among teacher collaborators.

Problems relating to collaborative teaching efforts include insufficient time to schedule planning, difficulty coordinating teacher and student schedules, and a lack of administrative

support (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Phillips, Sapona, and Lubic (1995) determined that collaborative teaching often failed as a result of teachers' inability to communicate, failure to resolve teaching-style differences, and an inability to integrate special education teachers and students adequately into the classroom (Kavale & Forness, 2000). In order for inclusion to be successful, educators must acquire the skills needed to become effective and proficient collaborative team members. Skills in creativity, collaborative teaming processes, coteaching and interpersonal communication are key to ensure that the needs of diverse learners are met within the general education classroom (Villa & Thousand, 2003).

### *Teacher Attitudes and Perceptions*

Special education and general education teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward the inclusion of students with disabilities remain varied in nature. As inclusion continues to be the focus of educational placement for students with special needs, more teachers are becoming advocates for the model. However, their radical views do not reflect those of general education classroom teachers. The early attitudes of general educators proved to be negative and reveal feelings of inadequacy in working with students with disabilities (Kavale & Forness, 2000). Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) conducted a longitudinal study aimed at surveying teacher attitudes of inclusion. Between the years of 1958 to 1995, they found very little change in teacher perceptions. The majority of teachers surveyed accepted the general notion of inclusion, with about half expressing willingness to participate. Numbers declined when the possibility of full inclusion of students with more severe behavioral and academic difficulties was presented, along with the possibility of making extensive changes in classroom routines to accommodate students with more severe disabilities (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997). Other factors such as feelings of responsibility (Minke, Bear, Deemer, & Griffin, 1996), low teacher efficacy,

insufficient teaching experience, and inadequate use of differentiated teaching practices resulted in less positive views regarding inclusion. Teacher perceptions were generally more positive when students with physical disabilities were included in their classroom rather than those with academic or behavioral disorders (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Mandell & Strain, 1978). Despite the rapid movement toward inclusion, teacher attitudes and perceptions have not been actively researched.

The inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom causes special educators to ponder whether or not their expertise is still warranted. Fisher, Frey, and Thousand (2003) suggest that the need for special education teachers is not lessened as a result of the inclusion movement. Moreover, as students with disabilities continue to participate in a broader range of placements, teachers with understanding of the complexity of their diverse needs are vital to ensure maximum student success.

### *Middle School Inclusion*

Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) indicate that secondary level inclusion poses a significant challenge for educators on the basis of academic complexity, pace of instruction, teacher attitudes, and the potential consequences of high-stakes testing. Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) document the challenges of inclusive practices at the secondary level. They indicate that inclusion at the middle school level requires teachers to shift their instruction from teacher-centered to student-centered, so that the individual needs of students are met more effectively. Despite the skepticism concerning inclusionary practices, specifically at the secondary level (Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997), positive practices are documented, yet they lack concrete data that proves how inclusion/collaborative classrooms are effective and successful. Hence, teacher perceptions serve as the primary source in evaluating the effectiveness of inclusion/collaborative classrooms.

Jehlen (2002) describes specific variables that teachers at the middle school level define as factors relating to the success of inclusion. A co-teaching model proves effective in that teachers feel they, as well as the students with and without disabilities, are receiving adequate supports in the classroom. Each teacher is able to put into practice his/her own expertise in order to serve students effectively. A reduction in discipline problems was also reported as a result of inclusion/collaborative practices (Jehlen, 2002). Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) documented an observable increase in positive social behavior among students as noted by teachers participating in inclusion. The reduction of discipline problems noted above and the increase in positive social behavior are data-based ways of looking at success. Unfortunately, a lack of empirical research exists examining how inclusion/collaborative classrooms are proven successful with the implementation of data-based methods.

Although positive concepts of middle school inclusion are evident, negative aspects of the service delivery model are also noted. Jehlen (2002) describes the challenges teachers face as they are introduced together in the same classroom. Differences in teacher philosophy exist, making it difficult for teachers to adjust not only to the changing needs of their students, but also to the differences between and among their collaborating colleagues. Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) determined such inadequacies of middle school inclusion to be (a) lack of ongoing training, (b) lack of assistance to teachers, (c) lack of communication, (d) lack of planning time, and (e) lack of ongoing evaluation and progress monitoring. They also noted that special education teachers felt their general education counterparts did not take enough responsibility when implementing inclusion as a service delivery model in their classroom. In conclusion, administration was not active despite their support of inclusion. In summation, Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) suggest the following to promote a more successful inclusion model: (a) allocate resources specific to the

service delivery model, (b) obtain active leadership from people who are enthusiastic about the model, (c) explicitly distinguish the roles of both special educators and general educators participating in the process, (d) establish more efficient ways of learning from the process of inclusion, (d) provide necessary training to staff members, (e) establish a universal rationale for inclusion, (f) actively promote social acceptance of the students included in the general education classroom, and (g) ensure active involvement of parents. Although Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) did not experience positive implementation of inclusion, the preceding factors give schools guidelines that aid in making further attempts of inclusion successful.

Education law has evolved to provide students with disabilities a wide range of placements associated with the severity of their disability. Specifically, as mandated by legislation, inclusion programs have been a major focal point in special education. For the past 25 years, the integration of students with disabilities has been the norm, but not without significant changes and questions regarding the structure, and overall success of special education (Kavale & Forness, 2000). The success of inclusion programs and the students with and without disabilities participating in them relies on the use of best practices. Villa and Thousand (2003) note that transdisciplinary teaming, block scheduling, multi-age student grouping and looping, school wide positive behavior support and discipline approaches, detracking, positive communication, and school-within-a-school family configurations of students and teachers are some initiatives schools might use when considering the implementation and success of inclusion.

As noted above, little research has been conducted on teacher attitudes and perceptions of their participating inclusion/collaborative classrooms. As a result of the lack of research, what teachers rely on to prove that the service delivery model is effective is not widely known. A

connection with organizational best practices, leadership and administrative support, redefined roles of educators and students, collaboration, and additional adult support lead to the prospect of successful implementation of inclusion and collaborative teaching (Villa & Thousand, 2003); however, what do special educators and general educators do to validate the success of their inclusion/collaborative classroom models based on the above criteria?

While legislation (EHA, 1975; IDEA, 1990, 1997; IDEIA, 2004) has encouraged collaboration and the inclusive classroom, as little as ten years ago, attitudes toward this service delivery model by beginning teachers were mixed in their support of the movement. In addition, knowledge of what exactly this model was and required of teachers was limited. Tarpley (1995) interviewed and observed special educators in three suburban middle school collaborative settings. Among the questions asked were those pertaining to special educators' understanding of three main components regarding the service delivery model: (a) the definition of the service delivery model, (b) teacher perceptions of the model's worth and success, and (c) the assessment and outcomes of students participating in the service delivery model. Participants in the 1995 study responded to their beliefs regarding the definitions of co-teaching, collaboration, and inclusion. Questions regarding teacher perceptions included the amount of support received from a building administrator, how decisions are made about which students will be in inclusion/collaborative classrooms, time allocated for communication among colleagues, reaction to suggestions made for modifications in the classroom or curriculum, type of assistance asked for by general educators, and what is pleasing and frustrating regarding this service delivery model. Questions regarding outcomes and assessment of students participating in this service delivery model included how progress is monitored, how grades are assigned, reactions to student grades, explicit evidence of effective collaborative efforts, and parental perceptions of

the service delivery model. Findings suggested that special educators were encouraged by their school systems to serve students with disabilities in a collaborative setting; however, a continuum of services should also exist. A consensus among participants in this study revealed an ideal collaborative setting as one that combines instruction in the general education classroom with pull-out services available to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. Reservations regarding collaboration as a service delivery model were expressed with regard to the logistics of scheduling, planning time, and administrative support (Tarpley, 1995).

The present research is interested in current special educator and general educator perceptions of their participation in inclusion/collaborative classrooms based on the three components listed above. The questions of are we making progress and are we appropriately documenting this service delivery model to its "best practice" still remain applicable to educators and provide a foundation for the subsequent research.

## *Method*

### *Participants*

The researchers used a convenience sample in selecting the participants for this survey study. Teachers from three middle schools in a large urban area of Virginia were asked to complete the survey. The sample of participants consisted of special educators and general educators participating in inclusion/collaborative classrooms within the three middle schools.

### *Instrument*

A self-made survey was used to obtain the information of interest for this study. Responses of participants to a series of interviews contained in a previous study (Tarpley, 1995) were used as the foundation for the survey. The researchers then reviewed current trends of inclusion/collaborative teaching environments and included this information in the current

surveys. One version of the survey was devised for general educators and a parallel version for special educators. The surveys' 14 multiple-choice items and three open-ended questions focus on three aspects of current inclusion/collaborative classrooms: (a) current definitions of each service delivery model, (b) current teacher attitudes and perceptions of their participating inclusion/collaborative classroom, and (c) assessment and outcomes of the service delivery models.

Demographic information was collected in the areas of training, current teaching assignment, number of years teaching, and gender. A page was also provided for participants to list comments and suggestions regarding the study. Two colleagues reviewed the completed surveys for understanding. The surveys were again revised to ensure clarity and parallelism between the versions.

*Procedure*

The researchers gained approval from the Longwood University Human Subjects Research Review Committee to conduct this study. In addition, the participating school division's Department of Accountability granted approval before surveys were distributed.

Arrangements to distribute and collect the surveys were made via email and telephone calls between the researcher and administration at all three schools. The administration at two of the three participating schools agreed to formulate a list of eligible teachers and deliver the surveys to them. At the third school, a list of teachers eligible to participate was given to the researcher by an Assistant Principal. The list was discarded immediately following the distribution of the surveys.

To protect anonymity and confidentiality of participants, a cover letter was provided outlining the purpose and procedure of the research. Participation in this study was voluntary.

and participants had the option to withdraw without penalty. Teachers participating in this study were instructed to return the surveys, complete or incomplete, to the appropriate location within their school. Surveys were distributed and then collected approximately one week later. The surveys were coded for identification to be used in the analysis The researchers used a two-letter abbreviation for each school and a two-digit number for each teacher completing a survey. The abbreviations give no indication of the school name, nor do the codes in any way identify the participants. Approximately 100 surveys were distributed

*Analysis*

The chi square procedure was used to determine the relationship between responses to the survey questions/statements and the teaching assignment of the respondents. Methods of naturalistic inquiry, specifically unitization, categorization, and triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), were employed to analyze the open-ended questions on the survey Each response was coded as a general educator or special educator response. Then, the responses were unitized based on the information within them. The units of information were then used to define more specific categories of similar content relating to each question. Methods of triangulation were then implemented to validate researcher interpretations. To complete the triangulation step, data was given to a colleague who unitized and categorized these responses based on her thoughts and rationale. Then, the researcher and her colleague collaborated to validate and finalize interpretations and final themes.

## *Results*

*Participants*

Surveys were distributed to 54 special educators and 47 general educators participating in middle school inclusion/collaborative classrooms at the beginning of this study. A total of 13

special educator and 18 general educator surveys were collected. Of the 18 total participants within the general educator population, 15 of the participants were female, and three were male. Across all general educator participants, three had between four and seven years teaching experience, three had between eight and ten years teaching experience and ten general educators had ten-plus years teaching experience. Of the 13 total participants within the special educator population, eight participants were female and five were male. Of these special educators, four had between one and three years teaching experience, four also had between four and seven years teaching experience, three had between eight and ten years teaching experience and three also had ten-plus years teaching experience.

*Analysis*

Results were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. Quantitative results will be discussed first, followed by qualitative results.

*Quantitative results.*

Participants' responses to the 14 questions/statements presented in the survey were analyzed using a Chi Square Test of Independence to determine if a relationship existed between the responses and any of four demographic areas: (a) current teaching assignment, (b) area of training, (c) number of years teaching experience, and (d) gender. A chi square analysis was performed in order to note the relationship between the observed frequencies and theoretical frequencies relative to this study. The observed frequencies were obtained based on each participant's response to the questions presented in the survey. Theoretical or expected frequencies were derived from a hypothesis or line of theoretical speculation independent of the data collected from this study (Ferguson & Takane, 1989). Significance was noted based on the

relationship between the four demographic areas mentioned above and how participants responded to each item. An alpha coefficient of .05 was set for the chi square analysis.

Based on current teaching assignment and participant responses, results of the Chi Square test indicated no significance in questions 1-7, 10, or 13-14. However, participants' responses to Question 12 resulted in a $X^2(df = 3)$ and a significance level of .053. In addition, participants' responses to Questions eight and nine both resulted in a Chi Square approaching significance. Question eight resulted in a $X^2(df=3)$ and a significance level of .069. Question nine indicated a $X^2(df=4)$ and a significance level of .078. Table 1 includes a summary of the level of significance for all questions presented in the survey and the relationship between general and special educators and the area in which they are currently teaching.

Table 1

*Current Teaching Assignments*

| Question no. | *n* | df | Level of significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | 29 | 3 | .482 |
| Q2 | 29 | 3 | .396 |
| Q3 | 29 | 3 | .302 |
| Q4 | 29 | 2 | .960 |
| Q5 | 19 | 2 | .635 |
| Q6 | 24 | 3 | .877 |
| Q7 | 27 | 2 | .185 |
| Q8 | 22 | 3 | .069 |
| Q9 | 28 | 4 | .078 |
| Q10 | 27 | 4 | .280 |
| Q11 | 26 | 3 | .115 |
| Q12 | 27 | 3 | .053 |
| Q13 | 25 | 3 | .502 |
| Q14 | 13 | 3 | .279 |

Results also indicated significance in area of training of participants and their responses to the questions. Question three determined a $X^2$(df=9) and a significance level of .049. Question 11 determined a $X^2$(df=9) and a significance level of .027. Table 2 includes a summary of the level of significance for all questions presented in the survey and the relationship between general and special educators in the area in which they received their training.

Table 2

*Areas of Training*

| Question no. | *n* | df | Level of significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | 31 | 9 | .546 |
| Q2 | 31 | 9 | .210 |
| Q3 | 31 | 9 | .049 |
| Q4 | 31 | 6 | .682 |
| Q5 | 21 | 6 | .650 |
| Q6 | 26 | 9 | .528 |
| Q7 | 29 | 6 | .259 |
| Q8 | 24 | 9 | .449 |
| Q9 | 30 | 12 | .409 |
| Q10 | 29 | 12 | .715 |
| Q11 | 28 | 9 | .027 |
| Q12 | 29 | 9 | .544 |
| Q13 | 27 | 9 | .641 |
| Q14 | 14 | 9 | .475 |

Results approaching significance were also noted in the relationship between how general and special educators responded to each question and number of years teaching experience. Question one revealed results approaching significance with a $X^2$(df=9) with a significance level of .070. Question 11 also reported results approaching significance with a $X^2$(df=9) and a significance level of .075. Table 3 includes a summary of the level of significance for all questions presented in the survey and the relationship between general and special educators and number of years teaching experience

Finally, results indicated approaching significance among questions five and 12 with relation to general and special educator responses and gender. Question five reported results approaching significance with a $X^2$(df=2) and a significance level of .066. Question 12 also reported results approaching significance with a $X^2$(df=3) and a significance level of .075. Table 4 includes a summary of the level of significance for all questions presented in the survey and the relationship between general and special educators and gender.

*Qualitative results.*

Methods of naturalistic inquiry resulted in common themes among general and special educators based on their responses to each open-ended question presented in the survey. The first open-ended question attempted to gain responses from special and general educators based on whether or not they were in favor of inclusion/collaborative classrooms. Perceptions indicated inclusion/collaborative classrooms to be both favorable and unfavorable for several reasons. With regards to positive perceptions, one general educator noted, "If the general education teacher has input/choice on whether or not they want an inclusion teacher with them, then yes!" Likewise, another general educator responded by saying, "I think that most teachers are open to ways that will improve student achievement." Additionally, a general educator that,

"Yes, I think most educators see inclusion as the most desirable placement because students receive the same content." Similarly, a special educator noted, "Yes, they feel that it's important for students to be exposed to the regular population and curriculum."

Table 3

*Number of Years Teaching Experience*

| Question no. | *n* | df | Level of significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | 29 | 9 | .070 |
| Q2 | 29 | 9 | .715 |
| Q3 | 29 | 9 | .224 |
| Q4 | 29 | 6 | .504 |
| Q5 | 19 | 6 | .676 |
| Q6 | 24 | 9 | .297 |
| Q7 | 27 | 6 | .238 |
| Q8 | 22 | 9 | .403 |
| Q9 | 28 | 12 | .609 |
| Q10 | 27 | 12 | .329 |
| Q11 | 26 | 9 | .075 |
| Q12 | 27 | 9 | .347 |
| Q13 | 25 | 9 | .862 |
| Q14 | 13 | 9 | .726 |

Table 4

*Gender of Participants*

| Question no. | *n* | df | Level of significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | 31 | 3 | .408 |
| Q2 | 31 | 3 | .458 |
| Q3 | 31 | 3 | .844 |
| Q4 | 31 | 2 | .684 |
| Q5 | 21 | 2 | .066 |
| Q6 | 26 | 3 | .489 |
| Q7 | 29 | 2 | .641 |
| Q8 | 24 | 3 | .454 |
| Q9 | 30 | 34 | .619 |
| Q10 | 29 | 4 | .576 |
| Q11 | 28 | 3 | .228 |
| Q12 | 29 | 3 | .075 |
| Q13 | 24 | 3 | .477 |
| Q14 | 14 | 3 | .455 |

Favorable and unfavorable perceptions were noted based on how the service delivery model relates to the curriculum. General and special educators note that a continuum of services must be available in order to accommodate the individual needs of students. A response from a special educator indicates acceptance of the service delivery model, "…but there need to be other options available for the students who may do well in 1-2 gen. ed. collab. Settings [*sic*], but need

a smaller resource class [pull-out] for the other 2 core classes." Similarly, general educators feel that having students with special needs in the classroom, "…takes away from the instruction time. They [general educators] feel they have to slow down their instructions [*sic*] to accommodate the students with disabilities." Unfavorable perceptions of the service delivery model were also noted based on an overall unwillingness to accept change within the curriculum. One general educator stated, "…most regular ed. teachers do not want to give up or share control of their classroom." Another response from a general educator noted, "…I don't think that most general educators feel comfortable teaching students with disabilities. In addition, having a large number of Special Education students commits you to attending [*sic*] many additional meetings. It is hard to focus on the non-disabled students." Similarly, a special educator noted, "…most Spec. Ed. [*sic*] teachers do not want to take on the additional planning. They are too busy w/IEP paperwork on a day-to-day basis."

Relevant to outcomes and assessment of students, general and special educators perceive inclusion/collaborative classrooms as unfavorable because of the decrease in standardized test scores and grades. Likewise, general and special educators feel they are held accountable for the poor performance of students with special needs. One special educator expressed reasoning for why most special educators are not in favor of a collaborative/inclusion model for students with disabilities. Another special educator noted, "…Special Ed students tend to lower standardized test scores. Since teachers are held accountable for their scores, I feel it is seen as a less favorable assignment." Another special educator adds, "…It [inclusion] has been an extreme reaction to SOLs and No Child Left Behind." Comparable to responses from special educators, one general educator noted, "The SPED students sometimes bring grades down which

is seen as a reflection of the teacher." Although negative perceptions of inclusion/collaboration were suggested, positive perceptions were gathered among participant responses.

The second open-ended question asked what about middle school might make inclusion more difficult and what about middle school would make inclusion easier. Both general and special educators noted that middle school, in general, was a difficult time for students. One special educator noted that, "Social transition is primary [it is the first time students] change classes, have lockers, dress out for P.E., and [are able to attend school] dances." Similarly, a general educator responded by saying, "I think the transition in sixth grade, from elementary [school] is an extremely large step for students. Students are used to more individualized instruction, and have a harder time adapting to middle school routines." Hormones were also noted as a factor contributing to the difficulty of inclusion in middle school.

Difficulty was also noted between general and special educators based on the lack of communication between collaborative teachers and the lack of availability of special educators. On general educator noted, "I think the schedule and the number of [special education] teachers available makes it difficult. They often have to split themselves up among 4 Core Teams and be responsible for resource classes, as well." Another general educator stated, "We have enough planning time, but for some reason, our inclusion teachers are not available or coming to our collaborative meetings." A response noted from a special educator stated, "There are more teachers that need to communicate with each other (more 'cooks in the kitchen')."

Planning and scheduling proved to make inclusion/collaboration at the middle school level difficult, as well. General educator comments included, "Planning time for collaborative teachers is a problem", "...schedules for the teachers should include time for collaborative planning allowing the teachers time each day", and "rigid schedules and lack of flexibility in

scheduling [make inclusion difficult]." Special educator comments such as, "Need admin. [*sic*] to provide planning time for teachers" and "scheduling!!!" proved to be factors that make middle school inclusion difficult.

Common factors that would contribute to easier implementation of inclusion were noted based on general and special educator responses. Responses by both groups of educators indicated that having one special educator assigned to the same group of teachers would make inclusion/collaborative environments run smoother. Specific comments made by general educators include, "Have one sp. ed [*sic*] teacher assigned per team so scheduling can be more flexible" and "To make it easier, there should be a teacher (Sp Ed) assigned to one core that follows the class throughout the day in ALL subjects." Similarly, one special educator noted that, "…to [make inclusion easier] assign 1 teacher to 1 team or 2 teams…especially if they are on the same schedule." Likewise, another special educator indicated that, "Working w/ the same teacher for more that one class a day [would make middle school inclusion easier]."

More planning time was another common theme found among general and special educators. One general educator noted, "More planning time together [is necessary] for the teachers to plan strategies, make adjustments and form a better lesson in meeting all students' needs." Similarly, a special educator indicated middle school inclusion "would be easier if we had more planning time." Despite an overwhelming response of factors that would assist in making inclusion easier at the middle school level, select general and special educator participants felt inclusion in middle school was easy. One general educator commented,

> The middle school structure greatly benefits the collaboration/inclusion model. Having a core group of teachers who work with the same group of students allows for better communication regarding the students' progress. It also allows for more consistency in the students' daily routine; it's more organized for the students.

Another response by a general educator indicated that, "The enthusiasm of the children and their capability to accept others makes it easier in my opinion." Equally, special educator responses reflect that of general educator responses. One special educator noted, "I don't think middle school is difficult for inclusion at all. I believe that the middle school concept is very conducive to the inclusion/collaboration model because of the teams and planning aspects."

The final open-ended question asked participants to list specific reasons educators know and/or observe that tell if a collaborative/inclusion classroom is successful. Results indicated commonalities such as student progress, success, and an increase in grades, as well as outcomes of assessments and effective teacher collaboration. As noted by a general educator, "a collaborative classroom is successful when students are successful with grade level assignments with little or no modifications." With regard to student success based on assessment outcomes, one general educator commented, "…student's assessments should be from a variety of methods, not just one, i.e. testing [*sic*]." General educators noting effective teacher collaboration as a way of monitoring success of inclusion/collaboration state the following, "Kids are not swarming around 1 teacher for help. They feel comfortable going to other teacher [*sic*] as well." Another general educator noted, "Both teachers are teaching and working with students [*sic*] not one teaching and the other sitting working on something else." Comparatively, a special educator stated, "Students on all levels make progress…grades reflect true performance of sped. [*sic*] kids." Another special educator responded by noting, "[Student success is based on] children need [*sic*] less and less individual help as the year progresses. Children are performing better and better with less accommodations as the year

progresses. Children have less and less behavioral problems as the year progresses." A special educator indicated effective collaboration is, "when teachers are working together, planning together, and making joint decisions." Likewise, another special educator indicated, "The teachers are planning together, both are teaching, the students regard both teachers in the same manner, and the students are successful."

In summation, results indicate commonalities among general and special educator responses across the three open-ended questions (See Appendix B). These commonalities incorporate characteristics relating to the three major components that outline this study.

## Discussion

The study completed in 1995 served as an impetus for the present study. More current trends of inclusion and collaboration were reviewed based on more recent literature and special education legislation. Three major concepts (i.e., definition of terms related to the service delivery model, teacher perceptions of the worth and success of the model, and assessment and outcomes of students participating in the service delivery model) will be discussed further in terms of significance levels and four demographic areas (i.e., current teaching assignment, area of training, number of years teaching experience, and gender).

### *Definition of Terms*

Teacher's understanding of the terms co-teaching, inclusion, and collaboration is more clearly defined based on results from this study versus those conducted in previous years. Studies completed 10 years ago (Tarpley, 1995) indicated that special educators were unsure of the meaning of these terms, as well as the context in which they should be used. Results of the Chi Square procedure approached significance when comparing the response selected by general

and special educators and the definition of co-teaching based on number of years teaching experience. It seemed teachers having less experience defined co-teaching differently than their more experienced colleagues. Participants (i.e., general educator and special educator combined) having at least 10 years teaching experience noted the definition of co-teaching to be where two instructors are both in the classroom at the same time, but divided up duties (i.e., instruction, planning, and behavior modification). The Chi Square procedure noted values approaching significance ($p = .070$) suggesting that, as veteran teachers are being introduced to inclusion as a primary service delivery model, they are willing to share responsibilities that once had been solely theirs. It could also be understood that veteran teachers are accepting support of their colleagues within the classroom more readily than they did in the past.

The Chi Square procedure produced significant results ($p = .049$) in the relationship between general and special educators' responses to the definition of inclusion based on their area of training. The relationship proved that general and special educators perceive the definition of inclusion to be a combination of a special educator and a general educator in one classroom, where the general educator is responsible for content instruction and the special educator is responsible for the needs of his/her students with special needs. While special and general educator perceptions of inclusion varied as indicated in the literature (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1996; Mandell & Strain, 1978), teacher perceptions of the definition appear analogous based on their area of training.

When examining teacher definitions of the service delivery model based on select response items, general and special educator responses were comparable. However, responses elicited by participants based on the open-ended questions resulted in differing opinions. It

appeared that both general and special educators had their own personal definition of each term, which differed from their response in the Chi Square procedure.

*Teacher Perceptions*

As noted above, teacher perceptions of this service delivery model remain varied in nature (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Mastropieri & Scruggs; Mandell & Strain). The Chi Square procedure noted values approaching significance ($p = .069$) from general and special educator responses and the type of assistance they ask of one another based on current teaching assignment. General and special educators ask for similar assistance from their colleagues while in the classroom. General educators most often ask for academic and behavioral assistance from the special educator. Likewise, special educators most often ask for the same type of assistance from their general education counterpart.

Research conducted 10 years ago (Tarpley, 1995) indicated a less positive view of how special and general educators use each other as resources in the classroom. Based on results of the open-ended questions presented in this study, special and general educators welcomed the added support into the inclusion/collaborative classroom. Conversely, selected participants also indicated that it was difficult to share control of their classroom.

Past studies (Tarpley, 1995) also indicated that special educators viewed this service delivery model as a favorable placement for students with disabilities, yet also believed a continuum of services must exist. Participant responses from the open-ended questions in the present study indicated similar perceptions. Educators, specifically special educators, noted inclusion/collaborative classrooms as being favorable to both teachers and students; however, they also mentioned that inclusion/collaboration is not appropriate for all students. Similarly, literature examining teacher perceptions (Jehlen, 2002) stated views akin to those described

above. Many general and special educators gain positive perceptions based on their experience with the service delivery model; therefore, indicating more positive collaborative efforts between the two cohorts of educators.

The Chi Square procedure resulted in values approaching significance (p= .078) from general and special educator responses and what is most pleasing regarding the service delivery model based on current teaching assignment. Results indicated that special educators enjoyed working in the general education classroom and were pleased to see services provided to students with special needs in a general education environment. Moreover, special educators felt they gained knowledge regarding the general education curriculum by working alongside general educators. General educators are pleased to have assistance and support provided to them in the classroom. They are also satisfied with the services provided to their students in the general education classroom, and feel they are learning new techniques from the special educator. Once again, these perceptions suggest effective teacher collaboration among general and special educators in the inclusion/collaborative classroom. Recent studies indicate the redefinition of the role of general and special educators participating in this service delivery model (Villa & Thousand, 2003). Effective collaborative efforts based on positive teacher perceptions suggest that general and special educators are beginning to accept and embrace their redefined roles within the inclusion/collaborative classroom.

*Assessment and Outcomes*

The assessment and evaluation of student progress is paramount in that it allows educators to evaluate the service delivery model as a whole, as well as the methodology and effectiveness of instruction. A lack of empirical data supporting or rejecting inclusion/collaboration as a service delivery model suggests why special and general educator's

opinions vary based on the definition of each service delivery model. This also suggests reasoning for a variety of teacher perceptions. It is difficult to validate "what works" with regard to increasing student performance and success within the inclusion/collaborative classroom. Previous studies (Tarpley, 1995) indicated that special educators did not use grades in evaluating student performance. Instead, educators relied on their own judgment and collegial satisfaction of the service delivery model as a basis for evaluating student success and performance.

Based on the open-ended questions presented in this study, participants relied on assessments, student progress, and grades to validate the effectiveness of their inclusion/collaborative classrooms. Teacher collaboration and how students perceive general and special education teachers indicated other measures of validation. Various aspects of this study indicated results suggesting how student progress can be monitored more effectively.

The Chi Square procedure noted a significant relationship ($p = .053$) between general and special educator responses and how grades are assigned in the inclusion/collaborative classroom based on current teaching assignment. General educators revealed that it is their responsibility to implement assessment procedures and assign grades to all of the students in the classroom, including students with disabilities. General and special educators also noted a collaborative effort with each other when assigning grades. On the basis of gender, results approaching significance ($p = .075$) were also noted by the relationship between general and special educator responses and how grades are assigned. Female responses indicated that general educators are responsible for assigning grades to all students, including students with disabilities. Other general educators noted that grades are assigned to all students based on a collaborative effort between general and special educators. Male respondents also noted that grading was a collaborative effort. The system of assigning grades is understood to be a tedious and time-

consuming process. Effective collaborative efforts among general and special educators in the classroom will aid in decreasing the work load, and produce more efficient methods of progress monitoring. Student assessment and outcomes will prove successful, in that students will make favorable gains toward increasing academic performance.

A Chi Square analysis resulted in significant values ($p = .027$) in the relationship between general and special educator responses and how student progress is monitored in the inclusion/collaborative classroom based on area of training. Participants receiving training in general education indicated that student progress should be monitored by means of a collaborative process among general and special educators. This can be attributed to the added support general educators receive in an inclusion/collaborative classroom. Participants receiving training in special education denote progress monitoring via a collaborative process, as well as using Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA). Research states that using Curriculum Based Assessment in an inclusion classroom will not only help general and special educators monitor student progress, but will also encourage students to take responsibility for their learning (King-Sears, Burgess, & Lawson, 1999).

Another Chi Square procedure resulted in significant values ($p = .053$) in the relationship between general and special educator responses and the way in which student progress is monitored based on number of years teaching experience. General and special educators having at least 10 years teaching experience noted that progress monitoring involves input from both general and special educators participating in an inclusion classroom. As veteran teachers begin to view collaboration as an effective and positive practice, the generalization to their less-experienced colleagues will also be positive, producing favorable outcomes for both teachers and students participating in inclusion.

Lastly, results showing approaching significance (p= .066) suggested a relationship between the gender of special and general educator participants and the responses to the question regarding the placement of students with disabilities into inclusion/collaborative classrooms. More females than males indicate specific criteria are used to place students with disabilities into inclusion/collaborative classrooms. An equal number of males noted that students are placed in inclusion/collaborative classrooms based on specific criteria and via randomized placement. Individualized teacher perceptions may indicate various methods of placing students into such environments; however, most understood that each school has a methodology specific to the placement of students in inclusion/collaborative classrooms. A larger, more randomized (i.e., male versus female) sample, as well as specific information relevant to each school, is needed to confirm such assumptions. See Appendix C (Table 6) for participant count totals based on the four demographic areas outlined in this discussion.

As indicated above, progress has been made in the 10 years between the study conducted in 1995 and the present research. Gains in how each service delivery model is perceived based on its definition, teacher perceptions of the worth and success of the model, and assessment and outcomes of students participating in the service delivery model are evident based on information described above. Major changes occurred in the area of assessment and outcomes of the service delivery model. Results from the 1995 study suggested that special educators were not using methods of systematic evaluation for their students (Tarpley, 1995). Results presented in the current study indicate significant values and values approaching significance among general and special educator responses across multiple demographic areas. Educators noted using collaborative models and Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA) in order to monitor the progress of students with disabilities included in the general education classroom. This, along

with characteristics relating to the definition and understanding of the service delivery models, and teacher perceptions of the model's worth and success, need to continue to exhibit positive change.

*Limitations*

While results of this study produced significant values and values approaching significance, the size of the population sample may have limited the results. More significant values may have been noted if researchers had the ability to generalize this study to a larger population. The nature of the instrument only allowed researchers to note perceptions of special and general educator participants, rather than actual behaviors.

*Suggestions for Future Research*

Assessment and outcomes of the service delivery model demonstrated significance throughout this study. Future research may include what methods of data collection general and special educators use in order to validate the success of inclusion/collaborative classrooms, as well as student success within the classroom. Future research may also include reformatting the instrument to a Likert Scale, as to gain more comprehensive quantitative data.

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Appendix A

General Educator Survey

Special Educator Survey

Demographic Information Sheet

**General Educators**

Section I.

Please answer the following questions based on your experience as a general educator.

1. Which one of the following definitions given for co-teaching would best describe your understanding of the term?
    a. The general educator and special educator are both in front of the classroom teaching and answering student questions.
    b. The general educator and special educator are both in the classroom together, but the general educator does the majority of the teaching.
    c. Two instructors are both in the classroom at the same time, but divide up duties (i.e., instruction, planning, and behavior modification).
    d. Other – please describe in detail.

2. Which one of the following definitions given for collaboration would best describe your understanding of the term?
    a. A collaborative teacher comes into the classroom to assist students when needed.
    b. Two teachers use each other as a resource in a variety of situations (i.e., planning a unit and/or asking for advice on a particular topic).
    c. Synonymous with co-teaching.
    d. Other – please describe in detail.

3. Which one of the following definitions given for inclusion would best describe your understanding of the term?
    a. A belief that all students, no matter the disability, belong in the general education classroom.
    b. A combination of the general educator and special educator in one classroom, where the general educator is responsible for content instruction and the special educator is responsible for the needs of his/her students with disabilities.
    c. A term that indicates that the general education classroom is the least restrictive environment (LRE) for all children.
    d. Other – please describe in detail

4. How does your principal show his/her support of collaborative/inclusion classroom environments?
    a. I do not think my principal is supportive of this model.
    b. Minimal support from my principal.
    c. My principal supports collaborative/inclusion classrooms.
    d. My principal provides flexible scheduling and collaborative planning periods.

5. How does the IEP team decide which students with disabilities will be in collaborative/inclusion classrooms?
    a. Specific criteria are set for students to be in collaborative/inclusion classes.
    b. Students are placed according to academic performance.
    c. Students are placed according to behavior.
    d. Placement into collaborative/inclusion classrooms seems to be random.

6. How do you and the special educator(s) with whom you work find time to plan instruction, communicate with each other about students, and problem solve?
    a. Daily meetings are established for planning.
    b. Weekly meetings are established for planning.
    c. No cooperative planning time is established.
    d. Phone calls and written communication are used as planning time.

7. How do you feel about suggestions special educators make for modifications in the classroom or curriculum for students with special needs?
    a. I am open to suggestions regarding both academics and behavioral issues.
    b. I tend to accept suggestions regarding academics more so than suggestions regarding behavior.
    c. I tend to accept suggestions regarding behavior more so than suggestions regarding academics.
    d. I tend to accept, but have difficulty implementing suggestions provided by the special educator.

8. For what kind of assistance do special education teachers most often ask of you?
    a. Special educators most often ask for instructional suggestions/modifications for the students with special needs in my classroom.
    b. Special educators most often ask for suggestions regarding behavior problems in the classroom.
    c. Special educators equally ask for suggestions regarding academic and behavioral concerns in their classroom.
    d. Special educators ask for assistance in the form of making copies, taking students to the office, and things of that nature.

9. As a general educator, what is most pleasing to you regarding the collaborative/inclusion service delivery model?
    a. I like having assistance with students with disabilities in the general education classroom.
    b. I am glad to see services provided to students with special needs in the general education classroom.
    c. I find that I am learning new techniques by working with a special education teacher.
    d. All of the above.
    e. None of the above.

10. As a general educator, what is most frustrating for you regarding the collaborative/inclusion service delivery model?
    a. I am frustrated when the special educator is not able to be in the classroom due to scheduling conflicts, paperwork, and other responsibilities.
    b. The model does not always work for the students with behavior problems in the classroom.
    c. The model does not always respond to the students' academic difficulties.
    d. All of the above.
    e. None of the above.

11. How do you monitor the progress of students with disabilities that are included in general education classrooms?
    a. The special educator uses Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA) to monitor the progress of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.
    b. The general and special educators collaborate to monitor all students' progress using combined methods of progress monitoring.
    c. The general educator is responsible for monitoring all students' progress through standardized school approved procedures.
    d. Student progress is monitored informally.

12. How are grades assigned in the collaborative/inclusion classroom?
    a. General educators use assessment procedures (i.e., quizzes, etc.) as a basis for assigning grades to all of the students in the general education classroom, including those with disabilities.
    b. The general educators and the special educator collaborate in the grading process for students with disabilities based on various assessment procedures.
    c. The special educator is the one responsible for assigning grades to students with disabilities in the collaborative/inclusion classroom.
    d. General educators and special educators collaborate in the grading process for all students in the classroom.

13. In general, what do parents of students with disabilities think of this collaborative/inclusion service delivery model?
    a. Parents are eager for their children to participate in a collaborative/inclusion setting and fully support this collaborative/inclusion service delivery model.
    b. Parents do not feel the collaborative/inclusion classroom is the best setting for their child.
    c. Parents feel as if their students would benefit more from a self-contained model and do not support this collaborative/inclusion service delivery model.
    d. Parent concerns are unknown.

14. In general, what do parents of students **WITHOUT** disabilities think of this collaborative/inclusion service delivery model?
    a. Parents are eager for their children to participate in a collaborative/inclusion setting and fully support this collaborative/inclusion service delivery model.
    b. Parents do not feel the collaborative/inclusion classroom is the best setting for their child.
    c. Parents feel that students with disabilities should be educated in a self-contained environment and do no support this collaborative/inclusion service delivery model.
    d. Parents would like to see more options for students with disabilities in and out of the general education classroom.

Section II.

Please answer each question to the best of your ability. Please be specific in your responses, remembering to protect the identity of those you speak of.

1. Do you think that most general educators are in favor of a collaborative/inclusion model for students with disabilities? Please explain.

2. Are there things about middle school that might make collaboration/inclusion more difficult? What are things that might make collaborative/inclusion easier at the middle school?

3. How do you **know** (specifically, what do you look at or what do you see) that tells you if a collaborative/inclusion classroom is successful?

Section III.

Please provide additional comments that you feel are appropriate to this research.

**Special Educators**

Section I.

Please answer the following questions based on your experience as a special educator.

1. Which one of the following definitions given for co-teaching would best describe your understanding of the term?
    a. The general educator and special educator are both in front of the classroom teaching and answering student questions.
    b. The general educator and special educator are both in the classroom together, but the general educator does the majority of the teaching.
    c. Two instructors are both in the classroom at the same time, but divide up duties (i.e., instruction, planning, and behavior modification).
    d. Other – please describe in detail.

2. Which one of the following definitions given for collaboration would best describe your understanding of the term?
    a. A collaborative teacher comes into the classroom to assist students when needed.
    b. Two teachers use each other as a resource in a variety of situations (i.e., planning a unit and/or asking for advice on a particular topic).
    c. Synonymous with co-teaching.
    d. Other – please describe in detail.

3. Which one of the following definitions given for inclusion would best describe your understanding of the term?
    a. A belief that all students, no matter the disability, belong in the general education classroom.
    b. A combination of the general educator and special educator in one classroom, where the general educator is responsible for content instruction and the special educator is responsible for the needs of his/her students with disabilities.
    c. A term that indicates that the general education classroom is the least restrictive environment (LRE) for all children.
    d. Other – please describe in detail.

4. How does your principal show his/her support of collaborative/inclusion classroom environments?
    a. I do not think my principal is supportive of this model.
    b. Minimal support from my principal.
    c. My principal supports collaborative/inclusion classrooms.
    d. My principal provides flexible scheduling and collaborative planning periods.

5. How does the IEP team decide which students with disabilities will be in collaborative/inclusion classrooms?
    a. Specific criteria are set for students to be in collaborative/inclusive classes.
    b. Students are placed according to academic performance.
    c. Students are placed according to behavior.
    d. Placement into collaborative/inclusion classrooms seems to be random.

6. How do you and the general educator(s) with whom you work find time to plan instruction, communicate about students, and problem solve?
    a. Daily meetings are established for planning.
    b. Weekly meetings are established for planning.
    c. No cooperative planning time is established.
    d. Phone calls and written communication are used as planning time.

7. How do you feel about suggestions general educators make for modifications in the classroom or curriculum for students with special needs?
    a. I am open to suggestions regarding both academics and behavioral issues.
    b. I tend to accept suggestions regarding academics more so than suggestions regarding behavior.
    c. I tend to accept suggestions regarding behavior more so than suggestions regarding academics.
    d. I tend to accept, but have difficulty implementing suggestions provided by the general educator.

8. For what kind of assistance do general education teachers most often ask of you?
    a. General educators most often ask for instructional suggestions/modifications for the students with special needs in the general education classroom.
    b. General educators most often ask for suggestions regarding behavior problems in the classroom.
    c. General educators equally ask for suggestions regarding academic and behavioral concerns in their classroom.
    d. General educators ask for assistance in the form of making copies, taking students to the office, and things of that nature.

9. As a special educator, what is most pleasing to you regarding the collaborative/inclusion service delivery model?
    a. I like working in the general education classroom.
    b. I am glad to see services provided to students with special needs in the general education classroom.
    c. I find that I am learning more about the general education curriculum by working with a general educator.
    d. All of the above.
    e. None of the above.

10. As a special educator, what is most frustrating for you regarding the collaborative/inclusion service delivery model?
    a. I am frustrated when I am not able to be in the classroom due to scheduling conflicts, paperwork, and other responsibilities.
    b. The model does not always work for the students with behavior problems in the classroom.
    c. The model does not always respond to the students' academic difficulties.
    d. All of the above.
    e. None of the above.

11. How do you monitor the progress of students with disabilities that are included in general education classrooms?
    a. The special educator uses Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA) to monitor the progress of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.
    b. The general educator and special educator collaborate to monitor all students' progress using combined methods of progress monitoring.
    c. The general educator is responsible for monitoring all students' progress through standardized school approved procedures.
    d. Student progress is monitored informally.

12. How are grades assigned in the collaborative/inclusion classroom?
    a. General educators use assessment procedures (i.e., quizzes, etc.) as a basis for assigning grades to all of the students in the general education classroom, including those with disabilities.
    b. The general educator and the special educator collaborate in the grading process for students with disabilities based on various assessment procedures.
    c. The special educator is the one responsible for assigning grades to students with disabilities in the collaborative/inclusion classroom.
    d. General educators and special educators collaborate in the grading process for all students in the classroom.

13. In general, what do parents of students with disabilities think of this collaborative/inclusion service delivery model?
    a. Parents are eager for their children to participate in a collaborative/inclusion setting and fully support this service delivery model.
    b. Parents do not feel the collaborative/inclusion classroom is the best setting for their child.
    c. Parents feel as if their students would benefit more from a self contained model, and do not support this collaborative/inclusion service delivery model.
    d. Parents would like to see options for service delivery in and out of the general education classroom.

14. In general, what do parents of students **WITHOUT** disabilities think of this collaborative/inclusion service delivery model?
    a. Parents are eager for their children to participate in a collaborative/inclusion setting and fully support this service delivery model.
    b. Parents do not feel the collaborative/inclusion classroom is the best setting for their child, either because of slowed down academics or because of disruptive behaviors of the students with disabilities.
    c. Parents feel that students with disabilities should be educated in a self-contained environment and do no support this collaborative/inclusion service delivery model.
    d. Parents would like to see more options for students with disabilities in and out of the general education classroom.

Section II.

Please answer each question to the best of your ability. Please be specific in your responses, remembering to protect the identity of those you speak of.

1. Do you think that most special educators are in favor of a collaborative/inclusion model for students with disabilities? Please explain.

2. Are there things about middle school that might make collaboration/inclusion more difficult? What are things that might make collaborative/inclusion easier at the middle school?

3. How do you **know** (specifically, what do you look at or what do you see) that tells you if a collaborative/inclusion classroom is successful?

Section III.

**Please provide additional comments that you feel are appropriate to this research.**

**Demographic Information for Collaborative Research Study**

Please check the appropriate response to the following questions as it applies to you.

1. In which area did you receive your training?

   ___ General Education
   ___ Special Education
   ___ Other – please specify

2. In which area are you currently teaching? Please list the number of years below your response.

   a. ___ General Education

   Number of years:

   ___ 1-3
   ___ 4-7
   ___ 8-10
   ___ Over 10

   b. ___ Special Education

   Number of years:

   ___ 1-3
   ___ 4-7
   ___ 8-10
   ___ Over 10

   c. ___ Collaborative/Inclusion

   ___ 1-3
   ___ 4-7
   ___ 8-10
   ___ Over 10

3. Gender

   ___ Male
   ___ Female

Appendix B

Table 5

Table 5

*General Educator and Special Educator Themes Presented in Qualitative Analysis*

| Question no. | General educator themes | Special educator themes |
|---|---|---|
| Q1 Do you think that most general educators are in favor of a collaborative/inclusion model for students with disabilities? Please explain. | Yes, because of the extra support.<br>Yes, because the model benefits students.<br>It depends on the co-teacher and the students.<br>No, grades fall.<br>No, change within the curriculum is not favored. | Yes, definitely.<br>Yes, but a continuum of services must still exist.<br>Participation should be teacher's choice.<br>No, too much additional work.<br>No, model will lower test scores. |
| Q2 Are there things about middle school that might make collaboration/inclusion more difficult? What | Difficult<br>Middle school is a difficult time for students.<br>Lack of | Difficult<br>Middle school is a difficult time for students.<br>Lack of |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| are things that might make collaboration/inclusion easier at the middle school? | communication and availability of Special Education teachers.<br>Lack of planning time<br>Inefficient scheduling.<br>Easy<br>Assign one Special Educator per one team of teachers.<br>More planning time.<br>Model is easy because of extra support. | communication.<br>Scheduling differences.<br>Easy<br>Assign one Special Educator per one team of teachers.<br>More planning time.<br>Model is easy because of added support. |
| Q3 How do you **know** (specifically, what do you look at or what do you see) that tells you if a collaborative/inclusion classroom is successful? | Students with special needs work at general educator pace.<br>Effective teacher collaboration.<br>Student's needs are met.<br>Students are successful.<br>Grades.<br>Assessments. | Effective teacher collaboration.<br>Student progress.<br>Grades.<br>Assessments. |