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Current practices of co-teaching in an elementary inclusive school: Moving toward effective co-teaching relationship

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CURRENT PRACTICES OF CO-TEACHING IN AN ELEMENTARY INCLUSIVE

SCHOOL: MOVING TOWARD EFFCTIVE CO-TEACHING RELATIONSHIP

An Abstract of a Dissertation

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Approved:

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Dr. Amy Petersen, Committee Chair

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Dean of the Graduate College

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May 2017

ABSTRACT

Co-teaching has become more prevalent in schools. The purpose of this study is to explore how general and special education teachers build successful co-teaching relationships to provide special education services to students with disabilities. This case study specifically described how two pairs of co-teachers including one special education teacher and two general education teachers interact, collaborate, and build and promote their co-teaching relationships.

The observation and interviews with two first grade co-teaching pairs provided data that told the story of how their co-teaching relationships developed and were promoted through working together in an inclusive classroom. Research data for this qualitative study were collected from teacher interviews, observational field notes, and review of related documents.

Findings from this study revealed that teachers' strategies of interacting and collaborating with each other affect how they build their co-teaching relationships. The three teachers realized the benefits of collective responsibilities included learning from each other and supporting one another. Teachers also experienced some challenges that impeded the improvement of the relationship. Such challenges included lack of shared knowledge, lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities, lack of planning time, and lack of administrative support. Several co-teaching strategies were identified as important factors when starting and building co-teaching relationships. Such strategies included respecting one another, trying new ideas, and keeping communication alive.

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Dr. Amy Petersen, Chair

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Dr. Radhi Al-Mabuk,
Committee Member

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Dr. Michelle Devlin,
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Dr. Mark Grey, Committee Member

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May 2017

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my mother and father who have supported me throughout my entire life. I also dedicate my dissertation to my wonderful husband, Ali, who supported me throughout this journey. He took care of our little angel, Zainab, so I could have time to do my study.

I dedicate my dissertation to all my family and friends for their support and encouraging words. I also dedicate my dissertation to my academic advisor, Amy Petersen, for her continuous support and feedback. Her guidance and expertise directed me to accomplish this goal. I also want to thank my other committee members for their support: Dr. Radhi Al-Mabuk, Dr. Mark Grey, and Dr. Michele Devlin.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The root of the current movement toward inclusive education dates back to the concept of the normalization of the lives of those with disabilities. In his book, *The Origin and Nature of Our Institutional Models*, Wolfensberger (1972) argues the need to end the separation of students with disabilities in segregated settings, and the need for an appropriate educational model that leads students with disabilities to be able to function in a non-disabled (the mainstream) world. Later in his book, *The Principle of Normalization in Human Services* (1972), he suggests that integrating students with disabilities into regular classrooms will result in meaningful learning that leads students with disabilities to have a normal routine of life. Whereas earlier it was argued that being segregated promises the security and appropriate support students with disabilities need, the movement toward inclusive education and "normalization" of individuals' lives emphasized individuals living within their communities (Bartlett, Etscheidt, & Weisenstein, 2007).

Shortly after Wolfensberger (1972) published these ideas, Public Law 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975) was legislated resulting in a large number of students with disabilities begin to move into public schools and attend regular classrooms. The passage of this legislation was critical for students with disabilities as it marked the beginning of the process of the change toward inclusion (Bartlett et al., 2007). In fact, special education services have continued to evolve over the years. The following section provides a review of legislation in special education to highlight how special

education services have evolved from 1975 to the present, and describe how this legislation has affected access to general education.

When PL 94.192 was passed in 1975 the purpose of this legislation was to mandate states to give every student regardless of the severity of his or her disability access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). This legislation included the following protections for students with disabilities: (1) an invitation for the parents or guardians of the disabled student to participate in decisions made about the students and to attend meetings where the student's program, including supports and services, is discussed, (2) the development an Individualized Education Program (IEP), (3) the right for each student to participate in his or her Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), (4) the right to participate with the appropriate accommodations based on the student's disability, and (5) an assurance of due process. This federal legislation helped to change the entire structure of special education services (Friend & Bursuck, 2006). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), P.L. 94- 142 is the most significant increase in the role of the federal government in special education to date. This advanced law afforded various key elements that are still in today's special education policy. Some of these elements included: Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), assistance to states and districts for educational opportunities, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Individualized Educational Programs (IEP), and mandated services for children age 6 to 21.

In 1986, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act was reauthorized by Public Law 99-457. The most significant change was Part H Program which mandated

the provision of services to infants and toddlers with disabilities. Also in 1986, PL 94.192 was amended by the Early Intervention Amendments to Public Law 94-142. These amendments allowed students age three to five to have access to FAPE by October 1991. In 1990, PL 94-142 became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It was renamed in order to reflect more contemporary "person-first" language. Under this act, children with autism and children with traumatic brain injury were added to the list of eligible categories. When reauthorized, this legislation included the following revisions: the term "children" became "individuals" and the term "handicapped" became "with disabilities" (Giuliani, 2012).

With the IDEA Amendments of 1997, PL 105-17 "congressional focus began to shift from implementation of educational programs and services to greater emphasis on assuring quality public education programs and improving and evaluating student performance" (Bartlett et al., p. 7). The purposes of IDEA are: (a) ensuring that all students with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living; (b) ensuring that the rights of students with disabilities and their parents are protected; (c) assisting states, localities, educational service agencies, and federal agencies to provide for the education of all students with disabilities; (d) assessing and ensuring the effectiveness of efforts to educate students with disabilities [34 C.F.R. 300.1; 20 U.S.C. 1400(d)]. In general, IDEA is composed of six key components that illuminate its main points: (a) Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), (b) Appropriate Evaluation,

(c) Individualized Education Program (IEP), (d) Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), (e) Parent and Teacher Participation, and (f) Procedural Safeguards (Giuliani, 2012; Murdick, Gartin, & Crabtree, 2007).

The focus of IDEA is the requirement that each student who is eligible for special education have an individualized education program (IEP). The contents of the IEP are the academic and functional skills to be achieved by the end of the coming year. Under IDEA, an Individualized Education Program is a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with the law [34 C.F.R. 300.22]. The IEP is meant to ensure that students receive an appropriate education through the delivery of special education and services. It is meant to summarize all the information gathered concerning the student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance, set the expectations of what the student will learn over the next year including academic and functional goal, and suggest the types and amount of special education and related services the student will receive.

The IEP is created through a collaborative effort of the parents, the school personnel, and other service providers to ensure that a student's special education program will reach his or her individual needs and include meaningful educational goals. All aspects of the student's special education program are guided by the IEP, including the special education and related services that a student needs, the educational placement, and the goals of the student's program (Giuliani, 2012; Murdick et al., 2007). Overall, the IEP team makes two important determinations: developing the child's education plan and determining the appropriate special education and supports where these services and

supports can be delivered. The interaction of those two determinations is that specific

child's least restrictive environment (Giuliani, 2012).

Under IDEA, the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requires that each public

agency ensure that:

> To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children requirement with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aides and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily [34 C.F.R. 300.114(a)(2)(i); 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(5)].

The LRE mandate in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides a priority

for educating students with disabilities in educational settings that attend to their needs.

More specifically, this mandate guarantees that students with disabilities should have the

opportunity to be educated with non-disabled students, to the greatest extent appropriate.

[34 C.F.R. §300.114(a)]. The IDEA also guarantees that the LRE decisions made

individually for each student, and ensures that each individual with a disability has the

supports and accommodations necessary for successfully participating in the least

restrictive environment and other services as needed.

In particular, under the IDEA there is a preference for students with disabilities to

receive special education services in the general education setting with general education

teachers and that the general education teacher became a member of the Individual

Education Program (IEP; Friend & Bursuck, 2006).

The students with disabilities are then educated according to each individual's

needs and capabilities and should be educated with students who do not have disabilities

in general education classrooms to the maximum extent appropriate (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008). IEP's are based on each individual's unique needs including individualized education goals, instructional accommodations and modifications, and related services needed to achieve those goals (McLaughlin & Rhim, 2007). In response to the legislation of 1997 (IDEA) encouraging inclusive instruction and access to the general education curriculum and classrooms, many students with special needs are educated in the same setting as their peers without disabilities (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008).

On December 3, 2004, president George W. Bush signed the most recent reauthorization of IDEA. This law merged components of IDEA and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) in several essential areas. The law required school accountability for students' academic achievement, teachers' qualification, and the use of research-based knowledge (Yell, 2006). The requirements of NCLB for all teachers of core academic subjects in the public schools of the state to be "highly qualified" required for all teachers to hold at least: (1) a bachelor degree from a 4-year institution, (2) full state certification or licensure, and (3) demonstrate competence in each core academic subject area they teach. The NCLB created difficulty for special educators who directly instruct students needing special education in core academic subjects in the special education resource rooms. They must meet the definition of highly qualified to be able to provide direct instruction in core academic subjects to students with special education needs. As a result, many schools have implemented "co-teaching" as a means for assuring all students including students with disabilities access to highly qualified teachers (Bartlett, et al., 2007). This requirement for all students to be taught by highly

qualified teachers and to be held accountable for reaching high standards of academic achievement under the NCLB legislation resulted for the growing popularity of co-teaching model in recent years (Friend, 2008). In addition, the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 with the No Child Left Behind Act has placed pressure on educators to ensure that all students, including students with disabilities, "have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments." — (Public Law 89–10, title I, § 1001)

Additionally, the relationship between IDEA and NCLB resulted in applying the NCLB provision to all students including students with special education needs which contribute to the popularity of co-teaching. The NCLB promoted students with disabilities as well as their peers without disabilities greater access to the general curriculum while in the general education classroom. In other words, co-teaching became a powerful means of ensuring curriculum access and least restrictive environment requirement. Until the past decade, however, co-teaching has not been widely advocated in terms of philosophies about the best ways to ensure that students with disabilities are educated in the same setting as their peers without disabilities. Now, according to these federal laws, co-teaching became a widely-implemented approach that increased the professional focus on this topic (Friend, 2008; Yell, 2006).

These legislative acts guarantee that students with disabilities are afforded equal educational opportunities in the LRE with appropriate educational supports and services.

One component of implementing these legislative acts is to determine effective practices to educate students with disabilities in educational settings that attend to their needs.

Therefore, if the general education setting is determined to be the appropriate placement for a student with disabilities, legal trend, then, supports the idea that general education teachers and special education teachers can no longer work in isolation. Such legislations, in part, have resulted in the increasing number of students with disabilities who are attending general education classrooms for part or all of the day and increased the need for collaborative teaching between special education and general education teachers (Bartlett et al., 2007; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). As a result, many regular schools have adopted the co-teaching model as a means of effective instruction practice in inclusive classrooms (Scruggs et al., 2007).

Currently, many students with disabilities are attending general education classrooms part or all of the day. Students receiving special education services under IDEA indicate that over 60% of students served under IDEA spend 80% or more of their school day in general classrooms in regular schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Furthermore, the need for collaborative teaching between special education and general education teachers has been increased in general schools to meet the needs of all different groups of learners.

Statement of the Problem

The following research study seeks to understand the ability of special education teachers and general education teachers to build relationships with one another. In collaborative settings, general education teachers and special education teachers share responsibilities for all activities related to planning (e.g., preparing the setting, selecting the instructional materials, and modifying the curriculum) and delivery of instruction, in addition to responsibilities in behavioral management, grading procedures, and collecting data on student achievement (Fennick & Liddy, 2001). Although the determination and distribution of these responsibilities between co-teachers is essential for co-teaching success, communicating and collaborating between two teachers in one co-taught classrooms might not be easy. A number of investigators found a complexity of collaboration between two teachers who have completely deferent personalities, teaching styles, and philosophy of education. Scruggs et al. (2007) wrote that co-teachers expressed a need for personal compatibility and effective collaboration skills in order to foster successful co-teaching. As a result of daily nature of this communication, there is a requirement for effective ways to build mutual respect that co-teachers need (Conderman, Johnston-Rodriguez, & Hartman, 2009). This understanding of the collaboration and communication needs of the other will eventually influence the student outcome. Therefore, it is essential that a study be conducted that examine how co-teachers build effective co-teaching relationships as the relationships form.

The purpose of this research study is to describe strategies co-teachers can use to build effective relationships in co-teaching classroom as they work to meet the needs of

all students. This includes descriptions of how a co-teacher works together with colleague

of a different discipline, the inclusive strategies implemented while co-teaching, the

teachers' role and responsibilities while co-teaching and strategies used to plan for

effective collaboration. The following questions guide this research study:

1. How do special education and general education teachers interact and
   communicate with each other while co-teaching?

2. What roles do special education and general education teachers adopt in co-
   teaching classrooms?

3. What strategies do co-teachers use to plan for effective collaboration?

4. What strategies do teachers use to promote effective co-teaching relationships?

<u>Significance of the Study</u>

This study will describe the relationship and interaction between special education and

general education teachers in co-taught classrooms. The results of this study will

illustrate ways for co-teachers to understand and respond effectively to their co-partner's

interpersonal style as they deliver instructional activities to students with and without

disabilities. The findings will reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the planning

strategies used by the participants. A description of the co-teaching process in which the

participants are engaged and conflicts they encounter may allow teachers to recognize

strategies for improvement in co-teaching in academic environments within elementary

schools. Knowing more about co-teaching relationships will improve the learning

experience for all students and the teaching experience for the teachers.

The Background of Co-Teaching

Over the past years, the IDEA and federal mandates have shaped the United States' educational system to pursue the goal of all students with disabilities being served in educational settings that attend to their needs. The IDEA requires that students with disabilities be educated in the LRE and encourages special education services be delivered to students with special education needs in the general education setting for all or part of the school day (Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, & Hudson, 2013). Further, effective services require adaptation to the curriculum and provide direct instruction and support to students with disabilities within general education settings (Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & Mcculley, 2012). It is important to indicate that inclusion is not clearly mandated by law; however, providing special education supports and services in the general education setting is preferred. According to the law, when deciding the educational placement for a student with a disability, the IEP team must consider that general education setting is in the least-restrictive environment, and other settings are possible alternative only if the student's need cannot be met in the general education setting (Bartlett et al., 2007). The trend towards placing students with special education needs in general education settings puts pressure on teachers to support a more diverse classroom.

Placing students with disabilities in the general education classroom increases the need for highly qualified teachers. Having an expert on individualization, progress monitoring, differentiation, and assessment (special education teacher) alongside the content area knowledge expert (general education teacher) will help ensure all students have their needs met (Murawski & Hughes, 2009).

Some schools and teachers may turn to co-teaching in order to enable students with special education needs to be educated in the general classroom to the maximum extent appropriate (Badiali & Titus, 2010). Overall, successful delivery of special education services begins in the general education classroom with the assumption that no individual teacher has all the skills needed to meet the instructional and behavioral needs of all students. It is critical that special and general educators are no longer disconnected but working together toward one curriculum.

Co-teaching is a service delivery model often discussed when considering necessary supports and services. In the co-taught classroom, one general and one special education teacher are equally responsible for all students. Although they have different areas of expertise, their goal should be to use the strengths that each brings to a single shared classroom (Friend & Cook, 2007).

Co-teaching became popular as a result of the IDEA and NCLB. These laws strive to welcome and include those with unique needs in the learning community. However, the process of co-teaching is not simple. In fact, having diverse groups of students in a single classroom requires extraordinary support and services to help everyone succeed. More details about the meaning and definition, benefits, challenges, and models of co-teaching are discussed in the following sections.

<center>Definition of Terms</center>

Co-Teaching

The concept co-teaching has been defined as two or more people sharing responsibility for teaching some or more of the students assigned to a classroom. It involves the distribution of responsibility among people for planning, instruction, and evaluation for a classroom of students (Villa, Thousand & Nevin, 2004). Similarly, Kloo and Zigmond (2008) defined co-teaching as "special education service-delivery model in which two certified teachers (one general educator and one special educator) share responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction for diverse group of students, some of whom are students with disabilities" (p.13). In co-teaching, two or more teachers are expected to dynamically participate in sharing responsibility for a diverse group of learners, assuming accountability for student learning, obtaining instructional resources and space, and delivering of instruction (Friend, 2008). Friend and Cook (2010) summed up co-teaching as "the partnering of a general education teacher and a special education teacher or another specialist for the purpose of jointly delivering instruction to a diverse group of students, including those with disabilities or other special needs, in a general education setting and in a way, that flexibly and deliberately meets their learning needs" (P.11).

Co-Teaching Models

Effective instruction in the inclusive classroom not only requires a strong relationship and communication, but also requires cooperation, teaming, and shifting in rules and responsibilities for co-teachers. In particular, King-Sears, Brawand, Jenkins,

and Preston-Smith (2014) observed one team of co-teachers when new content was being taught to students. They reported that for effective instruction teachers need to know and to be prepared for the different approaches of delivering instruction through co-teaching. It's important for co-teachers to understand the various needs of the students and consider an approach of co-teaching that may work the best while teaching together in order to meet the needs of students with wide range of abilities. Through effective planning meetings, co-teachers may determine the co-teaching model they may need to use frequently and which co-teaching model they will use infrequently. The frequently used approach should be one that is effective for the co-teachers' relationship and enlarges the student's learning outcome. Both co-teachers need to have knowledge of all different co-teaching approaches. Although specific co-teaching models have been identified with diverse terms, Friend (2008) identified six co-teaching approaches as: one teach/one observe, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, one teach/one assist, and teaming. By using these six different models co-teachers can blend their knowledge, build their relationship, and work together to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. Co-teachers commonly rely on one or more of these six co-teaching approaches.

One teach/one observe. In the one teach/one observe co-teaching model, one teacher delivers instruction to the entire group of students while the second teacher sits in the back of the classroom or walks around gathering data by observing both the general education and the special education students and the lesson being taught. This model is used when information is needed regarding student participation and behaviors, if one teacher is new in co-teaching or not familiar with some of its aspects (e.g., a special

education teacher is not familiar with the content or a general education teacher is not familiar with the instructional needs of students with disabilities), if co-teachers need to group students, observe student behavior, and monitor student progress, or if a specific situation needs to be addressed (Badiali, & Titus, 2010; Friend & Cook, 2007; Friend, Cook, 2010, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). Friend and Cook (2007) suggested that the one teach/one observe model should only be used infrequently and for brief time periods.

Advantages of this approach may include improving teachers' practices and communication relationship (e.g., co-teachers may gather data about each other and provide specific feedback though effective conversation (Friend & Cook, 2007). In a commentary in Badiali, and Titus, (2010) a co-teacher reported about her partner "she was able to look at the data she collected from various observations and make inferences about my instructional strategies." Another advantage is that the observing teacher can collect data on behavior not seen by the teacher who instructs the lesson (Conderman, Bresnahan, & Pedersen, 2008). In addition to having advantages, the one teach/one observe approach has challenges. One major challenge is that students may only seek help from the teaching teacher and see the other as an aide (Friend, 2008).

Station teaching. In the station teaching model, the classroom is divided into three or more various teaching centers based on student interests, or ability levels. If more than two stations are created, each teacher leads a group of students while the other one or more groups work independently (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010; Friend & Cook, 2007). The students then rotate from group to group after a

specified amount of time so that each teacher ultimately interacts with all students. Friend (2007) recommended frequent use of the stations teaching model.

The benefits of this approach may include that stations lower the teacher-student ratio allowing for more individualizing instruction for students (Badiali, & Titus, 2010). According to Badiali, and Titus (2010) one teacher reported "While my 'partner' was teaching the poetry center, I was able to deliver guided reading instruction to another group of students. The students in our classroom benefited by having two teachers work with small groups targeting their needs" (p. 77). More benefits of this approach involve meeting instructional goals, reducing behavioral problems, promoting student interaction and participation, and facilitating the observation of student learning.

Although both teachers have a clear teaching responsibility during station teaching, having multiple instructional centers in a classroom at the same time requires a lot of preplanning between the co-teachers. Time for planning and communication is critical. Because students rotate between stations, it is challenge for both teachers to pace each station so instruction ends at the same time. Another major issue is the increased noise level when both teachers are instructing two groups at the same time. (Friend, 2008; Murawski, 2009). Other issues include student behavior in independent groups or lack of co-teaching time. If these issues are a concern, it might be more beneficial to eliminate the independent groups and only implement two stations (Friend & Cook, 2007).

Parallel teaching. The parallel teaching approach involves the division of students into two heterogeneous groups and each teacher is responsible for delivering the same information as the other teacher to half of the class. For example, both teachers could be

explaining the same reading lesson in two different parts of the room. In this approach, each half of the class receives the same instruction, at the same time, in the same classroom, and the groups do not switch (Conderman et al., 2008; Friend, 2008; Murawski, 2009). Friend & Cook (2007) suggested frequent use of the parallel teaching model. Using parallel teaching approach also helps teacher lower the students-teacher ratio and increases focus in small group of students. It helps reduce some behavior problems and increase participation for all students. It also helps co-teachers differentiate the level of complexity to foster student's outcomes (Friend & Cook, 2007).

On the other hand, the disadvantage of the parallel teaching model may include the difficulty in finishing instruction at the same time, controlling the noise level to avoid distraction, and qualification requirements for both teachers, as they both need to be considered as highly qualified because they will be teaching the students separately (Friend, 2008).

Alternative teaching. In the alternative teaching model, the students are divided into one large group and one small group. This approach allows teachers to meet variety of needs of students in the classroom. One teacher teaches most of the class while the other teacher works with a small group to support students who may need special attention. The purposes of a small group may include re-delivery, pre-teaching, enrichment, individualized instruction, or make up for absences (Conderman et al., 2008; Friend, 2008; Murawski, 2009). A major benefit of the alternative teaching model is the possibility of attending to the needs of students who are advanced or have fallen behind the main group.

The challenges of this approach are similar to the challenges of parallel teaching approach: the difficulty of controlling the noise level when both teachers are teaching in the same classroom and the difficulty of maintaining the same pace and instructional time between the two groups. In addition, the most challenging aspect of the alternative teaching approach is the negative stigma that may occur related to pulling out a specific group of students (Friend, 2008, p.74). The co-teachers may need to take turns instructing the smaller group of students lest students should view the teacher who leads the majority group as the teacher in control. Also, if the same group of students placed in the same group every time they may quickly become labeled. Friend (2008) suggested avoiding these issues by having each teacher work with the small group and diversifying the students in the smaller group.

One teach/one assist. Research indicates that this approach is the most commonly used and the least effective model (Conderman et al., 2008; Friend, 2008; Scheeler Congdon, & Stansbery, 2010; Solis et al., 2012). Other terms for this approach are supportive teaching, one teach/one guide, one teach/one support, and one teach/one drift. In this approach one teacher take the primary responsibility for delivering instruction and the other teacher is circulating the classroom and assisting students and the lead teacher. The supportive teacher may provide individualized assistance to students who need help or support students with behavior problems while the lead teacher is focusing on the whole group (Friend, 2008; Murawski, 2009). The one teach/one assist model is beneficial for struggling students. For example, if a student struggles in the middle of math class, the supportive teacher can immediately provide the student with the one-to-

one tutorial assistance he/or she needs (Friend, 2008). "It is a great way for one teacher to monitor individual student's progress and provide correctives or positive feedback while the other teacher is focusing on the whole group (Badiali, & Titus, 2010)." This model can also help co-teachers learn how to collaborate with one another and help them become comfortable working together during the first weeks of school (Friend & Cook, 2007).

Although having an assisting teacher circulating around the classroom and helping students can be useful, it can also be challenging to some students. According to Friend and Cook (2007), "Its risks, especially when the special educator serves in the assisting role, include pulling student attention away from the other teacher's instruction, resulting in students missing core components of lessons; fostering dependent behavior, as occurs when students learn that if they say they need help someone immediately offers assistance, even if not really necessary (p.4)." Additionally, co-teachers should be aware that having teacher drift around the classroom could distract students who have difficulty focusing on the lesson being taught. The instructing teacher in this model may be viewed as having more control over the supportive teacher unless they take turns teaching the lesson (Murawski, 2009).

Teaming. This co-teaching model occurs when both co-teachers do what one teacher has always done. They equally plan, instruct, assess, engage in the delivery of content instruction, and assume responsibility for all students in the inclusive classroom (Conderman et al., 2008; Friend, 2008; Murawski, 2009). Teaming is a beneficial approach for both teachers. Each teacher has an active role in the classroom; they both

share the instructional planning and teaching responsibilities, they are actively involved in classroom management and organization, and they are viewed as equal leaders in the classroom. This approach also encourages co-teachers to take risks, and may inspire them to try things in pairs that they wouldn't try alone (Badiali, & Titus, 2010). The disadvantages of teaming may include the considerable amount of time co-teachers need to co-plan and to clearly define each teacher's role. Teaming is not recommended in the early stage of co-teachers' relationship because it requires a very strong level of compatibility (Badiali, & Titus, 2010; Friend, 2008). It is also recommended for occasional use because students may not receive the individualized attention they need to be successful (Conderman et al., 2008; Friend, 2008; Murawski, 2009).

Summary

The purpose of this research is to understand how co-teachers interact, build relationships, and collaborate in order to serve students with disabilities in a general education setting. The research is significant as it contributes to a better understanding how co-teaching is used to support the delivery of special education supports and services to students with disabilities in the general education setting. This chapter presents the legal requirements for special education services, a brief description of philosophy of co-teaching, a clarification of co-teaching, co-teaching models, and a definition of terms.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Over the past decade, the practice of co-teaching became a widely advocated service delivery model across the United States. In order to provide opportunities for students with disabilities to receive educational services in general schools along with their peers without disabilities, many schools are increasingly implementing the practice of inclusion through the co-teaching delivery model. In co-teaching, two teachers (one general education teacher and one special education teacher) instruct and accommodate students with special needs alongside their peers in a general education classroom. The success of students in this approach depends largely on the success of the relationship building between these co-teachers (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). Without support, teachers will be compelled to find the best relationship- building strategies by trial and error. Therefore, examining the research available from the teachers' perspective and experiences in how to build effective relationships would make co-teaching more effective and easier, and would preserve the overall success of co-teaching.

The literature in co-teaching has been filled with articles supporting the potential benefits of co-teaching for students with and without disabilities and teachers alike (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). The benefits identified for students with disabilities include having access to the general classroom and curriculum, decreasing the negative stigma concurrent with pullout programs, maintaining the advantage of the individualized education program, and enhancing academic and behavioral performance (Conderman & Hedin, 2012; Fenty & McDuffie-Landrum, 2011; Walther-Thomas, 1997; Murawski &

Hughes, 2009; Hang & Rabren, 2009). Not only does the co-teaching delivery model have a potential impact on improving the achievement for students with disabilities, but also having an additional teacher in the classroom may have a positive effect on the achievement of students without disabilities. The benefits identified for students without disabilities include enhanced academic performance, more time and attention from the teacher, increased attention to the development of study skills and cognitive strategies, increased development of social skills, and improved classroom communication (Walther-Thomas, 1997). In addition, the increased movement to the co-teaching delivery model may also have a positive effect on the relationship between general and special education teachers. The benefits identified for teachers include growth in teachers' professional and personal skills (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013), a support system for both teachers (Murawski & Hughes, 2009), and compensation for the weaknesses of each teacher (Murawski & Dieker, 2008). Benefits of co-teaching not only promote effective learning placements for all students with and without disabilities, but also improve the co-teachers' relationship.

Even though schools have implemented co-teaching into their instructional delivery model, a variety of challenges affect the progress of this implementation. The challenges identified include lack of communication, conflict of roles and responsibility, and need of common planning time (Scruggs et al., 2007). Researchers provide co-teachers with a variety of strategies that can be used before, during, and after co-teaching. These strategies could become the basis that teachers need to use to plan for successful co-teaching implementation and relationships.

The research regarding co-teaching involves not only skills necessary for implementing effective co-teaching relationships, but also ideas to promote these relationships. According to Murawski and Dieker (2008), teachers in co-taught classroom may use their own self-evaluation to help promote their relationships. Strategies identified for self-evaluation include using best practices checklists and using teaching journals and portfolios (Salend, Gordon, & Lopez-Vona, 2002). A better understanding of self-evaluation strategies can provide useful information for co-teachers assessing their own co-teaching partnership.

The first section of the literature review discusses the importance of the co-teaching delivery model for students with and without disabilities as well as general and special education teachers. The challenges teachers faced in implementing co-teaching is discussed. Finally, the strategies to promote effective co-teaching interactions and a positive relationship between the two co-teachers are presented. The chapter concludes with a rationale for conducting the current study which summarizes the gaps in existing literature, the need for this study, and the importance of this study for the educational community.

<center>Benefits of Co-Teaching</center>

The trend to place students with disabilities in general education classrooms on a full-time basis leads to a variety of benefits for students and teachers alike. According to Walther-Thomas (1997), "these benefits [are] related to various dimensions of student performance, professional performance, and school culture" (p.399). Learning about these benefits "can provide useful information for those assessing their own situations

and formulating service delivery plans for the future" (Walther- Thomas, 1997, p. 398).

This section will describe how students with disabilities, their general education

classmates, and general and special education teachers benefit from implementing co-

teaching delivery model.

<u>Benefits for Students with Disabilities</u>

All students and especially students with disabilities benefit from co-teaching.

Researchers have shown that because co-teaching between general and special educators

provides a great opportunity for students with special educational needs to have access to

the general education setting, general education curriculum, and high quality instruction,

co-teaching has become a very successful delivery-model for providing special education

services in general education classrooms (Fenty & McDuffie-Landrum, 2011;

Conderman & Hedin, 2012). Similarly, Magiera, Smith, Zigmond and Gebauer (2005)

found that co-teaching is the most mutually beneficial inclusive delivery model that gives

students with disabilities access to the general education teacher and curriculum and

provides them with the required accommodations listed in their IEPs. Thus, co-teaching

allows students with disabilities and special needs access to the same curriculum as their

peers without disabilities and meet equally high standards.

Co-teaching is found to be beneficial for decreasing the negative stigma related

with pullout programs. Beninghof, (2012) indicated in her book *Co-Teaching That Works*

that "students often admit feelings of embarrassment and isolation when they are

removed from the classroom for services" (p.13). The stigma linked with removal can

leave a serious impact on the students being removed. However, co-teaching avoids these

negative feelings by sharing the ideas that all students belong in the learning community, all students have strengths and weaknesses, and all students are worthwhile. A number of teachers, who were interviewed in a study by Walther-Thomas (1997), reported that many students with disabilities "lost" their labels when they moved from the special education delivery model to the co-teaching delivery model.

Co-teaching is focusing on students with disabilities being included in the general education classroom and at the same time benefitting from specialized instructional strategies necessary to encourage their learning. In a study by Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberiain, and Shamberger (2010), for instance, the practice of co-teaching is the most common solution to solve the difficulty of a single educator trying to be aware of all the knowledge and skills necessary to reach the instructional needs of more diverse groups of students attending the general education classroom and the complexity of the difficulties that they bring. The goal of co-teaching is to make it possible for students with educational needs to access the general curriculum while at the same time continuing to receive an individualized education program. In general, co-teaching provides students with disabilities "the opportunity to engage in more intensive, specialized instruction in a more natural way than pulling students out of the classroom" (Murawski & Hughes 2009, p.272). In an article by Friend (2015), two teachers were teaching a student with autism how to participate more effectively in a co-taught classroom. The teachers used social story, a specially designed instruction, to guide the student in taking turns when he interacts with his classmates. Thus, he "is learning and

practicing skills related to his IEP goals without being separated from his classmates" (p. 19).

Another benefit of having a special educator co-teach with a general educator in a single general classroom is that students with disabilities in such settings have been found to improve in academics and behavior outcomes compared with those in special education classrooms (Murawski & Hughes 2009). In a study by Lindeman and Magiera (2014), for instance, a small, rural school had experienced having student who uses a cochlear implant and sign language spend all day in the first grade general education classroom. The general and special education teachers had no previous experience in working with a student with cochlear implant on even in co-teaching. However, the study reported that these teachers collaborated, respected each other's area of expertise, communicated well, and set high expectations for the student to allow him to succeed. Although at the beginning of the year the student experienced some difficulty adjusting to the Common Core State Standards, being taught in the general classroom had helped improve his academic and social performance. In fact, "as he became a full member of the first grade classroom, his self-esteem increased, his social goals were met, and he had academic success" (Lindeman &s Magiera, 2014, p. 45). In their article, Hang and Rabren (2009) examined the efficacy of co-teaching using surveys, observation, and record analysis. Their results indicated that students with disabilities had improved their academic achievement in comparison to the year before co-teaching. Also, both general and special teachers who were interviewed in this study indicated behavioral improvement in students with disabilities after co-teaching (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

Benefit for Students without Disabilities

        A specific study conducted by Walther-Thomas (1997) examined the emerging benefits for students without disabilities as schools implement the co-teaching delivery model. Walther-Thomas conducted a qualitative method study consisting of 18 elementary school and seven middle school co-teaching pairs. Teachers interviewed identified five major benefits for most students in the general co-taught classroom. One of the benefits was improving academic performance for almost all students in co-taught classrooms and especially those who have not been formally identified as eligible for special education services. Participants in this study supported the co-teaching delivery model because "the presence of an additional teacher in these classrooms increased the amount of time, individual attention, and supervision" general education students received (p. 400). The additional teacher time and attention made possible due to reduced student-teacher ratios has a great influence on all students in co-taught classrooms. Walther-Thomas reported increased opportunities for "monitoring student progress; providing individual assistance; conducting student conferences; and providing enrichment, re-teaching, and guided practice activities" (1997, p. 400) in co-taught classrooms. Another benefit to co-teaching for students without disabilities is improving social skills (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Many co-teachers in this study reported that co-teaching was also beneficial for students without disabilities in that it improved their social skills. Teachers attributed this improved to factors such as "direct instruction, practice opportunities, and feedback" (Walther- Thomas, 1997, p. 401).

In addition, Walther-Thomas reported that general education students in non-co-taught classrooms also benefit from their teachers who "learned how to teach study skills and cognitive strategies during their co-taught classes." These teachers "liked the student performance improvements they saw and went on to teach these skills to students in their other classes" (p. 401). Co- teaching also had allowed students to think inclusively and that "many participants talked about their classrooms and schools feeling more like an inclusive community" (Walther-Thomas, 1997, p. 401).

Benefit for General and Special Education Teachers

The literature in co-teaching provides evidence that when successfully implemented, co-teaching results in many benefits for special and general education teachers. Planning together for collaborative instruction allows for more professional and personal improvement. In a qualitative report, Chanmugam and Gerlach (2013) write about their experience after co-teaching a new undergraduate elective course as doctoral students. The two authors spoke of the advantage they received out of co-teaching model. They recognized major benefits in two areas: personal development and development of teaching effectiveness. Benefits for co-teachers' personal growth include: offering positive and critical feedback from observing each other before, during and after each class and throughout the semester, and improving in confidence and sense of self-efficacy. In addition to these benefits, there is other benefits for co-teachers' professional growth including enhancing instructional quality by reviewing what strategies worked and those that did not work in the classroom.

For example, Scruggs et al. (2007) found that co-teaching helps improve the professional development of those who teach and support diverse groups of learners in co-taught classrooms through sharing different experiences. Results of this study also indicated that co-teaching develops content knowledge, contributes positively to teachers' personal development, and improves skills in classroom management and curriculum adaptation among educators. In fact, the collaborative nature of co-teaching results in improving teachers' instructional skills, increasing their knowledge of strategies, and helping them become better teachers.

In a study by Perry and Stewart (2005), the researchers interviewed 14 co-teachers to investigate the question of how colleagues from diverse disciplines can achieve an effective partnership in co-teaching. The results indicated that most of the 14 participants in this study felt the positive benefits of co-teaching. They specified that both teachers and students might benefit from an effective co-teaching partnership. The teachers in this study also reported that co-teaching naturally makes teachers more aware of the processes involved in teaching by forcing them to put their own beliefs about learning into words that become the basis for meaningful dialogue between partners. They suggested that a single educator teaching a lesson separately might not be the most effective instructional model. By encouraging teachers to help, observe and talk with each other, the co-teaching model can enhance the instructional quality of teachers.

Co-teaching also provides teachers with opportunities for personal support. Co-teaching can help alleviate the struggles that general education teachers may experience while teaching students with wide range of abilities. According to Murawski and Hughes

(2009), "the already-overworked general educator- who lacks the training and time needed to provide intensive strategies, collect assessment data, and ensure differentiated instruction and cross-curricular connections- is provided another professional with whom he or she can meet the same goals" (p. 273). For instance, the co-planning process enables special education teachers as the experts in differentiation to share their expertise with their general education partners to address the needs of all learners in the general education classroom (Murawski & Hughes, 2009). In fact, "co-teaching allows equal partners to blend their expertise to support the learning of each student in the general education classroom" (Conderman et al., 2009, p.14). Likewise, in the Walther-Thomas (1997) study, the researchers investigated 18 elementary and seven middle school teams who used co- teaching as a primary part of their service delivery model. Many of the teacher participants mentioned the supportive role their co-partners take and how they influence instruction and make it more accessible for learners. One of the teachers interviewed in this study declared:

> You can do this alone, but it's a lot more fun and more rewarding if someone else is there with you… someone who cares about the students the same way you do. Someone who will appreciate it when they are absolutely wonderful–or absolutely awful (p. 401)

In addition, one of the best things about co-teaching is the opportunity to have another professional in the classroom that shares the same goal with the other teacher to complement each other's strengths and fill each other's gaps (Murawski & Dieker, 2008).

Summary of Benefits of Co-Teaching

   Having two minds facilitate a classroom community leads to a variety benefits for students and teachers. Much research emphasized the importance of the co-teaching delivery model to provide supports that promote students with disabilities access and progress in the general classroom and the core academic curriculum (Conderman & Hedin, 2012; Fenty & McDuffie-Landrum, 2011). Implementation of co-teaching delivery model has also been reported to reduce the stigma for students with disabilities (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Another benefit of co-teaching is that students provided combined elements of both the general education curriculum and the student's individualized education program (Murawski & Hughes 2009). Students' academic and behavioral outcomes have also improved when co-teaching instructional style was implemented (Hang & Rabren, 2009). Benefits of co-teaching promote less restrictive placement for students with disabilities.

   For students without disabilities, learning in a co-taught classroom allows for additional opportunities to fully benefit from school. The benefits identified for students without disabilities include enhanced academic performance, more time and attention from the teacher, reserved more attention to the development of study skills and cognitive strategies, developed more social skills, and improved classroom communication (Walther-Thomas, 1997). According to Walther-Thomas. (1997), having a special education teacher in the classroom can be especially helpful to improve the academic performance for students who are low-achieving but are not qualified for special education services. Due to decreased students-teacher ratios in co-taught classroom, all

students are provided with more teacher time and attention. Many teachers emphasized that implementing co-teaching also allowed for increased emphasis on cognitive strategies and study skills even for students without disabilities in non-co-taught classroom. Students' social skills and classroom communication also improved when co-teaching model was implemented (Walther-Thomas, 1997).

Co-teaching provides a support system that teachers can benefit from working together in a shared classroom. The benefits identified for teachers include growth in teachers' professional and personal skills as a result of sharing their knowledge while instructing and co-planning together (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013). Co-teaching allows teachers to support and learn from each other (Murawski & Hughes, 2009). Co-teaching also allows both educators to find ways to use their strengths to help each other's weaknesses (Murawski & Dieker, 2008). Yet, the positive effects of co-teaching are limited by several significant challenges that occurred while planning for implementation.

<u>Challenges in Successful Implementation</u>

Despite the research on the positive effects of co-teaching as described above, co-teaching does come with difficulties. "Although the research base on co-teaching is still emerging, it suggests that co-teaching is far more complex to implement effectively than it might seem at first consideration" (Friend, 2008). By learning about these complexities and addressing them in advance, co-teachers will likely be able to make co-teaching partnerships more successful.

The move to a one single general education classroom can be for difficult teachers who are used to pullout special education. Having general and special education teachers together in a general education classroom does not guarantee that they interact and collaborate with each other. "Thus, in a single classroom, there may be, in reality, two parallel but separated system of instruction." For example, in a study by Wood (1998), some of the general and special education teachers who were participating in his study have experienced failure to work together as a collaborative team. One general education teacher in the study explained that even though she was primarily responsible in the individualized education program, the copies of written communication with families were signed by only the special education teachers. She reported: "I felt that I was the primary giver of the personal and social growth, yet I didn't have an opportunity to report to the parents on that." Researchers identify four common areas of concern regarding co-teachers' relationship and collaboration skills. This section will describe how communication, roles and responsibilities, and planning time pose the greatest challenges for co-teaching implementation.

Communication

Building effective interpersonal relationships and good communication skills among general and special education co-teachers is important for the success of co-teaching in the general education setting (Damore & Murray, 2008). However, if a disconnect exists between the two teachers in terms of expectations or teaching or management styles, the implementation of co-teaching may be unsuccessful. Scruggs et al. (2007) conducted a met-synthesis of 32 qualitative research studies determining the

practice of co-teaching in general education settings. Many research studies included in

this review referred to co-teaching as a marriage that is, requiring a close professional

relationship between co-teachers for success. For example, one teacher described her co-

teaching experience this way: "when you are a co-teacher, [you] are basically like

married at work" (p. 9). However, maintaining effective interpersonal communication

skills is a challenge for most educators. In fact, "research clearly indicates that many co-

teaching marriages result in struggle, separation, or even divorce" (p.40) (Murawski &

Dieker, 2008). Similarly, Friend (2008) reported that

> Co-teaching relationships are often likened to marital relationships in that they
> depend on commitment, negotiation, and flexibility. To be successful, co-teaching
> relies on two committed educators who care deeply about reaching their students
> and work diligently to achieve that goal. They problem solve to generate new
> strategies, resolve differences of opinion, and try alternative solutions if the
> original one is not successful. Co-teachers have a commitment to each other, as
> well, in terms of nurturing their professional relationship. Each educator works to
> bring out the best in the other person, and the result is improved outcomes for
> students and strong teaching partnerships. (p. 13)

Such research suggests that good communication can help implement co-teaching,

whereas bad communication can hinder implementation.

According to communication issues occurring between co-teachers were

consistently reported as a barrier to effective co-teaching practices. Many educators

believe that effective communication skills are an important component for co-teaching

success, and co-teachers who fail to adapt such skills may create negative effects on co-

teaching implementation and create additional conflicts that interfere with teaching.

Teachers who have different communication or conflict styles need to discuss these

issues together to better understand each other's prospective lest they become hard to

resolve. "If co-teachers are to be effective partners, they must know each other well, be able to anticipate the partner's response, and have an on-going interactive relationship" (Conderman et al., 2009, p. 14).

Co-teachers who don't work well together are unlikely to create high levels of learning among students and to achieve their teaching goals. According to Perry and Stewart (2005), students see and feel the poor communication between co-teachers. Such disagreement may result in conflict among teachers and confusion for students. One participant in this study cautioned "When it doesn't work, it's a very painful experience … and when you are in front of the class with someone who you had just had major disagreements with, it's like trying to run a family with children while you are on the verge of a divorce. There's a lot of energy that gets wasted on trying to look neutral or look undisturbed" (p. 568).

The need for effective communication skills begin as soon as two teachers are assigned to co-teach together. It is common for co-teachers in the beginning of their relationship to find it challenging to collaborate with a partner who may have a different personality and different communication skills. Conderman et al. (2009) identified five areas for co-teachers to resolve communication deficiencies. The identified areas include having willingness to compromise, having willingness to accommodate, having willingness to try, having willingness to get support, and exiting the situation. Both teachers need to be willing to compromise on issues around their content and curricula, as well as the individual needs of students. However, compromise doesn't always work in co-teaching relationships. If teachers have extremely different styles, they may come up

with extremely different suggestions. In order to work together effectively, one may need to be willing to support the suggestion that works best for the students. Co-teachers also need to be willing to give a new idea a try to test its effectiveness without committing themselves to it. When an agreement cannot be reached between two co-teachers, they may get some support from another professional. For example, the site administrator may view the issue from different perspective to identify compromises or solutions. Finally, if teachers have extremely different personalities and working styles, and their co-teaching relationship presents challenges that may have a grave impact on students learning, then the solution is to conclude their co-teaching efforts and get other techniques to continue the support needed in the classroom.

In addition, Pratt (2014) addressed six strategies that teachers who were participating in his study used to overcome challenges. The strategies included having an open mind, using open communication, finding common ground, using humor, being selfless, and asking to help. When one teacher shares his or her ideas, preference, or a concern, the other teacher listened carefully without judgment or discrediting. When teachers disagree with each other or have different viewpoints, they talked about these issues to come to an agreement. When co-teachers worked toward building an effective relationship, they end up with a common ground in instructional strategies and classroom management. Teachers also used humor to help enjoy working together and to ease tension among each other. To make their relationship work, teachers in this study did not take criticism or differing ideas personally. Finally, these teachers were willing to offer assistance to each other without being asked (Pratt, 2014)

<u>Roles and Responsibilities</u>

Defining the roles and responsibilities of each teacher in a co-taught classroom can be a complex and challenging assignment. The problem is that when roles are unclear or poorly defined, it may negatively affect the success of co-teaching (Wood, 1998). In her study of six elementary co-teachers, Wood (1998) investigated the perceptions of general education and special education teachers on their educational roles and teaching efforts to students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Result of this study indicated poorly defined and unclear expectations of roles among general and special educators who were teaching in the general education classroom. Although special education teachers participating in this study assumed separate role responsibilities for students with disabilities' individualized educational goals, they wanted to assume more responsibilities for the students' social behavior and academic agenda. For example, one special education teacher in this investigation stated: "I don't think [the general education teacher] should really be responsible for giving any type of the [behavior] consequences.... I feel that I'm the one that should give feedback . . . on grades and homework" (p. 187). Such a statement demonstrates role confusion in the co-teaching setting.

Three general education teachers were interviewed regarding educational roles and responsibilities to which they should be held accountable in the study by Wood referenced above. The three teachers initially did not take responsibilities for students' individualized educational goals, and they all agreed that their main role was to focus on the social goals of the students with disabilities included in their general education

classrooms. For example, one general education teacher stated: "I think mainly my goal for him is that he . . . operate as normally as possible in this classroom; and be as inconspicuous as possible in the sense that he look as typical as possible. [I] think I see that as my major goal with him" (as cited in Wood, 1998, p. 188). The difference in the special and general educators' view of their roles demonstrates a lack of clarity on such roles.

One qualitative study conducted by Strogilos and Tragoulia (2013) examined and evaluated the roles and teaching responsibilities of co-teachers with reference to role understanding and responsibilities in classroom management. The researchers observed and interviewed 18 co-taught teams from 18 general education schools over a school year to determine to what extent teachers collaborate equally. The teachers' teaching experiences ranged from one year to 27 years and co-teaching experiences ranged from one to three years.

The data showed a narrow implementation of co-teaching practice among the participants. Sixteen out of 18 co-teaching pairs indicated that the most common role for special education teachers was assisting students with disabilities while general teachers upheld the role of primary instructors. One special education teacher stated: "I always assist Jim when the general teacher is giving an exercise to the whole class, or, when I understand that he cannot follow the general teacher's instruction" (p. 85). Teachers participating in this study had co-taught for the whole year but had not gone beyond the practice of one lead and one assist model (Strogilos &Tragoulia, 2013)

Similarly, in their article, Magiera et al. (2005) observed 10 co-teaching pairs and interviewed four pairs. They found that 67% of the time, the general education teachers led the instruction with little individualization and the special education teacher acted as an assistant. Many special education teachers in this study felt that their roles in the general classroom were controlled by the general education teachers' dependence on whole class instruction. Although teachers' co-teaching experience in this study ranged from 3 to 5 years, they had not moved beyond the initial stage of co-teaching (e.g., leader and assistant model).

Implications from (Strogilos &Tragoulia, 2013; Magiera et al., 2005) studies showed that sharing roles and responsibilities is an essential element of effective co-teaching. They pointed out that teachers need good training in collaborative teaching in order to be able to recognize and assess all students' needs. Teachers will also need such training in order to plan and implement efficient strategies while cooperating and working together. Similarly, teachers need appropriate common planning time so they can develop and plan meaningful instructions and activities that allow all students to engage in meaningful activities and meet their needs. They need to blend the content skills of the general teacher and the strategy skills of the special teacher so both teachers become equally functioning member of an effective co-teaching classroom (Strogilos &Tragoulia, 2013; Magiera et al., 2005).

<u>Planning Time</u>

Finding enough time to co-plan is considered to be the greatest challenge of co-teaching. According to the lack of time for co-planning together is repeatedly described

as a barrier to effective co-teaching. Through teachers' interviews and observations, limited support for collaborative planning between general education and special education co-teachers was reported (Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013). In their study Strogilos and Tragoulia stated that 17 out of 18 co-teaching pairs reported having no access to sufficient co-planning time. These teachers found to work individually in planning and to have no scheduled shared planning time presented in their schedules. As a result of such lack in common planning time, special education students' needs were not included in the whole class instruction, and special education teachers' instructional choices were constrained by the class curriculum. Researchers found that since almost all the general education teachers in this study worked alone in planning the class instructions, these instructions were designed only to accomplish general education students' needs (Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013). Special education teachers also reported that their planning for special education students' needs and Individualized Education Programs was guided by the class curriculum. For example, one special education teacher commented: "I try to follow the class curriculum. I want Mixalis to follow the rest of the class. We do everything the class is doing. I don't want him to feel different. Sometimes we succeed and at others we fail" (Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013, p. 86).

Having sufficient time to adequately discuss and co-plan for the instructional and behavioral needs of heterogeneous group of students is considered the number one barrier for many co-teachers (Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Scruggs et al., 2007). Dieker and Murawski have found that even if time is made available, it is a limited time. Even though many co-teachers often use this limited time to co-plan for collaborative co-

teaching, their effort often is limited to cover a large number and wide scope of subjects

for their class, leaving only moments for co-teachers to communicate about each student

as an individual and consider the type of support a student might need so that they are

challenging all students:

> These broad planning sessions frequently result in special educators being told
> moments before the class begins what is going to be taught that day.
> Communication around critical areas such as curricular concerns, IEP content
> needs, and behavioral or assessment issues often are left untouched, or have to be
> addressed in a reactive manner rather than a proactive one (Dieker & Murawski,
> 2003, p. 4).

According to Murawski and Dieker (2004) "planning is an integral part of any effective

teacher's schedule and is a proactive way to determine what standards will be addressed"

(p. 55). Although finding adequate time for co-planning is challenging, researchers

suggested many creative ways for co-teachers to consider for planning time. One of these

considerations is about weekly planning time. For example, Keefe, Moore, and Duff

(2004) found it difficult in the school schedule to have planning time for special and

general education teachers to sit and plan lessons together each week. They also

suggested some possible solutions that may fit in every day schedule. For example, "use

e-mail to send thoughts about enriching an existing lesson plan; walk together to the

lunch line to discuss concerns about students; or stay behind a minute after the bell rings

to do some quick reflective practices on what went well in the class." (p. 41).

Similarly, Friend (2008) indicated that planning is the key to successful co-

teaching; however, finding regular planning time is a major challenge of co-teaching. A

possible solution for such a problem according to Friend is to think of planning as a two-

section procedure. The first section can be monthly instructional lessons that include

consideration of the key decisions and discussing the most critical topics. This type of planning may occur for at least 45 minutes. The second section happens every day or as needed and include quick conversation related for example to a concern about a student. The authors also suggested three strategies for organizing frequent planning time including: summer planning, use continuing education credit, and use of the professional development day.

In addition, Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, and Blanks (2010) reviewed the literature on co-teaching and found it very difficult for co-teachers to find time and a place to get together and share planning each week. In their review, they offered a variety of practical techniques to support new co-teachers. Their suggested techniques regarding finding common planning time included: in addition to face-to-face conversation, teachers may use online tools (such as Skype, Edmodo, iChat) that can find time in the evening or on weekends to co-plan. Teachers may schedule a regular planning time once a week and use other adults to help cover their classrooms so they make time for co-planning. Even more, with collaboration, teachers may create specific timelines (for example, a timeline suggested goals for specific units, marking periods months, or semesters) to effectively manage their limited co-planning time.

Summary of Challenges

Even though many schools are moving toward more co-teaching practices, several challenges limit or prevent teachers from successfully implementing co-teaching. Lack of communication, confusion over roles and responsibilities, and insufficient planning time pose significant challenges for co-teaching implementation. If these challenges can be

addressed, the implementation of co-teaching can be enhanced. Successful

implementation of co-teaching can positively affect the relationship between general and

special education teachers. The research provides a variety of strategies that teachers and

schools can implement to overcome the challenges. Since decreasing the challenges will

have a positive impact on co-teaching partnership, teachers need to be provided with

ideas to promote effective co-teaching relationship.

<div align="center">Ideas to Promote Effective Co-Teaching Relationships</div>

A review of the literature regarding ways to promote effective co-teaching

relationship recommend that self-reflections and self-evaluations are necessary for

improving co-teachers' relationships and instructional practices (Jang, 2006; Roth,

Masciotra, & Boyd, 1999). It is important for co-teachers to conduct their own self-

evaluation and write a journal record during or after co-teaching. They may write down

their reflections twice or more a week. The content of the journals may include personal

observations on what they co-taught, how they co-taught certain concepts, and how

effective their instructional strategies were (Murawski & Dieker, 2008; & Jang, 2006).

To promote effective co-teaching relationship, co-teachers should also be aware of what

their co-partner is feeling, doing, thinking, and bringing into the school environment

(Condemerman et al., 2009). They must work hard to maintain a collaborative working

relationship and keep communication alive to address any conflict before it becomes

more complicated and leads to misunderstandings that affect their co-teaching

relationship (Cook, & Friend, 1995).

Research has shown how important for co-teachers to evaluate their own teaching and co-teaching relationship (Murawski & Dieker, 2008). However, no prior study has examined whether these evaluation strategies contribute to effective relationship among special and general educators in co-teaching partnerships. Salend et al., (2002) suggested two main ideas that can be employed to help teachers self-evaluate their own co-teaching to ensure effective co-teaching relationship and ongoing communication between special and general education teachers. The suggested ideas are using best practices checklists and use teaching journals and portfolios.

<u>Using Best Practices Checklists</u>

In effective co-teaching, educators need to self-evaluate their own teaching and the co-teaching relationship to become aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their relationship. Co-teachers can do this jointly or individually (Salend et al., 2002). After self-evaluating their effectiveness, they may then ask each other: "Is what we are doing good for both of us? If not, what are we doing that we could change so that we both are happy with the relationship?" (Murawski & Dieker, 2008, p. 47). By engaging in this process, both teachers will be provided with the necessary feedback to build deep and meaningful relationships with each other as well as improve instruction for students. In order to build a good co-teaching partnership, "teachers could not fear creating misunderstandings, but had to be willing to work through resolving them. As they used these strategies, they worked toward building an effective relationship where all pieces came together into a perfect fit" (Pratt, 2014, p. 10).

<u>Using Teaching Journals and Portfolios</u>

According to Salend et al., (2002), co-teaching journals and portfolios can be used to document evidence of what is occurring in the co-taught classroom. Co-teachers need to jointly or individually report their daily work in a teaching journal that they might use it to evaluate and measure their overall co-teaching relationship efforts. For example, "teachers can record their reactions to their roles and interactions with one another" (Salend et al., 2002, p.198). Co-teachers can then use this collected information as topics in their meeting times to "identify the team's achievements and concerns, as well as to brainstorm strategies for addressing any difficulties the team may be experiencing" (Salend et al., 2002, p.199).

Teaching portfolios are another way to evaluate and improve the progresses of the relationship between the two teachers. The teaching portfolio is a record that could include the teachers' teaching philosophy, the method they use, their effectiveness, and the classroom activities. Keeping this portfolio up-to-date helps teachers "periodically review and discuss various portfolio items; engage in self-examination concerning their program's goals, successes, difficulties; and determine strategies for improving their co-teaching efforts" (Salend et al., 2002. p. 199).

Summary of Ideas to Promote Effective Co-Teaching Relationships

Self-evaluating co-teaching can enable teachers to improve their co-teaching relationship and also their instructional practices. By using best practices checklists, teaching journals, and portfolios, co-teachers can improve not only their instruction for students, but also build a deep and meaningful relationship, support their partner, and overcome challenges that occurred

Rationale for Conducting the Current Study

Throughout the review of studies that addressed the nature of co-teaching relationships, common themes regarding building effective co-teaching relationship were apparent. Interacting and communication skills are necessary to prevent or mediate any interpersonal conflicts among co-teachers. Dynamic roles and teaching responsibilities may not be clear to co-teachers in the general education classroom due to the confusion of adding new roles to both regular and special educators (Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013). Co-teachers need to have sufficient time for professional development and co- planning (Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). Furthermore, self-evaluation enables teachers to promote their co-teaching relationship and instructional delivery (Murawski & Dieker, 2008; Roth, Masciotra, & Boyd, 1999). All these components can be seen as effective elements for the outcome of co-teaching partnership, however, only few studies cited in this literature review considered the strategies co-teachers use to build effective relationship in co-taught classroom while new content is being co-taught. The research literature lack result from qualitative investigation of what strategies current co-teachers use to promote effective co-teaching relationship.

Co-teaching is a collaborative teaching model that requires a day-to-day co-teaching relationship between two teachers in the general education classroom to meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities. Across the 32 studies reviewed by Scruggs et al. (2007), teachers repeatedly stressed the importance of training in collaboration and communication skills in order to create strong co-teaching partnerships. If the training is required by a school district, co-teachers may be able to find the best way for building positive co-teaching relationships which is the key to success in all aspects of co-teaching, whether they are teaching in the classroom, planning a lesson, or even grading the students' work.

The literature on co-teachers' relationship may provide a general overview that may be considered as ideal model of co-teaching and may not include information that solves issues about an existing situation at a real school. Since interpersonal styles differ from teacher to teacher, perhaps the literature will not indicate the communication skills that a teacher may need to help him or her work effectively with the other partner. A narrative of a current situation in a specific school, including the strengths and weaknesses of the co-teachers' interaction and relationship and the conflicts they may encounter, may clarify why the study of relationships in co-teaching is important. Discussions that underline issues that co-teachers may encounter while they plan together and deliver the instruction to both students with and without disabilities may give the reader a realistic picture to think about and to recognize how important it is to collaborate with one's co-partner in order to create an effective co-teaching environment. Thus, a description of what actually happens in an inclusive classroom as two teachers work

together to ensure all students have access to the general curriculum will be beneficial.

The purpose of this research study is to describe strategies co-teachers can use to build

effective relationships in co-teaching classroom while new content is being taught. These

strategies include teachers' strategies of communication, roles and responsibilities, co-

planning, and promoting effective co-teaching relationships.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how general and special education teachers collaborate to provide special education services to students with disabilities. This chapter begins with a discussion about the nature of qualitative inquiry. Following the discussion, I describe an interpretivist approach to qualitative research and the philosophical assumption that grounds this research study. Next, I describe how I used a case study designed to explore the daily interactions and relationship-building of current co-teachers. Lastly, I share the research methods that I used to carry out the study.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research as a methodology is "a systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature, of a phenomenon with a particular context" (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005, p. 195). Per such a claim, qualitative research, when implemented within a particular context, leads to results that can inform knowledge and can contribute to understanding and eventually practice of beneficial processes within the context. Therefore, qualitative research can be applied to the co-taught classroom and the co-teaching delivery model. However, much of the research on the nature of the co-teaching relationship lacks a full explanation for the natural interaction that occurs between co-teachers when collaborating to provide special education services to students with disabilities.

Data collection from qualitative studies can lead to a deep and full understanding of how processes work or what people think. Bogden and Biklen (2003) emphasized that

if researchers want to "understand the way people think about their world and how those definitions are formed they need to get close to them, to hear them talk and observe them in their day-to day lives" (p. 31). In this research study, qualitative research was selected as the methodology to reveal and provide more insight to teachers' implementation of co-teaching practice and perceptions of co-teaching. For example, the qualitative data collection that was used in this study, such as observing the classroom and interviewing teachers, allowed me to get close to these co-teachers, observe their interaction in the co-taught classroom, and hear perceptions of their experience of co-teaching. By gaining a deep understanding on teachers' experiences of co-teaching, the qualitative research "look[s] at that matter from teachers' point of view" (Becker, 1967, p. 245), rather than measuring on their behalf, as is done in quantitative research.

Researchers found that qualitative research can be distinguished from quantitative research by number of different characteristics. Bogden and Biklen (2003) outlined five characteristics including naturalistic settings, descriptive data, inductive analysis, concern with process, and understanding of meaning. Qualitative research occurs in naturalistic settings where human behavior and events occur rather than in experimental designed settings. The data collected in qualitative research are descriptive which means that data are described in words or pictures, rather than in numbers. Qualitative research focuses on processes beyond the individual's behaviors, and is mainly interested in understanding how such behaviors arise. Qualitative research is also based on analyses that emerge during data collection and that research questions are studied before hypotheses and theories are developed. Finally, qualitative research focuses on people's experiences and

perceptions, and the way they make sense of their lives "to better understand human behavior and experience" (p. 38). This final characteristic is of particular importance to this study since it indicates the importance of understanding the meaning of a process or experience. In fact, it leads to the philosophical and theoretical framework that informed my work which will be discussed in the following section.

Interpretivist Research

Interpretivist research seeks to study social phenomena in a scientific manner without compromising the humanity of its participants. It adds real-life tales to operationalized factors, thus eliminating the constrictive boundaries of traditional, purely-quantitative objectivist research while avoiding unscientific stories (Ferguson, Ferguson & Taylor, 1992).

Ferguson et al. (1992) have identified several tenets of interpretivist research allow it to maintain its personal approach without comprising its scientific data analysis. The first of these tenets is the belief that people interpret and shape phenomena around them until it becomes their own reality. The second tenet uses such reasoning to make its claim: since each person makes their own reality, subjectivity and objectivity are one. The third tenet unites facts and values and claims that facts cannot exist where there are no morals, since every person uses his or her morals to shape the facts. All the tenets combine to produce the ultimate aim of interpretivist research: to see phenomena from the perspective of the study's participants.

Interpretivist research is one form or approach of qualitative methodology that involves researchers to "focus on in-depth, long-term interactions with relevant people in

one or several sites" (Glesne, 2011, p. 8). In the current study, questions about how general and special education teachers collaborate to provide special education services to students with disabilities in the general education classroom requires detailed and personal engagement with the teachers. Giving that the focus of this study was the understanding of how general and special education teachers jointly teach a heterogeneous group of students in general education classroom, the interpretivist approach was appropriate.

For this study, the interpretivist approach was selected to provide meanings of interpretations and point of view regarding general and special education teachers' roles. The most important finding in the current study was how teachers interpret and make meaning of their roles in co-taught classroom (Glesne, 2011). According to Jacob (1990), "meaning can have significant impact on special education practice" (p. 200). For instance, when the co-teachers' interpretations of their roles differ from what is already known about effective teaching practices, co-teaching goals might not be met. Through an interpretivist approach, researchers "assume that a central characteristic of human beings is that they are 'meaning makers'" (Jacob, 1990, p. 199). This interpretivist research focused on how general and special educators interact and communicate with each other while co-teaching. Because the relationship between general and special education teachers has an important role in the success or failure of the co-teaching practice, finding ways to promote an effective co-teaching relationship was critical.

There are many different developed traditions of interpretivism, and they all "share the goal of understanding human ideas, actions, and interactions in specific

contexts or in terms of the wider culture" (Glesne, 2011, p. 8). In her book, Glesne introduces five various approaches of interpretivism including ethnography, life history, grounded theory, action research, and case study. Case studies are of particular importance to my study, since "Each approach carries with it philosophical assumptions, emphasizes certain foci, is associated with particular disciplines, and tends to rely upon select methods" (p.17). In other words, researchers explore a group, individual, process, event, or setting in depth during case studies (Glesne, 2011). More details about case study research will be discussed in the following section.

Case Study Research

The research design for this study was an instrumental case study that provides in-depth details on the everyday interactions and relationships of two co-teaching pairs, their experiences and events of co-teaching, and the perceptions and meaning attached to those experiences as expressed by the participants. Such details include their strategies of communication, roles and responsibilities, co-planning, and promoting effective co-teaching relationships.

Case study was the methodology chosen for the current study because it "draws attention to the question of what specially can be learned from the single case (Stake, 1995, P. 435). My case study pointed out some significance and meaning in the practice of co-teaching and will inspire teachers to perceive, believe, or act in different ways (Glesne, 2011, p. 24). In this study, I explored the collaboration of two teams of co-teachers. I explored the collaboration in order to provide useful information that may guide novice co-teachers in identifying the key elements for formulating their own co-

teaching delivery plan. The current study can be considered an instrumental case study because in an instrumental case study "a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization" (Stake, 1995, p.437). In this study, I extensively reviewed the two co-pairs to provide insight into the current practice of co-teaching. The study represented a snapshot of current practices of co-teaching from the perspective of the current co-teachers and observations of their interactions.

<div align="center">Methods</div>

Setting

This study was conducted in one of the largest school districts of Iowa's public school systems. There are eleven elementary schools, four middle schools, and two regular high schools and one alternative high school for a total of 18 schools in the district. At the time of the study, 10,555 students are enrolled in the district prekindergarten through grade 12. Of the total student population, 1,850 students receive special education services. 801 students are English language learners and 65.48% are qualified for free or reduced price lunches (Waterloo Schools, 2016). The decision was made to include only co-teachers of elementary schools grade one to five. These teachers must have access to the co-taught classroom setting. The study was specifically conducted in one elementary school that implemented a co-teaching delivery system.

Participants

     Once the permission for entry into the school was received from the Human

Subjects Review board (Institutional Review Board form) at the University of Northern

Iowa, I emailed the superintendent of the school district asking for permission to conduct

the study in her district. In the email I explained the purpose of the research and asked to

be provided with participants for the current dissertation. Once the permission was

received, I emailed the Special Education Instructional coach to provide me with names

of current co-teaching pairs in the district. She then provided me with four possible co-

teaching pairs from four different elementary schools. Then I emailed the schools'

principals asking for permission to conduct my study in their school. Once the

permissions were received, I emailed the four co-teaching pairs to see if they were

willing to participate in the study. Only one co-teaching pair ("Mary" and "Emma")

agreed to participate.

     Since the main requirement of this study was to observe the co-teachers the

entirety of the school day, the co-teachers must co-teach for the entire day. I was

informed by Mary, general education teacher, that because of the high number of students

with disabilities in first grade, this year they split the students between two classrooms

and Emma, special education teacher, co-taught between the two rooms. She co-taught

with "Jane," another general education teacher, in the morning and with Mary in the

afternoon. To accomplish the study requirements, I emailed Jane to see if she was willing

to be a participant in this study. After she agreed via email, I emailed the three

participants to arrange dates for observations and interviews. See Appendix A for the schedule of the observations and interviews.

The participants in this study included two first grade co-teaching pairs (two general education teachers and one special education teacher) who collaboratively serve students with disabilities in the general education setting. Particular attention was paid to the roles and responsibilities of the co-teacher in instructional delivery, decision making and co-planning, and relationship building.

Teacher Information

Mary (a general education teacher) co-taught the entirety of her seven-year teaching career. She first taught kindergarten and then moved to first grade. She has been co-teaching with Emma for three years. Recently she is working on her Masters' degree in special education.

Jane (a general education teacher) was in her 25th year of teaching. She spent 13 years teaching pre-kindergarten, and subsequently taught six years of kindergarten. After a brief hiatus, she returned to teaching. This is her tenth year co-teaching, and her first year working with Emma and teaching first grade.

Emma (a special education teacher) was in her seventh year of teaching. She taught four years at another elementary school in Waterloo, where she taught special education and then taught preschool. She subsequently took a few years off to raise children, and has resumed teaching for three years. This is her third year of co-teaching with Mary and fourth year co-teaching in general.

Data Collection

Data collection in this qualitative research was conducted primarily through observation and interviews. Secondary data were conducted from email equations and document analysis. Participant observation is one of the main ways in which more qualitative inquiry gathers its information (Ferguson, Ferguson, & Taylor, 1992). The main goal of conducting an observation is to be familiar with the study setting, its participants and their behavior. Through observation, the observer does not talk, gauge, or compete for prestige. The observer also "seek[s] to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange" (Glesne, 2011, p. 67).

Brantlinger et al. (2005) identified five quality indicators for conducting observation. These indicators include appropriately selecting the setting and participants for the observation and spending sufficient time in the field. The researcher needs to fit into the site by being accepted, respected, and unobtrusive during observations, and should have minimal impact on the setting. Field notes need to be systemically collected by writing notes during or soon after observation, and sound measures are needed to ensure the confidentiality of the participants and settings. I strived to meet those quality indicators in the current study.

As part of the current study, I observed and took field notes of two co-teaching pairs. These observations took place in the general education classrooms when the general education teacher and special education teacher were presenting new content to students. The observation lasted the entirety of the four school observation days, and included two observations of staff meetings and a collaborative planning session. I

conducted four observations of the co-teaching pairs in their co-taught classrooms. I first

observed Jane and Emma in the morning and the Mary and Emma in the afternoon. As an

observer, I only observed and did not interact with the class. After each observation, I

analyzed the data collected through observation for meaning and evidence of personal

bias. Interview questions were also developed through the observation.

The special strength of interviewing in qualitative inquiry is "the opportunity to

learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do

see" (Glesne, 2011, p. 104). As mentioned above, Brantlinger et al. (2005) identified five

quality indicators for conducting interviews. These indicators include appropriately

selecting and recruiting an adequate number of participants for the interviews, making

reasonable, clearly-worded interview questions that are appropriate for exploring the

domains of interest, using adequate mechanisms to record and transcribe the interview

data, representing the participants sensitively and fairly when sharing the results, and

using sound measures to ensure confidentiality.

For this study, I carried out six interviews of co-teaching pairs through the four

occasions of collecting data. Each interview session was redesigned and structured based

on the responses from the previous interview. Each interview was tape recorded and

transcribed immediately and then coded based on themes and patterns of the responses. A

semi-structured interview format was constructed with interviews lasting approximately

30 to 45 minutes.

The first round of interviews was conducted jointly with Mary and Emma and

individually with Jane after the first classroom observation. The interview focused on

teachers' education background, co-teaching experience, collaboration, and current co-teaching situation. Questions for the first interview were based on literature about co-teaching. At the beginning of the first interview round, I asked participants to read and sign the consent form and asked them for their permission to record the data.

The second round of interviews was conducted jointly with Mary and Emma and individually with Jane to extend and clarify the data obtained from the first interview. According to Glesne (2011), coding of the early data collection can help the researcher "develop a more specific focus or more relevant question" (p. 191). The interview focused on details of the lesson, co-planning, and how roles and responsibilities were divided. At the beginning of the second round, I briefly mentioned the highlights of the previous interview to allow participants to confirm the accuracy of the previous interview.

A third round of interviews was conducted individually with each participant. The third interview conducted discussed particular issues and concerns of the current co-teaching relationships, meaning of working with a partner, and how the co-teaching relationships were promoted.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, "Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard and read so that you can figure out what you have learned and make sense of what you have experienced" (Glesne, 2011, p. 184). I simultaneously reflected on the data, worked to organize it, and tried to discover what it has to say to make the current study more relevant and profound. I followed Brantlinger et al. (2005) quality indicators when

analyzing data. These indicators include sorting and coding the results in a systematic and

meaningful way, providing sufficient rationale to explain what was and was not included

in the finding, using clear documentation of methods to establish the trustworthiness and

credibility of the data, providing reflections about the researcher's personal perspectives,

substantiating data conclusions by sufficient quotations from participants, and making

connections with the related research (p. 202).

In analyzing the data in this current study, I reviewed the data repeatedly to

highlight key words and phrases from the field notes and each participant's responses

immediately after transcribing the interview and also during data analysis. I categorized

and defined patterns and themes from the viewpoint of the participants. I tried to

understand and clarify these patterns and themes (Glesne, 2011).

The process I used in analyzing the data had several steps. First, I coded the

observation notes and responses of the participants by organizing them into charts. The

tables can be found in Appendices B, C and D. Next, I used my research questions to

categorize the coded data. These categorizations resulted in four main themes related to

the four research questions. By comparing the main themes and concepts from the coded

data, I categorized these comparisons into several subthemes for each main theme. The

table can be found in Appendix A.

Credibility and Trustworthiness of Research

In a qualitative study, the researcher has the responsibility to make sure that the

collection of data is credible and trustworthy (Brantlinger et al., 2005). For this study, I

used qualitative research techniques to establish trustworthiness. Per what was outlined in

the Brantlinger et al., (2005) study, I used the technique of member checks to confirm the accuracy of the teachers' interviews responses. I also used an audit trail to "keep track of interviews conducted and /or specific times and dates spent observing as well as who was observed on each occasion" (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 201). By doing so, I justified that an enough time was spent in the field so that results are dependable and confirmable. Finally, I made sure that the study's analyses, interpretations, and results were reviewed by an expert in the phenomena being studied to provide critical feedback of the study.

The expected results of the current study are not intended for "purposes of generalization but rather to produce evidence based on the exploration of specific contexts and particular individuals" (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 203). It was expected that the results will help readers "see similarities to their situations and judge the relevance of the information" (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 203). It was my responsibility as the researcher to provide an in-depth description of the current practice of co-teaching so those who wish to co-teach can make necessary judgments and evaluations.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this case study was to describe the daily interaction and relationship-building of general and special education teachers who collaborate to provide special education services to students with disabilities. This qualitative study explored a day-to-day co-teaching relationship between one special education teacher collaborating with two first grade teachers in two general education classrooms. It also examined the strategies they use to achieve a successful collaborative relationship. The analysis of data from teacher interviews and observational field notes resulted in four major themes and each theme contains several sub-themes in response to the four research questions:

1. How do special education and general education teachers interact and communicate with each other while co-teaching,

2. What roles do special education and general education teachers adopt in co-teaching classrooms

3. What strategies do co-teachers use to plan for effective collaboration,

4. What strategies do teachers use to promote effective co-teaching relationships?

The four major themes and subthemes are presented in the following chapter. The four major themes are building the relationship, the shared roles and responsibilities of co-teaching, the co-planning strategies and the promotion of partnership. Each theme includes several subthemes that will be presented in the following chapter.

<u>Building the Relationship</u>

The theme of relationship building addressed the subthemes that co-teachers go by to make a successful co-teaching partnership. These subthemes include teachers' choice to co-teach, the first year together, getting used with each other, teaching style and philosophy, and the ability to learn from each other.

<u>"It's Not Really Up to Us": Teachers' Choice to be in a Co-Taught Classroom</u>

The co-teachers interviewed felt they were not given a choice whether they wanted to participate in co-teaching or with whom they would co-teach. One of the reasons Mary, a first grade general education teacher, thought they were not given a choice was that "In first grade there's no option for kids to be like in a self-contained classroom unless they have behavior needs." Mary also stated that for their students who do have academic goals but not necessarily have behavior needs, general classroom "is basically where they are." She stated that when she first got into co-teaching, she "didn't have a choice." "They said, 'You're going to co-teach.' If I want a job, I'm going to say okay."

When Mary was selected to co-teach for the first time, she had not had any experiences working with diverse students. Although she believed that all students should have the opportunity to learn, working with students with disabilities was her major fear. She explained:

> I was nervous, I was scared. I honestly hadn't had experience with special ed students before. I guess I was nervous that I wasn't going to be able to handle it, like these students are going to be too tough for me or I'm not going to be able to teach them. I was just nervous about that. I think every teacher wants [his or her] students to learn. I was just nervous that I wouldn't know what to do to help them to learn.

Emma, a special education teacher, has similar feelings. In their interviews, both Mary

and Emma felt that they like to continue co-teaching with each other, but that is not their

choice. Emma stated, "Would we like to still be doing this? Yes. Will it be our option?

Probably not." Mary added:

> Next year our principal might say, 'I'm not going to have you co-teach anymore.'
> Actually, that was supposed to happen this school year. She actually was going to
> have [Emma] just work with [another teacher]. But because I was working on my
> Master's and because the number of students was so high, she said, 'Well, let's
> split them between two classes.'

Similar findings were recorded during Jane's interviews. Jane, a general education

teacher, believes that teachers should be given a voice about the teacher with whom they

will co-teach and need to be passionate about their co-teaching. She believed if selected

co-teachers are not comfortable working together, it can be detrimental for the students.

Jane said:

> I would say a lot of times you are told that you're going to be co-teaching. I think
> that it needs to be a passion of yours. It is a passion of mine so I love doing it.
> But for some people, they like the control of the classroom and they don't like
> other people coming in. I think then it's a detriment to the students.

Jane also spoke about her previous experience when she was paired with a special

education teacher who was not getting along with her, and how that was very stressful

and not beneficial for the students. She described her relationship with that teacher in a

detailed response:

> It was very difficult. It was very stressful. I never knew what she expected. I just
> didn't feel like the co-teaching went as well as what it could have. I felt that they
> were all of our kids and she felt that she just had to deal with the special needs
> kids. Really, part of the lesson, how it went was it was either she did the whole
> lesson or I did the whole lesson. It was like we had two teachers in the room, but
> we weren't co-teaching. It was like she would do her thing; I would do my thing.

It just was not beneficial for the students at all. There were times when we would not even talk to each other. It was just very stressful. I think the students could feel the tension between the teachers. I think it really did. It was very detrimental to them. The outcomes were not as good as what they had been previously.

In a similar way, Mary stated that if she can choose the teacher she will co-teach with, she will choose Emma, because they get along very well and like each other. She stated: "If it was somebody who gets under your skin, they kind of irritate you, then I would say somebody else. But we get along very well."

Based on teachers' responses, it was evident that although they did not get to choose who to work with, and would like to have the option to keep or change their current co-partner, they do their best to make successful partnership.

"I Don't Want to Step on Her Toes": First Year Co-Teaching

When the co-teachers were thinking about beginning a new co-relationship, they experienced a variety of feelings such as being worried, nervous, and excited. Although Emma and Mary are in their third year of co-teaching, they remembered how in their first year they struggled to determine their roles and boundaries and not to get involved in something that is the other person's responsibility. Emma said her experience provided her with the ability to co-teach effectively, but her major concern was working with unfamiliar person.

I had done co-teaching before. You're always a little worried or nervous what the person you're going to be with is like. That's the hard part. That's any job, working with somebody new. So to me, who I was working with was the part [I was worried about]. I knew I could co-teach. The only hesitation I had was, what was she going to be like? Other than that, I thought I could do it.

Mary said working with a new person was difficult when first started until they find out a balance that makes both of them comfortable. Mary said:

When you first start, it's kind of like you don't want to step on the other person's toes. You don't want to offend them and you're still trying to figure out what's your role and figure out those boundaries. What's my job? What's her job? What kind of roles are we each going to play? So it wasn't as easy when we first started. But now I think we're a lot more comfortable together.

In the same way, this is the first year Emma was co-teaching with Jane and both teachers were still experienced feelings of difficulty. Emma stated "I'm still trying to figure it out with Jane. We're still kind of new at it. It's only been a month so we're just trying to feel each other out." Similarly, Jane had a good experience for three years with a prior co-teacher in kindergarten and was wondering if her new relationship with Emma will be similar. She explained:

My previous co-teacher and I could almost finish each other's sentences. Our brain waves were right. I was kind of worried if I was going to be able to do the same with Emma or would it take time.

According to Emma, one of the best ways to resolve such issues and to improve the relationship when starting a new co-teaching partnership is to spend some personal time with each other:

We didn't do anything this summer together. It would be nice to do something outside of school together. Go to lunch together. She's big in exercising. Do something together so that we can build our relationship that way. That would be nice. I would like to do that.

On the other hand, Emma and Jane felt their prior experiences of co-teaching had created a beneficial effect on their first year co-teaching relationship. Observational field notes illustrated how they brought up their experiences during their everyday co-instruction, and how these experiences influenced their daily interaction to be comfortable and natural. Both teachers were actively involved during morning's instruction and activities. They both took turns interjecting ideas and checking for understanding in large and small

groups' instructions. For example, one-day in a large-group instruction Jane was reading

aloud from the reading book (*Mrs. Nelson is Missing*). When she got to the point that

Mrs. Nelsen is not coming to school, she stopped reading and ask students, "What do you

predict?" She and Emma circulated around the room checking students' understanding

and helping them predict what will happen. Jane continued to read and ask students for

predictions while Emma was circulating to help students make some predictions. Jane

then stopped at one last point and gave students oral instructions to write down in their

writing log about what they predict will happen. At that same time, Emma wrote the

instruction on board. She wrote down "I predict…" and asked students to write that down

in their writing log.

Emma experienced feeling of being welcomed when she co-instructs with Jane.

She said Jane's experience with co-teaching had provided her with the skills to give up

control and allow someone else to share aspects of the classroom. She explained

> Jane has had so much experience co-teaching that it's really easy for her. If
> somebody didn't I can see that you'd need to talk about "Okay, I'll do this part,
> you do that." But because she's had so much experience, it's really not that hard
> to jump in and she works well with it. Our month and a half together has been
> great. She's fun, she does fun things. She doesn't take it too seriously.

In addition, Jane felt she started to slip into the rut of a routine from co-teaching with the

same person for three years and is looking forward to a new relationship. She said she

was motivated to experience a new co-teaching relationship with Emma. She added "I

was excited to have somebody new. I think new is always good. Sometimes I was

feeling in kindergarten that I was kind of getting into a rut and I needed a change."

The data indicated that whether participants have previous co-teaching experience or not, working with a new co-partner evoked anxiety, although finding ways to work with new people was Emma, Jane, and Mary's fundamental tool for building a positive co-teaching relationship.

"We kind of Figured it out": Developing a Better Relationship

Mary and Emma had developed their co-teaching relationship over the last two years. This year is their third year co-teaching together, and as the years progressed, Mary and Emma had learned about one another and how to work together in the same classroom. They know each other so well that they finish each other's sentences. For example, in a joint interview with Mary and Emma, Mary spoke about how their commitment to come early every morning to have time to communicate was a big challenge, although it contributed to the building of their collaborative working relationship. She stated: "Like you said, if you're just going off the fly, winging it, then it's a lot harder to …" Emma then finished Mary's sentence by saying "Make it flow." Mary also added:

> I think the fact that we've taught together for several years now…makes a big difference. Emma and I can sometimes kind of read each other's minds. I know when to jump in or she knows when to just jump in.

Mary explained that one of the skills she learned from co-teaching with Emma for more than two years was giving up control of class activities and allowing Emma to carry out teaching tasks at which she is particularly competent. Mary said that it was difficult to switch from being a control person to let go and let someone else do the classroom activities differently. She stated:

As our relationship has grown, it has gotten easier for me to release some of that responsibility. I like things a certain way so it's hard for me sometimes when other people do things differently. I like to see them my way. Not that anybody else's way is wrong. It has gotten much easier as our relationship has grown. I'm perfectly comfortable with having her carry out any tasks.

Observational field notes captured how Emma and Mary enjoyed spending time together. They were observed walking together to the conference room on Monday and Thursday and walking together to teachers' meeting on Wednesday. When Emma was done working with Jane for reading, she would meet Mary for lunch. They would then walk together to the kitchen, warm up their lunch, and go to the classroom to eat their lunch and talk together. They both came early and they both walked with students to the play yard every day. Emma explained how she and Mary like to spend personal time together: "She and I get to see each other. We're both taking Masters' classes so I always ask her if I have questions. She and I text each other, so does Jane. I just enjoy spending time with her, but you can tell that too."

The data indicated that Emma and Mary's have developed a better understanding as the years progressed. As they spent a more than a year co-teaching together, they got used to each other, became comfortable with each other, enjoyed spending time together, and grew better relationship.

"That's a Key": Teachers' Teaching Style and Philosophy

The three teachers commented that in some ways they have common philosophies and teaching styles, and in other ways each one has her own different personality. They also agreed that both their similarities and differences had contributed to the success of their co-teaching relationship. The shared belief that all students can learn has supported

an effective relationship; however, each teacher has a different belief of how to reach this goal. Emma stated that developing a relationship between students and their teacher is the most important factor that helps all students learn. She said "If kids know that you like them and that you are here to help them, all the other[s] – reading, writing and math – fall into place." Mary also stated that creating opportunities for all students including differentiated instruction to reach every level of learning in the classroom is what facilitates learning for all students. She said

> I guess the main thing I believe as a teacher is that every student can learn. Of course, you look out in our classroom and everybody is at their own level. I think along with every student learns is that you kind of have to push them at their level because you don't want them falling behind or you don't want the kids who are already ahead to be bored. So it's important to differentiate your teaching for all your students, not just the struggling learners. I think all the students need some of that differentiation.

In addition, Jane believes that if she employs good classroom management and knows the curriculum, she can reach all students' needs. She stated:

> The main thing with the core of good teaching is …some people might disagree with me, but I always feel that when you have good classroom management then the learning will take place. If it's complete chaos in your room, then it's going to be really hard. There's always going to be those students that can't handle that chaos. So I think that having good classroom management, knowing the curriculum. Right now I'm taking my stuff home every night. First grade is totally different than kindergarten. So I'm taking all of my things home, going through my lessons to make sure that I'm doing what I need to be doing. This is my first year in first grade.

In a joint interview, Emma and Mary agreed that although having similar teaching philosophies can build a better co-teaching relationship, their different teaching styles can be complementary to each other and facilitate learning for all students. For example,

Mary reported that while she and Emma have similar classroom management styles, she

believes their different teaching styles contribute to students' success. She states:

> There's two people helping all the kids out. I think it's beneficial because our teaching styles are similar but they're also a little bit different. The special ed students, especially at the reading time … they would get to meet with her in reading group and then also with me in reading group. So they get to have two reading groups every single day and they get to have two teachers with different styles. Sometimes they just help pick up on something if they have extra support with the teacher.

Emma added that not only students with disabilities can benefit from having extra

support and different styles of instruction, students who struggle but are not identified to

receive special education services also get support and benefit from both teachers. She

said:

> Then those outliers –the kids that aren't identified but could use the extra help – in other classrooms they'd have to be identified as special needs to get the additional services or reading recovery. In here I can just grab them and put them with a group of lower students that are working with the same skills. So it helps the gen ed kids too who may be struggling.

The three teachers reported similar beliefs about the importance of collaborative learning

and having students help each other. They all agreed that students helping their peers

learn is a powerful teaching technique. Jane commented that "when the gen ed and the

special needs kids are together, they can benefit each other." She believes that general

education students can help give timely social reminders to their peers with disabilities

with no disruption to the lesson cycle. She described the effect that she has seen one

general student have on another student with special needs,

> You probably haven't noticed. But like with Sam, Tom is wonderful with Sam. Whenever he sees that Sam is starting to start with a melt own like he did this afternoon, I noticed here Tom is just rubbing his back, just trying to calm him

down. He was saying some things. I thought, 'Okay, Tom has that under control so I'm just going to walk away' and have the kids deal with it.'

Emma and Mary recognized peer models play an important role in addressing

misunderstandings and clarifying misconceptions among students while co-teaching.

Emma commented:

> A lot of times we pair them up with somebody who's got the concept. So then they don't always have to be stuck with us. They like to work with partners. They don't always want to work with the teacher. So that's what we try to do.

Mary stated:

> Sometimes kids are more comfortable learning from each other. Like with our math games we always have partner time. At reading time we do 'Turn to your partner and tell your partner this.' Sometimes I think it's just not as intimidating. I can easily talk to my partner, whereas if I have to share in front of the whole class it's a little more intimidating for some kids. It just gives them time to learn with their peers.

Mary also described how she paired one of her higher achieving students with a student

who has trouble with one to one counting to help him with counting,

> David was purposely paired with John (John is one of our highest students.) Sometimes they get confused on the game. He has trouble sometimes with one to one counting, so John is really kind about saying, 'Hey, let's count again. That wasn't quite right.'

Mary added that students were not just helping in learning, they were also helping in

some classroom management. They have been patient with their peers and helping direct

their attention to the lesson. She explained:

> It's interesting. Sometimes kids will find the flaws in kids and pick at them. I've got about three kids in both rooms that just kind of noticed, 'You know what? I can tell he can use a little of my help' instead of being mean about it, he'll turn and say, 'This is what page we're on' or 'Turn your book to here.'" It's nice to see kids that know that it's okay if they help people and it feels good to help people. It has been nice this year.

In addition, Jane shares Emma's philosophy of teaching that co-teachers must always be

thinking "what is best for all students." She stated "we have the same philosophy of

teaching and I think that's a key too when you're doing co-teaching – that you have the

same philosophy. Philosophy is how we think that students learn best." She related that

having similar beliefs and values helps both shape their co-teaching relationship in a

short time and benefits all students. She explained:

> I think we're both very open to new suggestions. I'm very surprised how quickly
> we were able to just bounce off ideas. This is like our 17th day of school and I
> think we're doing an awesome job so far. I just feel like we're rocking it. I just
> feel like we're in sync and we're benefiting all of the students.

Jane and Emma also believe that the best way to help students learn is to make learning

fun. Emma stated that fun is a key characteristic of her teaching and that Jane "is (also)

fun, she does fun things." She stated:

> I like to do fun, wild stuff. Sometimes there's different stuff I like to do, like
> messing up the letters or making the animal sounds or things like that. I think the
> kids enjoy coming to class. I hope they do. They tell me that they like being here
> and they like school. I try to make it fun. If I'm excited, then they are excited
> about the learning.

Observational field notes captured how Emma and Jane did fun strategies to make

learning take place. One specific example of this was at the writing time when they were

explaining the concept of using freezing and unfreezing strategies to write a story. They

first played a song called "Fried Ham" and both teachers danced with students to let them

move their body and get refreshed. On the Promethean board Jane displayed her story

with freezing characters which make all pages look the same. In a fun way, Emma

explained to students that Jane needs their help to unfreeze the pictures by reading the

sentences and help Jane add more details to the pictures. Jane explained, it was "very active, but that the students are engaged in learning and they want to try to do their best."

Emma described her personality as "open to work with just about anybody," and how her flexibility helped her while co-teaching with two teachers who have two different styles. She explained:

> Jane's tough on the kids when they need to be tough. She doesn't yell. Some people are just constantly yelling. Mary is not like that and neither is Jane. They're both different styles though. She's a lot more laid back with the noise. Mary likes it a lot quieter. I just have to remember when I'm at. At writing time, it got a little loud and Jane brought it down. But to me, writing sometimes is a loud time. Kids are talking, they're reading their stories.

With both their similarities and differences in their personalities and philosophies of teaching, co-teaching allows students to experience different personalities and allows teachers to help all students succeed. This collaboration also allowed teachers to extend the range of their practice by mixing multiple styles into their teaching and also strengthen their co-teaching relationship.

"The other person kind of makes you stronger": Growing from One Another

The three teachers reported that co-teaching has allowed them to learn from each other and grow as professionals, thus influencing their relationship. Their stories reported through interviews and classroom observations were those of professional growth and personal support. In individuals and joint interviews, both Emma and Mary spoke about being better teachers and learning from each other. When they were asked to identify what they have learned from each other, Emma stated "Mine would be specific math skills I would say. Being a better math teacher." Mary stated "Mine would be behavior

management. Skills that you can use for those difficult students that have a lot of behavior problems."

Emma credited much of her math teaching techniques to her relationship with Mary. As a result of working so closely with Mary, she recognized that her math teaching needed improvement and explored new ideas to make her teaching much stronger. She explained:

> I learned that I wasn't as strong at math that I thought I was. I learned that the way I was teaching math maybe wasn't best for kids. I was teaching it just by the facts, not putting it into practice. Now watching Mary teach the math, it's made it a lot more concrete for me of different ways I could do things better. Math has been something I've been working on.

Emma reflected on how working with Mary allowed her to watch her different teaching strategies and methods. She said "it really helps me see 'Oh, I should try that.' That's a part I really enjoy." Especially in the aspects of teaching in which she was not particularly comfortable, Emma preferred to be "more reserved and really [sit] back and kind of [watch] instead of jump in as much as" she usually does. She explained, "That's how it was the first year. Everything was new to me the first year. I would say the first year I did not as much jumping in as I do now because I was just so new to it and I didn't want to mess it up. I would say that was true of the first year."

Emma was observed being careful before she joined Mary the instruction in one math lesson. While Mary was giving directions and examples in the Promethean board to clarify the concept of Double Compare in a whole group instruction, Emma was sitting with one student trying to help him focus on the instruction. After a while, she went to the board and played one example with Mary to help clarify the concept before kids got

to work in their own. She reported it was very helpful to be with another teacher in the classroom. Emma commented, "when you're in a room by yourself you don't see anybody else teaching."

Emma also has learned how to improve lesson delivery from watching Mary and Jane. She stated:

> It's nice to see how someone else does it. You can read the lesson plans from a book, especially math, like four times and say, 'What am I doing?' But once Mary showed me, I'm like, 'Oh, I get it. That's easy.' The same thing with being in Jane's room this year. I'm learning how to do things differently too. That's the thing that teachers don't get to do very often. Most teachers don't like other teachers watching them. But if people are just there to learn, then it doesn't affect it.

Emma also offered to provide mentoring to other teachers who want to co-teach, but no one has asked her yet. She stated, "The third grade teacher came in and talked to me today. She's doing co-teaching and she's never done it. She'll call me or email me and that's how I provide it. But it's not like she comes in the room and watches us. That's not how it's been yet."

Mary repeated Emma's impression of improved classroom strategies. She has learned from Emma different strategies to help students with behavior issues and applied what she has learned to her other students to better manage her classroom. Mary stated

> I think the major thing that I've learned is …I have struggled with students who have behavior needs and we've had a lot of tough behavior kids in our classroom. Emma is really good with those kids. I have been able to watch her and see different strategies that she's used to help those kids. I think my management has definitely improved from having those tough kids. You learn what works and what doesn't work and then you can use it with other students as well. Really, when it comes down to it if your management isn't good the kids aren't going to learn because there's just too many distractions and they're too off task, they're not engaged. That's a big part of teaching – your management. I learned a lot about that in co-teaching.

Mary also believes that she and Emma have become better instructors as their co-teaching relationship developed. She said, "I've learned a lot from Emma. I think she's learned a lot from me too, which is good." Mary described how their first year they were struggling, and how they supported each other to help strengthen their weaknesses. She said:

> I know when she first started, she wasn't as comfortable with the math. I was able to help her out with that a lot. With the behavior stuff she was able to help me out a lot. It's just kind of a give and take relationship.

Mary explained that in her first year of co-teaching she struggled with a management system which had a negative impact on students' learning and how she has improved her management strategies as a result of her effective relationship with Emma. She explained:

> To be honest, my first few years I really struggled with management system. Not that my class was crazy or anything. I spent a lot of time with the behavior stuff and putting out little fires all day long instead of teaching. I just think where would my students have been, how much smarter would they have been if I hadn't had to do that constantly all day every day. The past couple years has been pretty smooth. You can see if there's a problem we just take care of it and we move on. Our main goal is to keep teaching.

Mary reported that Emma has helped her to increase her belief in how critical it is to provide students an opportunity to physically move in the classroom in order to keep their brains engaged in learning. She stated:

> One of the main things that I've really amped up since I started with her is that you gotta get kids moving up and down and they gotta do different things. Like she said earlier, they can only sit for so long and then they gotta get up and move.

Observational field notes supported Mary's statement. For example, Emma was observed

taking the initiative to give students the opportunity to get up and move in the two

classrooms she works in.

Mary explained how she is very comfortable allowing Emma to see aspects of her

teaching in which she is not particularly comfortable. She stated that such observation

will allow Emma to support her as well as to improve their co-teaching relationship. She

said:

> I think we brought it up yesterday that we can learn from each other. If she sees
> me doing something that I'm not particularly comfortable with, she can help me
> out and she can give me ideas. Sometimes she'll just jump in and say something
> or start teaching and then I can learn from her. So that's one of the really good
> things. Even if you have areas that you're not particularly strong with teaching,
> the other person kind of makes you stronger.

Similar findings were documented during Jane's interviews and in her morning

classroom observations. While this is her first year co-teaching with Emma, Jane

reported, "I have good ideas, but I also can learn more ideas. Even though this is my 25th

year, I've learned a lot from Emma in just the 17 days that I've worked with her." Jane

mentioned that she likes it when Emma joined her afternoon lessons on some days, since

she feels uncomfortable with math. She believes Emma can help her with new ideas and

different strategies. Jane stated, "I know that I can always improve. I am always willing

to hear ways that I can improve." Jane was observed seeking support from Emma during

a writing activity. Jane wrote a word in the board and asked Emma to check if her

spelling was correct.

Jane believes the opportunity to work with a special education partner through her years of co-teaching has helped her become a stronger teacher. She has learned that patience is a key to better co-teaching relationship. She explained:

> I've learned patience because special education teachers probably have the most patient personalities of anybody I've even been around. They've taught me how to be patient and not jump in right away. To kind of step back, look at the situation to help what is best.

Jane also shared her experience with previous co-teacher and how her instruction strategies have developed as a result of co-teaching with her. She explained:

> I think I do a better job of giving directions. I learned this from my second co-teacher that I worked with. She would just pick some kids to repeat what the directions were just to make sure that my directions came across to everyone. She would always choose a high, a medium and a low. She would always choose one of her special needs kids. She'd always start with a high who always is paying attention and she goes, 'If they don't know it, I know that I have to do the directions differently.' This way it gives the special needs child, 'Okay, I heard it from this person. I heard it again from this person.' So then when I call on them, they've already heard it twice so hopefully they can repeat it then.

When teachers were asked what advice they would give to teachers who want to co-teach, the three teachers stressed the importance to give it a try, experience co-teaching, ask questions and accepts others' ideas. Emma strongly stated that teachers who are considering co-teaching need to first observe a co-taught classroom to see if it is a good fit for them. She explained:

> I think a lot of observing of it. You can read it out of the book and think you've got it figured out. But once you actually come and see what it looks like, there's really no other way to do it besides coming and watching. Or give it a try. If we had a teacher in here that wanted to give it a try, I'd step out and let them try it. Just actual practice because some people don't like it. For some people, it's just not for them. And that's okay. If you're a real control person and like things your way and it's gotta fit in this way, it's probably not for you. You'd have to have the disposition "Oh okay, I can go with the flow. I can use other people's

ideas. I don't have to be in control." Otherwise, it would be more difficult. Experience and a flexible attitude would be the advice I would give.

Jane confirmed Emma's advice and added they need to know that there is a lot to learn in a co-taught classroom, and the only way to improve their co-teaching relationship is to welcome new ideas and different opinions. She advised new co-teachers,

> To be open minded…especially for new teachers coming in, there's lots to learn. Even somebody that has taught for 25 years, I can still learn new things. Sometimes the first year teachers are afraid to ask because they think it's a weakness. It's not a weakness. They think 'this is how it needs to go'. Maybe somebody who has more experience, maybe a co-teacher will come in and say, 'Let's do this.' Please be open about that.

The advice of the three teachers shows the need for an open-minded attitude and ability to learn from others.

In a unique situation where Emma, the special education teacher, was working between two similar grade classrooms connected with a little office area, the three teachers were working like a team; they all shared ideas and teaching strategies, and grew from one another. Observational field notes illustrated how they all worked together as a teaching team. In the early morning before students arrived, the three teachers were preparing for the day. Jane and Mary were in their desks checking the day activities on their computers, and Emma was in the little office area preparing for in classwork and getting some handouts for the para-educator to use with students with disabilities at rotation time. At this time, the two doors for the little office area were opened and the teachers were able to see and hear each other, and had a chance to ask each other questions, seek support, and exchange ideas. For example, in one morning Jane was having difficulty with a reading program in the computer. She asked Mary "How this

program work?' Mary first gave her oral directions, but Jane did not understand, so Mary just walked through the little office to Jane's classroom and showed her how it works in her computer.

Emma, Mary, and Jane have improved their quality of teaching as a result of working so closely with other professional educators. They have learned how to address each other's weaknesses and combine their strengths. They have learned new ideas and teaching techniques. They have learned the relationships they build together are not only good for building stronger teachers; they are also the foundation of collaboration that can raise students' achievement.

In summary, one theme emerged in response to the first research question regarding how co-teachers interact and communicate with one another in co-taught classrooms. Within this theme, Emma, Jane, and Mary expressed the importance of giving teachers the choice on whether they co-teach, which is a key for relationship success. The three teachers also described how they initially struggled to define roles and limitations until they became accustomed to each other after a year or more of co-teaching together. Although they believe it is important to have similar co-teaching strategies, they did an excellent job in merging their different personalities to make a beneficial impact on the learners. Finally, they all acknowledged the benefits of coming to school every day and having a partner with different opinions and ideas on their professional growth.

The second research question attempted to address the impact of roles and responsibilities adopted in co-taught classrooms on the co-teaching relationship. One of

the responsibilities, setting roles and responsibilities, appeared in the analysis of data

from teachers joint and individual's interviews, classroom documents, and observational

field notes. This consisted of three sub-themes that will be discussed in the following

section.

<div align="center">Roles and Responsibilities</div>

The practice of co-teaching had effects on teachers' instructional delivery,

methods and strategies. This addressed the value of teamwork, the advantage of sharing

leadership, and the process of sharing instructional duties and responsibilities.

"You're not really on your own": Shared Responsibility

Participants explained how in co-teaching relationships they not only learned how

to appreciate each other's personality and teaching philosophy and how to develop a

system that makes each teacher effective in the classroom, but how to value of working

together. Jane, Emma, and Mary mentioned how showing their partner that they value her

and her relationship made not only their relationship stronger, but also made a direct

effect on students' achievement. Jane explained her belief that Emma has benefited

students in the classroom, and how she let Emma know that her action in the classroom

that she mattered. She stated:

> I think it's (the value of working together) very beneficial for the students as well
> as the teachers. One of the things I noticed with co-teaching is sometimes if I
> can't get a concept across to the students, sometimes another person can do that.
> So that's an advantage of co-teaching. If I can't get it across, maybe Emma can
> or the other way around. If Emma is doing something and it seems like the kids
> aren't getting it, maybe I have another way. You can kind of tell with some of the
> things that we've done. We kind of go back and forth.

Mary spoke about the great value of having another person teaching with her in the
classroom. She said working together resulted in more students being served. Mary also
explained that Emma when was not with her, she experienced difficulty supporting all
students in the classroom. She stated:

> It's just nice to have another person. Teaching is kind of unpredictable. You
> never know what's going to happen. Even like today. Emma wasn't in here at all
> today. So it's like I hate Wednesdays because I don't get to see her at all. I never
> know if one of the kids is going to start having a hard time with something. I'm
> only one person. At math today, I could clearly tell. We were doing the problems
> up here and there were about three or four kids that weren't getting it right. They
> didn't have the right number on their paper. I'm only one person, I can only help
> so many kids at once. So it's just nice when she's here because I know that more
> students are going to get served. I can pull one or two; she can pull one or two.

Emma also valued the benefits of working together in keeping the learning alive in the
classroom. She stated:

> You can keep the group moving forward too. If you stop every time those three
> kids need help, then you would never move forward. So we'll take turns. One of
> us will move it forward and the other one will be like, "Okay, let's you and I try
> that again." You're not on your own. That's what I really enjoy about it – you're
> not really on your own.

Another value of working together in one classroom was the ability to reduce teaching
stress. Emma and Mary both commented they liked coming to work and having second
person available to support whenever there was a need. Emma said that she felt less
stressed working with Mary that she did not need to always be fully prepared. She stated:

> I'm glad when Mary is here. It's really stressful when she's not here because I
> know what to expect. I know that I'm going to do this and it makes my day a lot
> less stressful knowing that she's here. I know how she reacts to things and she's
> always prepared for things and that takes a lot of pressure too when you're not the
> one that always has to be prepared.

Mary valued her co-teaching experience with Emma in the previous year when they were having difficult students. Mary explained how having Emma with her in the classroom helped her manage the classroom. She said:

> Our class was very difficult last year. There were times in the classroom where we didn't feel safe. It was just nice to have another person in here. Last year we had students who needed to leave the classroom very often. One of us or Miss Elaina probably left the classroom 10-15 times a day. If I'm in here by myself I cannot leave. I don't have the option of leaving. If Emma is in here and there's a student who needs a break …sometimes they just get so escalated that they have to leave. It's nice that there's somebody here that can take that student and I can keep teaching. Sometimes you call the office for help and there's not anybody that can help…. it's nice having a second person.

The ability for the teacher to have someone to support her was another perceived value to Mary. She commented that she liked how it was easier when Emma participated with her in all students' conferences. Mary described how students' conferences was different this year that Emma was in between two rooms, and the priority for her was to be with students with disabilities, and when Mary would need her to back her up in explaining difficulties a student going through to parents. Mary stated

> This year is a little bit different because she's between two rooms. Her priority for the conferences would be to make sure that she sees the identified students and their parents at conference time. Then past that, I would want her to be in on a conference that I could anticipate might be difficult, if a student is struggling or having behavior issues or things like that. Sometimes it's nice to have a second person to kind of back you up. Sometimes parents get defensive. Like when you tell them what their child is doing at school, right away they're like, 'Oh no no, my student wouldn't do that.' So it's nice to have a second person say, 'Well, this is what's happening' and kind of help back you up on that. So she'll divide her time between all the students. She has 40 students this year so she obviously can't be at 40 conferences because they overlap. But she does participate in the conferences as well.

Observational field notes illustrated another value of working together in one classroom:

Jane was observed sharing students' successes with Emma, while Emma was listening

with interest to her to show her that she valued her and her success. For example, at reading rotation, Jane was working with three students with disability at the table. She was excited that students successfully copied the sentence (look to my shoes) in their individual boards. When they done, Jane told Emma to "look what they have done!", and they both cheer for that great job.

The perceived benefits of sharing the classroom included supporting students' achievements, reducing teaching stress, backing up one another, and sharing students' success. These benefits were viewed by the participants as a great way for enriching a co-teaching relationship.

"She is everybody's teacher… I am everybody's teacher": Shared leadership in the classroom

Data revealed that co-teachers in this study were sharing leadership equally in the classroom. Emma and Jane were observed starting together on time and presenting together at the beginning of literacy block. For example, the observed literacy block in Emma and Jane's morning classroom started with students entering, putting their backpack in the locker room, selecting their lunch type on the smart board, and finding their way to their seats. While Emma went to the school bus parking lot to walk with Adam who is not ready yet to walk by himself to the classroom, Jane gave activities to the students who needed to finish them, and the rest of students got to work in their own. To start, Jane put on some music and both teachers asked students to take their book box and sit in their spot in the carpet or chairs. Emma or Jane began with asking students "does anyone has something to share with us?" Then Emma pronounced the letter they

would practice for the day, and read a short story including words which started with that letter. During this time Jane presented an exercise sheet on the smart board that included words has the practiced letter in the beginning, middle, or end. While Emma did the activity with students in the smart board, Jane circulated among students, answering their individual questions. This morning routine confirmed a sense of parity as both teachers worked equally together.

During the math period observation, Emma and Mary also achieved leadership equality in their co-taught classroom. Both teachers ate their lunch together in the classroom, and subsequently went together to bring students back from lunch. When students entered the room they returned their lunch boxes to their backpacks and went to sit in the carpet. During this time both Mary and Emma began with the large group instruction. They both took turns explaining and giving examples to students on how to add two numbers through an exercise called "five in a row" in which they threw two dice, count the dots in both dice and circle the number they got on the smart board to make five in a row. After several examples they moved to one-to-one model where each student got to work with a partner and both teachers circulated around the room and help students. When they finished, both teachers lined up the students and walked with them to physical education class, and then walked together to first grade teachers' meeting. This example illustrated how Emma and Mary achieved parity in their co-teaching relationship.

Classroom documents and observational field nots also illustrated other signs that parity was applied to co-teachers' relationship. For example, Emma's name was shown on both classrooms doors, both teachers' names were written on the students' "welcome

to first grade" card, in the two classrooms both teachers were observed circulating through the classroom assisting students and providing feedback, Emma was planning together with each teacher, and was starting out co-teaching with both Jane and Mary in each observed day. On the other hand, when reviewing take home documents, many of these documents were signed with only the general education teacher' name such as tack home folder, grade report, online activities descriptions, ClassDojo, and other take home documents. As Emma was working between two classrooms, her primary responsibility was for students with special needs. This was clear when she took these students in reading rotation to her room for small group instruction.

Another way parity was applied to the teachers' co-teaching relationship is the fact that students viewed both teachers as equal partners in the co-taught classroom. Jane and Mary shared how they believed their students saw Emma as an equal partner in the classroom. Jane explained how it is essential for students to see them both as teachers. She said "it's really important for kids to know that we are both teachers. Emma isn't the one just for a few friends. She is everybody's teacher. Same way with me. I am everybody's teacher." Jane commented that even students she had this year that were her students last year in kindergarten still see Emma as their teacher too. She explained

> I don't know if you know this, but my class right now I had in kindergarten. So they came up with me. I think that's why it has looked a lot more in control. They know what my expectations are so they do it.

She continued "they don't always come to me. Even though since I had them last year they feel more comfortable with me. But they will go to Emma." In like manner, Mary believed she and Emma were teachers for all students, but she is not sure students view

them as equal teachers since Emma is only in the classroom half of the day. She

explained how in the previous year when she and Emma were co-teaching all day long,

students saw them both equally. She stated:

> It's not just like 'these are my students and these are her students.' They're all of
> our students. This year is a little bit different because you're only in here half the
> time. In previous years if you say, "Who's your teacher?" half of the kids would
> say Mrs. Emma and half the kids would say Mrs. Mary. We're both equals. It's
> not like I'm the main teacher and she's my helper.

However, what Jane and Mary believed regarding how students view Emma was

different than reality. It was evident from Emma's practices in both classrooms that

students viewed Mary and Jane as their primary teachers. For example, at reading

rotation, Emma pulled the identified students from the literacy co-taught classroom to her

room for reading instruction, while Mary remained with rest of the students in the

classroom. Emma stated that she pulled them out because she liked to do loud and fun

activities with students, and that was distracting in the co-taught classroom. Emma

mentioned that if she co-taught with Jane next year, she would think about not pulling

them from the classroom. She stated:

> Right now, I'm taking the kids out for reading, which you've seen. I'm going to
> see how that works. Next year, that would be the only thing – whether to take
> them out of the classroom or not for that reading instruction. You kind of noticed
> how loud that group gets in our room. I like to do fun, wild stuff. Sometimes
> there's different stuff I like to do, like messing up the letters or making the animal
> sounds or things like that. That's really distracting in the classroom. But if we're
> together again next year I'd like to decide if I should take them out or should not
> remove them from the general ed classroom.

Another observed practice that made students see Emma as a teacher for only

specific students was that four students, two from Jane's classroom and two from Mary's

classroom, attended with Emma the reading block in the morning in Jane's classroom and

moved with her to the second classroom for math instruction in the afternoon. Having specific students associated with the presence of Emma lead some of the students to see her as only those students' teacher.

Another fact that reflect the co-teachers' parity in the classroom was seeing both teachers as equal partner by the students' parents. While Jane said yes to the question, do you think parents see both of you as equal partner? Mary and Emma both agreed that was evident last year when they were co-teaching together all the day long, but this year, it was different because they co-taught only half of the day, since take-home documents do not contain Emma's name. Mary hoped parents view both of them as teachers. She explained:

> I would hope so. I honestly don't know. The model that we had last year, when both of us were in this classroom all day long, it was a little bit easier for parents to see us as equal partners because we both were here all the time. This year parents might view me more as the primary teacher because I'm the only one in here in the morning teaching their child. She's only here half the day. I guess I don't know how parents see it. I hope they would see it as equal, but I don't know.

Emma said in the previous year she was sure parents viewed her as a primary teacher, especially because Mary had maternity leave, and she was working with a substitute teacher. This year, she believed they saw her as a special education teacher supporting students with needs. Emma explained:

> I don't know about that one. Last year I'd say so. Last year was kind of unique because Mary had a baby last year. So I was more the lead teacher last year and then we had a substitute. When you're the substitute it's hard to know what to do so I just kind of jumped in. So then last year yes. This year probably not. I would say a lot of them think she's the teacher for those kids that need help. I would say so far that would be my opinion of what people would think. That could be wrong or right, but that would be my opinion right now.

Emma and Mary were both viewed as teachers when they were co-teaching all day long in the previous year. Once Emma's time was divided between Jane and Mary's classroom, teachers were not sure about what students and parents think of Emma; although it appears that students without disabilities see Mary as the primary teacher, and with disabilities see Emma as the primary teacher. Regardless of what students and their parents see, achieving leadership equality in the co-taught classroom has made their co-teaching relationship a little smoother.

"I'm happy to jump in": Determining who will do what

Data revealed that participants shared duties and responsibilities for instruction and classroom management through their co-teaching relationship. Emma and Mary were observed working jointly to introduce concepts, clarify the lesson content, and facilitate classroom management. During a math lesson, Mary showed the students how to add two numbers together using cards with pictures and numbers. She explained "the goal is to work in counting and adding." Mary and Emma then played the math game together to show students what to do in their work with a partner. Each teacher turned over two cards, picked the biggest number, and add the other number by counting the pictures on the card. Each one then wrote the number she got on the board and circled the larger number. The person who got the larger number kept the cards. During partner work time, both teachers circulated through the classroom assisting students and providing feedback. After five minutes Emma clapped her hands five times, a sign for everyone to stop working and return to the carpet, and all students repeated the five claps. Mary then said "raise your thumb up if you know the game, flip it to the side if you are not sure, and

thumb down if you don't know." To make every one pay attention to her, Emma asked

students to read her lips and whispered "take your math book" and "turn to blank page."

Emma then took her turn to lead, and she read a story with math problems to the large

group. Then students individually solved the problems in their math book, and both

teachers circulated around to assist students.

In a similar way, Emma and Jane were observed jointly involved during a writing

activity. Both teachers asked students to bring their writing sheet they were working on

through the week. Emma walked around students and picked three of their writing sheets.

Both teachers were standing in front of the students. Emma displayed the three sheets one

at a time using the classroom document camera, and students read their stories out loud

one at a time. When each student finished his or her story, together Emma and Mary

acted each story out to help students see where they should add more details to make their

writing make sense.

When Emma and Jane were asked "How did they decide to act the stories out?"

Emma said:

We kind of looked at the plans this morning and we were kind of like, "What can
we do to really get the kids to understand?" A lot of their writing is, "I like this. I
went to here." Trying to get that writing pushed further, to tell us some feelings,
tell us what happened. Like we were acting silly about not knowing what toys
they were playing with. Just that kind of stuff. Writing doesn't always have to be
so tedious. It's something that a lot of kids don't like to do, so trying to make it
fun and think "Oh, I can add …this happened" and it's like a little spark, "Oh, I
could add this." That's kind of why we did that?

Jane described how they decided to act the stories out. She stated it started in the morning

when they reviewed students' writing and found out they were not putting enough details

to make sense of what they are trying to tell. She explained:

> We were looking at this and we were saying, "Okay, what should we do?" I had noticed that some of the kids were not putting a whole lot of detail in. Sometimes when they read their story and then have somebody act it out they kind of get an idea "oh, this is what I'm missing." I noticed that when we were going through, a lot of them were putting a lot more detail into it. Or when I would try to redirect them …like with David, I said, "But what were you playing with Daniel?" He goes, "Hide and seek." He didn't get defensive like he usually does. I think it was because he saw what we were doing and so he was able to actually transfer that into his own writing.

Teachers shared the responsibility and leadership in the classroom by taking turns leading the instruction and assisting students. They both teach and they both assist. In both classrooms, teachers divided their responsibilities in which one person teaches specific class content to the whole group and the other supported students' needs. The teachers would subsequently switch their roles. Mary explained how they implemented the one teach, one support approach. She stated: "Kind of one of us teaching, one of us assisting and then jumping in and switching. But that's pretty typical of what our day looks like."

Jane reported that her classroom instruction style involved doing whole group co-teaching instruction with Emma followed by small group instruction. She explained students in need of individual assistance went with the paraprofessional to the office area between the two classrooms to have a quiet environment. She stated:

> We start with the large group. We go into the small groups. Then if we see that a child is struggling, like some of the kids …I don't know if you noticed that Miss Elaina will go into the little office area. Those are kids that are really struggling with writing we had noticed. They just needed a more quiet environment with not so much going on. They have a lot of attention problems. So this way she can keep them on task and help them with the skills that they need.

Mary's description of her classroom instruction style coincided with Jane's style. She stated:

> I'd say about 30% is whole group and probably the most of that after that is small group. Or even one-on-one individual time. We try to break up that carpet time because you lose them. Their attention just drops after about 10 minutes. Then you gotta get up and move. I would say some information has to be given in large group and then it's break into small groups (parallel teaching) and then you can still see who from there is not getting it and needs more. So that's kind of how I'd say.

Emma expressed different feelings because she works with two teachers. She believed her role is clearer in Mary' classroom that she has worked with her for two years. She explained:

> This year is just different because I'm between two rooms. So that's a little bit different for us. Other than that, I feel like we're kind of in the groove. We know where to jump in, where to meet. Especially with math, who's going to need a little more of this or how we can change it to be better for each student. Other than that, just getting used to being between two rooms is kind of different for me.

Another area where participants shared duties and responsibilities was working as a team in arranging the classroom at the beginning of school year. Emma supported both Mary and Jane in preparing the classrooms for students' first day of school. She stated that she "worked on getting the room ready. Especially Jane since she was new to 1st grade."

In their joint interviews, Mary and Emma described how they arranged their classroom together. Mary said it was her duty to prepare the classroom because she is the general education teacher, but Emma was always welling to help. She stated: "I feel like I may do a bit more of the preparations since I am the gen ed teacher but Emma is great about helping with anything or purchasing supplies we need." Mary explained how they both change the arrangement of the room to better manage it. She said:

> We change it each year, yeah. My small group people used to be in the back of the room. But that was hard because I was on the outside of the tables. So I couldn't always see what the kids were doing. So I like it up here because I can

have a little bit more eagle eye. I can see what all the kids are doing a little bit better I think.

Emma added: "We change the desks around quite a bit too." Mary then explained the reason they decided to change the teachers' tables' location this year because it was very loud last year when their tables were on the same side. She stated:

> One of the things that was difficult was our two tables. Mine was in the back and hers was on that wall. They were pretty close so it got to be kind of noisy. She was talking and her students were talking, I was talking and my students were talking. It was a little bit noisier.

Emma added that they both agreed it was loud last year and both requested the change. She said, "We both did. We had some kids that had loud voices. I have a student this year that I'm like, 'Okay, take it down.' We could just tell. I don't know who said it, but we both agreed that it was too loud." Finally, Mary concluded:

> The hard thing is it looks like we have a nice big classroom, but the carpet takes up a lot of space. So we really don't have a lot of ways that we can arrange the classroom. We have the computers so there's only certain ways the tables will fit. I think there's three or four ways we can arrange the room and we're kind of stuck with those.

Data also revealed that participants all share responsibilities for determining what to teach, what teaching strategies to use, and which part of the lesson each one will teach. Mary expressed differences in how they were dividing their responsibilities in the current year compared to their first year co-teaching. She explained in the past they decided which part of the lesson each one will teach before the instruction time, but new they feel more comfortable to teach as a team and just jump in when needed. She stated:

> At the beginning, our first year, we would decide, "You teach part of the lesson and I'll teach this part of the lesson." But as we got more comfortable with each other …I'm comfortable with just jumping in. If I see that she's struggling or if I think that there's a way that I think I can explain it differently then I'm

comfortable jumping in and so is she. We just go with the flow and take turns going back and forth. I'm never offended if she starts the lesson or if she teaches. It is just a give and take. Like she said yesterday, we work with all the students. So if I see some students that need a little bit of help, I'll go over and help them and she'll teach or she'll go over and help them and I'll teach. We kind of just go back and forth.

Emma agreed that she was more comfortable to just jump in and lead the instruction with Mary more than Jane. She also explained how she was welling to exchange roles with other teachers. Emma stated:

Mary and I kind of have that down. Jane and I are trying to figure that out. We'll just kind of take each other's leads. Like we read a book the other day. She read a page, I read a page. That wasn't even said. We just kind of jumped in. I'm happy to let anybody jump in. I don't need to control it or be the lead teacher. I'm just as fine working with some kids that aren't paying attention or some things like that and then jumping in. I really don't need to be the lead teacher all the time.

Jane explained how she and Emma divided the lesson. She said: "We usually just kind of discuss, "What part do you think would be good for you to do? What do you think would be good for me to do?"

Although Emma and Jane divided the classroom duties equally, they collaboratively planned their instructional activities so they both were ready to cover the other's role in case that one of them was absent. According to Emma, teachers get pulled out from the classroom for several reasons, so, they both need to be comfortable with the different materials presented in the classroom. She stated:

She (Jane) always knows. Same thing if she leaves I know what to do. So it's never like one of us is the only one who knows what's going on. That happens all the time. Jane had to leave the other day for something. We get pulled out. We always know what the other one was going to be doing.

However, observational field notes captured that although teachers were dividing the classroom duties between them equally, they were not necessarily sharing knowledge. For example, Jane was a little bit confused when Emma was pulled from the classroom and she was left to figure out how to do the pretest that was Emma' responsibility. This was the first pretest in making connections for Jane because it was her first year in first grade, and they do not do such a pretest in kindergarten. Jane explained:

> This morning during the CFA, Emma was going to do that, then she got called out so I just had to jump in and do it. We're doing a pretest on making connections. We just wanted to see what kind of growth they will make. With making connections we don't do a whole lot of that in kindergarten, so this was really a true test on seeing what they know and what they don't know.

In the classroom, students were sitting on the carpet ready for the pretest when the school nurse came and talked with Emma and pulled her out of the classroom. Emma explained:

> A former student was having some trouble and mom said, "Go get Emma. She knows how to deal with him." So when that happens I have to …if it had just been me in the room I couldn't have gone, but Jane could handle it so I just went and talked to mom and the student and the nurse and figured out what was going on and got the kid back to the classroom.

When Emma left the room, Jane got her role and started the pretest with the students. She told students about the pretest and to be quiet while watching the story on the smart board; the story was part of the test. Then she turned on the story video (Chrysanthemum) and students watched it. While still watching, the reading teacher came and stood next to the room door watching the story. After watching the story, Jane passed the test sheets to students and told them what to do. The reading teacher pulled one student to go with her to her room and Jane gave her his test sheet. The reading teacher asked Jane if she needs to explain anything to the student about the story, and Jane said "no." She then asked

Jane about accommodations, if the students can draw their answers or only write, and Jane was not sure, she whispered to her: "I don't know and Emma is not here."

Another area for shared duties and responsibilities was attending the IEP meeting and modifying curriculum and materials as needed. According to Emma, general education teachers attended the IEP meetings with much information and ideas to support the student. She stated: "each general education teacher attends the meeting; they have a ton of good information about the student and also peer comparisons." She went over the IEP with each teacher at the beginning of the year, and they all have access to the IEP at a glance.

Although Emma as the special education teacher was responsible for keeping the data on students' progress toward their goals on the IEP, Mary and Jane also have the accommodation documents and supported the students' needs too, and they all kept students with disabilities' needs in mind while planning and creating teaching activities. Mary explained how it was the primary role for Emma to keep the data on students with disabilities and worked on their IEP goals, and how she supports their need as well with her. She stated:

> Her role is she's the person who's in charge of keeping the data on all their goals. So if their goal is site work identification or numbers or writing a sentence or whatever their goal is, she's the person who works on that goal with them. I support their needs as well, but she's the one that keeps the data.

Mary also explained how they together planned and created classroom activities with students with disabilities' needs in mind. She stated:

> They have the rules that are written into their IEP. We kind of try to keep those in the back of our mind as we're planning out things. Some of our kids this year have goals that are 'letter identification' so just knowing that, we know when we

do the jolly phonics time that this is an area that they really need because they don't have all their letter identification. Or when we're doing writing. So just kind of keep their goals in the back of our mind as we're planning and delivering the instruction. At math time, we have some students who their IEP goal is number identification. So when we're doing story problems and they're required to write 4 plus 6, we know ahead of time that if they can't identify the number 10 it's going to be difficult for them to get the answer written down. So just kind of keeping those things in the back of our mind as we're teaching.

Making co-instructing smoother and more meaningful takes time. Since this was the first year of Emma and Jane teaching together, they are still dividing the instruction into a set of activities and distributing those activities between them. With Mary and Emma's relationship, the teachers have moved to the level of being fully comfortable with each other and have gotten used to each other so they both work at the same time as a team to introduce new content and facilitate learning and classroom management. Emma with Jane are in the process of building their relationship, Mary and Emma have reached a good co-teaching relationship in which they created together an excellent classroom climate.

In summary, the second themes emerged in response to the second research question regarding how roles and responsibilities adopted in co-taught classrooms impacted the co-teaching relationship. Within this theme, Emma, Jane, and Mary acknowledged the benefits of coming to school every day and having a partner to teach with for both the success of their students and their co-teaching relationship. The three teachers believed they did a really good job of sharing leadership in the classroom although it seems like Emma dose take primary special education duties. They also described how in their first year co-teaching together they chose to split the instructional

responsibilities between them until they became comfortable with each other, and then their roles became more integrated in the lesson.

<div align="center">Using Co-Planning Time</div>

The third research question attempted to address the impact of co-planning strategies on the co-teaching relationship. Four sub-themes emerged based on the data analysis of teachers' interviews and observational field notes and will be discussed in the following section. These sub-themes are lack of co-planning time, the value of collaboration, faculty meetings time and administrative support.

The theme "Using Co-Planning Time" addresses the perception of co-planning and its impact on the co-teaching relationship. Within this theme, participants explained their need of more time to collaborate and plan, their current planning strategies, the faculty meetings, and administrative support.

"You can't make the day longer": Lack of Co-Planning Time

The most prominent challenges in the two co-teaching relationships under study was having adequate time to collaborate and plan for instruction. Since being between two rooms was new experience, Emma said it took time and effort to be prepared, and "it doesn't always happen." She said more planning time with Jane is needed, "I guess I would like a little more time. Jane and I are kind of on different schedules. I like to be gone by about 4:15 and pick up my kids. She doesn't come as early in the morning so that's a little hard."

Even though they both were willing to either come early or leave late if there is a big need to discuss, Emma stated that time to plan during the school day would be

helpful, "Both of us are always willing to stay late or come early if we need to talk, but time would be what would make it all better I think… You can do co-teaching, but if you don't have the time to plan together then you're always 'What are we doing next? What's next?'"

Concerning planning time, Jane said that they did not have regularly scheduled time to meet and discuss classroom activities. Instead, they planned and discussed students' needs whenever they can. Jane said "It's whenever we can have a time together. But usually it's after school or before school." They also used the time in the hall and morning time to address some areas of their co-instruction. She said: "Emma and I just talk constantly. In the hall we'll just talk about things. When we come in in the morning we discuss what the day is going to be like." When asked if there anything that she would like to change about co-teaching, Jane said: "about the only thing that I can think of is I wish that we would have more time to collaborate."

Similar findings were noted during Mary's interview. She said finding enough time is difficult and more time to plan would be desirable, "I think the amount of planning has been really tough … It would be nice to have more time to collaborate. I think we could be even better if we had more time. But you can't make the day any longer, so that's just one of those things that you're stuck with."
Mary also would like to have more time to sit with Emma and discuss students with disabilities' progress toward their IEP goal. She explained, "We honestly don't have time to communicate on that data. I don't ever have time to say, 'How are they progressing?'

It would be nice to have a little bit time to check in periodically and see how they're making progress towards their goals on their IEP."

Participants were observed trying to use their time wisely as possible. They met in the morning, at lunch time, and after school looking at the already planned lessons and choosing the appropriate structures that match the lessons and students' abilities. They were doing it quickly in the morning before students arrived and in the afternoon before walking out to get students at lunch. For example, in one morning, Emma and Jane were both sitting at the teacher table planning for the reading block. They were talking about continuing the reading from the day before how they will introduce the strategies of "writing my story bit by bit" to students. Jane suggested starting the writing with "Itsy Bitsy Spider" song, and Emma agreed. Then Emma went to the board and under the success criteria column she wrote "I can write a story bit by bit."

Planning time was a great opportunity for co-teachers to sit together, discuss students' needs, and adjust the instruction to make it comfortable for two teachers to reach all students, and through all that build their co-teaching relationship, although finding enough time to do all that was challenging.

"This year our lesson plans are a little bit different": The Value of Collaboration

During the first year of co-teaching together Emma and Mary spent time every day planning and collaborating. They would come early or stay late every day to create lesson plans and discuss any needed accommodation. Mary explained:

> Obviously, Emma and I don't live together so we can't take stuff home to work on it… Emma and I were in charge of doing all of our own lesson plans. So we had to get all that done at school. Of course, from the time the kids come at 8:30

until 3:30 there's no time for us to really work on the lesson plans. So we always
had to either come early and work on them or stay late.

They both sat together, read everything together, and typed lesson plans together. Emma
said,

"We stay with the computer and we would type lesson plans together. We would say,
'Today we're going to work on predictions. What do we want our lesson to look like?'
We would together type up a lesson plan for making predictions."

Emma believes planning at the same allows ideas to flow. She explained how this
way of co-planning "has pluses and minuses both. Us sitting together doing it allows for
the thoughts to happen then. But then that takes an awful lot of time."

During the current year all first grade teachers share the processes of planning the
lessons. They are four general education teachers and one special education teacher, and
each teacher was in charge of planning one subject for the whole team. Mary said, "This
year, we don't do a lot of planning anymore. I'm in charge of one subject, Emma is in
charge of one subject and then Jane is in charge of one subject. The other two teachers as
well." Each teacher planned one subject and shared it with the other teachers to deliver to
their students, and after a week or two, they switch and each teacher got to plan another
subject.

The team also has a regular scheduled time on Thursdays to meet, plan together,
and help each other out. They would use this time to discuss specific activities and select
the unified lessons' materials such using the reading book. For example, Jane explained
how they as a team met and chose the reading story for the week they were under

observation. She said, "Actually, we meet as a team and we choose the stories that we're

going to read. So all of the first graders get the same books read."

Collaboration helped co-teachers save time in planning. Mary explained how the

practice of each teacher planning one subject has saved them some time for the week they

were under observation. She said:

> Like the predictions plan. I wrote those and all of the first grade teachers taught
> them. But then for content time, we've been doing growth mindset. Jane wrote
> those plans and we're teaching them. Emma did our math plans this week, but all
> of us are teaching the math plans. We're just sharing them, which is a time saver.

Another value of team planning was making the co-planning easier. Because, they

already have the lessons planed for them, Mary and Emma only need a short time to

collaboratively divided the lesson activities between them and make the needed

accommodations.

Mary Explained:

> So this week I planned reading for the whole team and Emma planned math for
> the whole team. So our plans are kind of already done for us. But still in the
> mornings Emma and I usually meet up quick and say, "Okay, here's what our
> plan is for the day. Here's our math lesson. They're going to play this game.
> First it'll be calendar and then we'll do the game. Then we'll have them do the
> worksheet and then…" So we kind of have an idea in our mind of the order. We
> make accommodations a lot for our students. So sometimes we'll look at the
> lesson and we'll say, "Here's a lesson that might not work for this hand full of
> students. What are we going to do to meet their needs?" We'll say, "Okay,
> here's what we'll do. You take them for 15 minutes and then I'll take them and
> I'll work with them for 15 minutes." We discuss our accommodations, how we're
> going to …we already know ahead of time that these students are going to
> struggle or these students are going to need some enrichment. What are we going
> to do for those students?

Emma also said co-planning was easier this year, "now we just look at the plans and

think how we're going to make it work." She explained how they go through the pre-

planned lesson to prepare the activities to fulfil students with disabilities needs and to

decide ahead before starting instruction how they will group the students and who will

need the para-educator assistant. Emma stated:

> Before the lessons, a lot of times at lunch we just kind of run through it and think about it. We kind of plan ahead who can work together and who's going to need a little extra support. With inclusion, some students like Evian – he's not going to have trouble at math and I know I'm not going to probably pull him into a group to do the story problem today. But I already had in my mind Ava probably will need help, Kaelan is gonna need help. So right away I just ask, [the para-educator], can you take those two kids up front?" and I took a small group too. With the inclusion, we want to include kids as often as we can. But we know ahead of time who might struggle and kind of anticipate for those kids.

Similar results were reported during interviews with Jane. She stated how when they

finished the school day, she and Emma sat together and divided the pre-planned activities

between them. Jane explained, "A lot of it is we'll have our lesson plans out. For

example, last night with the writing. It's like, 'How about if I do the starch of this and

then you can chime in and you can start from here on down.' For the one today."

Flexibility was one more advantage of collaboration. The lesson does not need to be

delivered the same way as it was written. It is up to the teachers to decide how they

would deliver and teach those pre-planned lessons. For example, in a joint interview

Mary said how she felt about her planning the reading lesson for the whole team. She was

not sure other teachers will like her lesson plan. Mary said, "This is probably just me, but

I get nervous that other people …everybody has a little different teaching style. I get

nervous that other people aren't going to like my lesson plans. That they're not how they

teach or something. "

Emma added that they have a little bit of flexibility that if teachers are not comfortable with the plan, they can change the activities to fit their teaching styles. She said: "That's why we just look at them and do what we want with them too. If it's something a little different we can change it."

Knowing what you need to be doing was another advantage of team planning. According to Jane when teachers know the lesson and are prepared for delivering the instruction ahead of time, the instruction becomes more valuable to students. She said: "I think it's a benefit to the students because we know what we're going to be doing. That's the biggest part of teaching, knowing what you need to be doing."

The first grade planning meeting time was not only critical to classroom success, but also it was critical to save planning time and make co-planning easier, which lead to more co-integrating and collaboration opportunity between co-teachers.

"That's Not the Most Productive": Faculty Meetings Time

Observational field notes illustrated how besides all the first graders team meeting, first grade teachers also met two more times weekly. They met on Mondays and Thursdays with the principal and other administrators. On Mondays, they met as a team in the conference room with the principal and a literacy coach. On Thursdays, they were back together at the conference room with the principal and a math coach.

On an observed Monday meeting, Emma, Mary, and Jane were in the meeting with the other two first grade teachers, the literacy coach, the principal, and a faculty person. Teachers all came with the Iowa Common Core, class calendars, and other documents, and all attendants have their laptops turned on. The coach spoke about

trimester one concepts and asked teachers about what has been achieved so far. On a smart board there was an Excel document with different charts, and the principal was busy asking about students' achievements and wrote down the data in the Excel document. Teachers asked some questions such as one teacher asked the coach about how they respond when some students already know the concept. Then they quickly talked about learning goals and success criteria for reading such as big picture learning goal and making connections.

Mary and Emma were not satisfied about the use of meeting time. About Monday's meeting Mary felt the time was note used effectively. She said "Mondays sometimes seems like that's not the most productive, but everybody has to [attend]." Mary also felt those meetings took a lot of their co-planning time. She said: "You've been here this week. You can see that we don't really have a lot of time to ourselves because we have a lot of meetings and things."

Emma also felt those meetings were difficult and a waste of time in some way because teachers spend a lot of time sharing information with the other members that already discussed in the weekly first grade teachers' meetings. Emma explained:

> Those meetings are difficult because our team meets together and we discuss things. Even just like in passing. Like we're all walking out to get the kids at lunch and we'll quick, "Hey what did you do for this?" and talk like that. When we go in the conference room, those people that are in there weren't in on our conversation, so we're always having to catch them up before we can move forward. So sometimes it just takes a little bit of our time to kind of catch them up on what we've been working on before we can move on to the next topic.

In summary, the participants felt using faculty meeting times to their best advantage was a challenge, and the time could have been used in more productive ways.

"We Want Them to Support us": Administrative Support

Administrative support for the co-planning time was not offered according to Marry and Emma. Mary felt administrators do not understand the difficulties of time that co-teachers hold out. She said that they need administrators support in providing extra resources. She said:

> Sometimes I don't always know if they even understand what it's really like to be a co-teacher. I think they take some things for granted and they don't realize how much time it involves being a co-teaching with all the planning and things. It's important that they support us because we do a lot of times have difficult students. We want them to support us if we need extra resources or if we need help.

Emma said it was hard to find extra time and that everyone in school need time, and there was nothing that the principal can help with. She stated, "Time is a swear word around here. That's what everybody wants. There's nothing [the principal] can do to give us more time. You're always pulled in a thousand different directions. We have not told her that we'd like more time to plan together."

Observational field nots captured how teachers were pulled out from their planning time. One day at lunch time where Mary and Emma usually reviewed their plan, the literacy coach came pulled Mary out to review some data about students with her. On another day, Emma was supposed to miss the teachers' weekly planning meeting because she had a meeting with the principal. The principal canceled the meeting at the last minute, and Emma got to attend the teachers meeting.

All in all, a third theme emerged in response to the third research question regarding how collaboration and planning strategies influenced the co-teaching relationship. Under this theme four sub-themes were discussed. Participants first shared

the challenges of co-planning time and their needs for more time to sit with one another

and get well prepared. They also described how the current first grade team planning has

saved them some co-planning time and make co-planning easier. In addition, participants

explained their feelings about the use of the facilities meetings time and the

administrators support.

<div align="center">Ongoing Relationship</div>

The fourth research question attempted to address the strategies co-teachers use to

promote successful co-teaching relationship. One theme, Ongoing Relationship, emerged

based on the analysis of data from teachers' interviews and observational field notes. The

theme consisted of three sub-themes that will be detailed in the following section.

Building and maintaining positive had effects on the success of co-teaching. This

theme addresses the aspects that must be present in order for co-teachers to create and

promote an effective co-teaching relationships where they used their individual expertise

to reach all student needs. Promoting positive relationships within this study was linked

to several factors including respecting one another, trying different ideas, and

communicating with each other.

<u>Respecting One Another</u>

According to Emma and Mary, respect was a key to be able to work together

effectively and keep the co-teaching relationship strong. Emma stated that respect was

not only needed to support the relationship but also to benefit the students. She said "It's

just a mutual respect. She knows what she's doing and I know what I'm doing. Let's do

the best we can for the kids that we have." She also said that co-teaching was an attitude

of respect, where co-teachers treated each other as being both teachers. She said "to me it's [co-teaching] an attitude of respect that will help with co-teaching. If you respect each other and you assume they're both good teachers."

Mary agreed with Emma that co-teaching was an attitude of respect, respect each other's personality and teaching style. She explained how respect caused their relationship to grow better and be stronger to the point they can read each other's minds. She said:

> Emma and I can sometimes kind of read each other's minds. I know when to jump in or she knows when to just jump in. I think part of the thing too is that we respect each other and we respect each other's teaching styles. I never get offended or anything if she jumps in because sometimes she might have a way to explain something that I hadn't thought about. Sometimes it's just looking at it from a new lens.

Along with respect came compromise. Mary likened the co-teaching relationship to a partnership where compromise was a big part of it. She explained:

> Yes, it's an attitude of respect. It's like a partnership really. Some people compare it to a marriage. Honestly, I spend more time with Emma than I do with my husband. They say it's like a marriage. You have to have the give and take just like in a marriage. You have to compromise. I've heard it compared to that before with good reason. There are a lot of similarities.

According to the participants, when co-teachers respect each other, they became willing to share the work and their ideas, and as a result promote the relationship. Emma said that co-teachers must always be thinking "How can [they] share the work." While Jane explained who co-teaching was an attitude "of accepting other ideas, even if you've never tried it before."

Besides sharing ideas and the work, Mary shared how respect helped teachers understand each other and have a friendly relationship. She said:

Just be cognizant of where she's going with it and where I would like to go with it. Sometimes we'll jump in and say, "I think we could try it this way" and then Megan is like, "Okay, we can try that way." So always thinking how to get along with the other person or share ideas or share the work.

Observational field notes illustrated how teachers showed respect to their partners. They showed respect by being prepared, being enthusiastic, and being on time. They always came to school ready to go and having their materials in order. For example, Jane said because this was her first year in first grade, she took her materials home every night to make sure she is well prepared for the next day. She stated "I'm taking all of my things home, going through my lessons to make sure that I'm doing what I need to be doing. This is my first year in first grade."

Emma also was observed being respectful with both Jane and Mary by understanding and accepting each teachers' availability of time and different teaching style. She came early in the morning to have time to communicate and co-plan with Mary who always comes early and leaves early. She also stayed a little bit longer after school communicating and co-planning with Jane who did not came as early in the morning. Emma also respected the differences in the instructional noise between the two classrooms that she co-taught in. Emma tried to remember in which classroom she was in and adapted her instructional noise to fit with her partner. In the morning, she accepted that Jane was comfortable with a noisy instructional setting while in the afternoon she seems a little bet quieter because Mary preferred teaching in a quiet environment.

By understanding their partners and respecting their differences in personality and teaching style, co-teachers could develop closer relationship

<u>Trying Different Ideas</u>

Trying different ideas was another key to keep the co-teaching relationship healthy. Emma and Mary stated that doing different ways of instructing helped keep the relationship moving in a positive direction. Emma explained that although her good relationship with Mary helped with the challenging students they were having the last two years, thinking about trying different ideas with students was the alternative that allowed them to better lead the classroom. She said:

> I think ultimately we like each other. It's hard to teach with somebody that just irritates you. For the most part we get along really well. We've had some tough kids the last few years. If you have tough students and you don't get along, that just makes it really hard. We just kind of do our best every day. At the end of the day we're like "Wow that was tough. What could I have done better? What could we figure out together?

Emma also explained how trying different ideas helped co-teachers stay motivated, especially those who have a very good relationship. She said, "How can I do this differently? That's what I'm always thinking. Even though it went well, how could I do it differently to make it better for the two kids that didn't get it? So to me how can we do it differently, how can we do it better?"

Building a strong co-teaching relationship according to Emma required that co-teachers "listen to each other's ideas and willing to try different teaching styles."

Pertaining to making suggestions for new strategies of instruction, Emma was very willing to try Mary and Jane's different strategies, but she expressed difficulty in making a suggestion if a strategies did not work well. Emma said that she would feel more comfortable if Mary and Jane came to her and suggested new ideas. She stated:

I'm happy to do it a different way and then if it doesn't work out say, "Okay, this happened. Let's try it this way instead." But that could be a point that's kind of hard. I would hope that Mary or Jane would just come talk to me and say, "I'd really like to do it this way. Can we try?" And I would be more than willing to give it a try. I'm pretty willing to compromise, but maybe to speak my mind might be a little bit harder.

Mary also felt the need for trying to introduce new co-teaching models to their delivery of co-instruction. She said they are caught in their comfort zone model of teaching and need to move past it to get on the move. She said:

We could probably do better about doing different models of co-teaching. We kind of do the same model every day for the most part. We kind of are both up there jumping in, jumping out. For certain lessons, like in the math book, we'll put a sticky note 'today let's do stations' or 'today you take a group and I'll take a group.' There's certain lessons that that works well for and there's certain lessons that it's like 'what's the point?'

In individualized interviews, both Emma and Mary had the same answer about what changes they will make next year if they get to work together again. Emma said:

I think if I made any changes if I get to work with her, it would be different styles of co-teaching. She said the other day, "Let's try this, let's try something else" and not get stuck in our same rut. That would be the only thing I'd like to change – try a few different strategies of co-teaching.

In a reply to the same question, Mary explained how trying different models would improve their relationship and at the same time positively benefit students. She stated:

I think that we can always get better at trying different idea and trying different strategies for the kids. I really liked how she said yesterday that even if the lesson goes well you always in the back of your mind think 'how can I do it better?' I think it's just nice to hear from other teachers, "How did you do this activity" or "how did you teach this?" So many people have things that you haven't even thought of. Just continuing to try different methods of teaching and hopefully reach more learners that way.

Participants were observed sharing and accepting ideas in the teachers' planning meeting, where all first grade teachers met to plan lessons together. In that meeting Mary, Emma,

and Jane with the two other first grader teachers were discussing the goals they need to work on with students from the science curriculum, and trying to find appropriate activities from the teacher and student's books. They were looking for examples of materials to explain sounds, lights, and waves to students, but there were not enough examples in the science book. Jane looked up on the internet for vibration ideas for first grade. She shared the ideas and examples with teachers and they watched a video about vibration on YouTube. They all agreed to an idea, and the host teacher then shared a set of paper cups that were stored in her classroom's cabinet from the previous year. They cut the bottom side of the cup and put a rubber band around the both opened sides to use it for making sound. Each teacher then took enough number of cups and concluded the meeting.

Being willing to listen to new ideas, as well as share their own was not only beneficial to students' achievements, but also was an important factor to build and promote effective co-teaching relationship.

<u>Keeping Communication Alive</u>

Another key to keeping the co-teaching relationship healthy was communication. The three teachers shared how having good communication was a basis on which to build a strong co-teaching relationship. Jane defined good co-teaching relationship as "Two people who have great communication skills and who are willing to be open to new ideas." Mary also stated that communication was a main element to build a strong co-teaching relationship. When asked how to build a strong co-teaching relationship, Mary

said, "Communication is key. Talk through the problems and kinks before they become

larger issues. Be open to the other person's ideas and ways of teaching things."

Mary explained how communication positively affected her co-teaching

relationship with Emma. She said,

> I think communication is probably one of the biggest things. If I was over here in
> my little corner and I don't communicate well with [Emma], then things probably
> aren't going to go as smoothly. So make sure that you communicate openly if
> there is a problem. Even if things are going well. 'Hey, that went really good
> today. Let's try that again.' Communication is a big thing.

She felt that one of the reason she and Emma constantly are in a good relationship was

being open and honest with each other. She said they got along very well with each other

and have not disagreed with each other or have any concerns. Mary stated, "We really

haven't had a lot of things that we don't see eye to eye on. If there were something, I feel

like our relationship is open and honest, that I would feel comfortable telling her if there

was an issue that I had a problem with."

Jane confirmed the importance of communication and sharing feedback to improve and

keep the co-teaching relationship active. She explained how they gave each other

feedback usually, "just talk after the lesson or during breaks or right after school."

Similar to Mary, Jane also felt the importance "to be open and to have good

communication with your co-teacher" especially if they got disagree about an issue. She

said:

> We are Leader in Me [school], so we both need to listen to each other. I think that
> if something happens where I would really disagree with her, we could sit down
> and I could explain my part and why I disagree with her. I would also want to
> listen to her part because maybe she did have a reason for doing something.

Communicating with the other teacher to make sure they are on the same page and both were satisfied about the co-teaching was a priority to Emma. She communicated with her partners after school or early in the morning to see how the day went. She said: "I said this the other day, "Is everything going okay?" Checking in with them and just saying, "Is it going okay? Could I do something differently?" Hopefully that helps the relationship."

To promote effective communication in a co-teaching relationship, Emma and Jane spoke about taking the time to "communicating during planning time, before and after school, during lunch, and through email and text when [they] are not at school." Mary on the other hand spoke about being positive, open, and willing to communicate with each other, share feelings, and try to see things from the other person's viewpoint. She said:

> Be positive and open. Avoid criticizing the other person or their ideas. Find time to talk and share things. Sometimes this is just venting but it's important to keep each other up to speed on what you are noticing. This helps to plan next steps.

Emma and Mary were observed talking to each other and asking about specific things and asking about students every single observation day. They ate lunch together in the classroom, reviewed the math plan, discussed what the lesson was going to be like, and gave suggestions. On the first observation day, Mary brought a book she found interesting to read to students and showed it to Emma. Emma skimmed through the book, agreed it was interesting, and read it to students when they came back from lunch. On the second day, they were discussing the previous day's math. They were taking about who they think were still struggling with it and would need more practice.

Co-teachers felt the need for communication and opportunity for collaboration to support a positive co-teaching relationship since they work closely for most of the school day.

In summary, three subthemes emerged in attempt to answer the fourth research question regarding the strategies co-teachers used to promote effective relationships. Participants found a way to build and promote positive co-teaching relationship through respecting one another, sharing experiences, and talking openly. The most important element to nurture their relationship was the ability to establish mutual respect. Respecting each other included accepting the other personality and teaching style, sharing the work, and being on time. Additional element was adapting to change by trying new and possibly beneficial alternatives and considering different approaches of teaching. The final elements to promote the relationship was communicating openly. Such communication occurred whenever it was possible during planning time, during lunch, before and after school, and through text messages and email when teachers were not at school. The subthemes described the co-teachers' efforts to maintain close co-teaching relationship.

In conclusion, interview data, observational field notes, and documents were organized and analyzed. In response to the four research questions four main themes of information were revealed: building the relationship, setting roles and responsibilities, using co-planning time and ongoing relationship. To build the relationship teachers expressed a desire for flexibility in choosing the co-teaching partner to work with. Participants expressed difficulty when starting a new co-teaching relationship, but after

spending some time together co-teachers attempted to grow a better and stronger relationship and became friends. All teachers agreed that combining their different philosophies and teaching styles was beneficial for both the teachers' relationship and students' achievements. Participants expressed that teaching was easier with a partner, and felt comfortable knowing that a partner was there if they need support. To set roles and responsibilities, participants explained the value of sharing the classroom and the leadership with another partner in achieving successful co-teaching relationship. Participants also stated how they shared duties and responsibilities through active engagement and involvement. They explained how they divided roles equally between themselves during first year of co-teaching, then as the years progressed parity became part of their teaching style without need to sit and divide roles. Regarding co-planning time, participants expressed the need for more co-planning time and administrative support. They all agreed their current team planning has advantages that make their co-teaching relationship better. Finally, teachers identified elements such respecting, willing to change, and willing to communicate with your partner to be very effective in building and promoting positive co-teaching relationships.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore how general and special education co-teachers construct the co-teaching relationship while working together in the co-taught classroom. As a result of the new legislative requirements and increased accountability demands, co-teaching has become popular and various elementary schools are adopting it to provide special education services to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Many research studies have examined the implementation of co-teaching. However, these studies fail to provide an in-depth examination of teachers' perceptions regarding their collaborative work in the co-taught classroom.

Analysis of previous literature indicates that constructing positive co-teaching relationships requires several essential elements involving day-to-day interaction between two teachers in the co-taught environment. These elements include regular interaction and communication, equal roles and responsibilities, adequate co-planning time, and continuous evaluation of the collaborative efforts. Much of the research conducted on the roles and relationships of co-teachers has been offering tips and advice for teachers to consider while collaborating. Thus, although the literature assumes that following such strategies improve teachers' co-teaching relationship, it does not specifically provide in-depth details on the everyday interaction and relationships of the co-teachers in order to see how the perspective of co-teachers contributed to their collaboration. This study was designed to explore a day-to-day co-teaching relationship and strategies teachers use to achieve positive collaborative teaching.

Four main themes emerged in response to the four research questions based on an analysis of the data. The four themes described how special and general education teachers build their co-teaching relationship while working together in inclusive atmospheres. These themes are related to the different experiences co-teachers go by in build the relationship, the roles and responsibilities for sharing the classroom, planning together for delivery of classroom instruction, and the factors that resulted in promoting an effective co-teaching partnership. The stages to build the relationship include choosing or being asked to co-teach, first year co-teaching, working together, blending teaching philosophies and styles, and willingness to learn from the other. The shared roles and responsibilities include the value of teamwork, the advantage of co-leadership, and the creation of parity. The co-planning strategies include dealing with lack of time, alternative co-planning, faculty meetings, and need for support. Finally, the promoting of partnership involves respecting one another, trying different ideas, and communicating with one another. While participants were working together, they all recognized the importance of establishing effective co-teaching relationships in order to reach the needs of their students.

This chapter discusses how the findings support and expand the research literature based on collaborative teaching by discussing the findings of the current study in relation to previous research described in chapter 2. The next section discusses implications and recommendations for professionals and researchers based on the study's finding. The final section of this chapter offers suggestions for practice and further research in the realm of building positive co-teaching relationships.

Building the Relationship

The first finding of this study addressed five sub-themes that influence the co-teaching partnership. The participants' ways of interacting and working with one another effected their co-teaching relationship.

The findings of this study support and add to the literature discussing co-teaching, which shows that co-teachers should be asked to identify the partner they would be comfortable working with, and not be coerced into co-teaching (Friend, 2008). Teachers in this study believed that having a choice about the partner with whom they would co-teach would create a more effective collaborative relationship. When one general education teacher in this study was told to co-teach in her first year teaching, she expressed concern in working with students with disabilities. This is consistent with the research that states potential co-teachers who are assigned by a principal and not given a choice to participate in co-teaching or select a partner expressed concern (Friend, 2008). In fact, according to Perry and Stewart (2005) and Wood (1998), co-teachers who do not get along with each other are unlikely to achieve outcomes for students and create an adequate teaching relationship. The present study also illustrated how assigning a teacher to work with a colleague who is not getting along with her is not beneficial for the students, since students can feel the tension between teachers. Teachers in this study have achieved a high level of professionalism because they were willing to work well with a colleague of a different discipline.

Furthermore, in this study, although the co-teachers have previous experience with co-teaching, they all expressed anxiety about working with a new co-teaching

partner. However, teachers also felt that over time they found a way to build a strong collegial relationship. Previous research confirms that both experienced and inexperienced teachers express difficulty when first co-teaching, although these struggles lessen over time (Perry and Stewart, 2005). Teachers who are about to start a new co-teaching relationship must first get to know each other's preferences and styles to help avoid personality conflicts (Perry and Stewart, 2005; Keefe et al., 2004; Conderman et al., 2009). They also need to discuss their willingness to try new ideas and find out what their roles will be and preferences related to working together, so that they both benefit (Conderman et al., 2009; Murawski & Dieker, 2008). These literature findings supported the shared values that the three teachers in this study felt were important. In fact, teachers in this study placed great emphasis on their experience of co-teaching and its role in strengthening their willingness to collaborate with a new partner. Teachers' prior experiences in working with a co-partner provided them with the skills necessary to build an effective relationship with any new partner. For example, in the current study prior experiences of co-teaching have allowed Emma to build a positive relationship with Mary in their first year co-teaching. It also appeared that Emma could potentially become as comfortable with Jane, her new co-partner, as she was with Mary.

Moreover, findings from this study suggested that co-teaching with the same partner for several years contributed to improvement of the co- teaching relationship so that teachers become friends as well as co-partners. They become aware of their preferences and styles, which facilitates a successful partnership. These findings are similar to the study by Perry and Stewart, (2005). They stated that when co-teachers have

mutual understanding of what their roles and expectations are, they can work well together even if they have very different personalities and teaching styles. In the present study, Mary and Emma have been working together for more than two years and have developed a mutual understanding of each other's roles and expectations. Therefore, they got used to each other and are comfortable working together.

Another part of the co-teaching relationship building process is teachers' blending of philosophy of teaching and teaching style. The findings showed that although teachers shared similar beliefs and values and had individual strengths that complemented each other, they had different personalities and teaching styles. All teachers supported the idea that every student can read. They all agreed about the importance of collaborative learning. They also care about what is best for all students. Similarly, the participants in this study had similar goals for classroom climate; they recognized the importance of co-teaching for more students to be served; keeping the learning alive in the classroom, reducing teaching stress by having extra support whenever there was a need, supporting each other, and sharing successes. The similarities in the teachers' philosophy of teaching facilitated shaping their co-teaching relationship and also benefited all students. Murawski and Dieker (2008) found that one main advantage of co-teaching is the opportunity to have two colleagues in the classroom who share the same goal of teaching to collaborate and make instruction accessible for all learners. In fact, teachers in the current study were likely to seek out partnership with one another where their beliefs and values were similar.

Teachers in this study also had different personalities and teaching styles. Although the literature indicated that co-teachers in the beginning of their relationship find it challenging to collaborate with a partner that has a different personality (Conderman et al., 2009), the findings of this study revealed teachers were able to blend their different strategies to meet the needs of all students. In terms of teaching strategies, teachers in this study blend between doing quiet activities (Mary's preferred strategies) to make communicating with students easier and fun activities (Emma' preferred strategies) to get students excited and engaged.

Working together in one shared setting also allowed teachers from this study to learn from each other and grow as professionals. Evidence from prior studies in collaborative teaching corresponds with this finding. Chanmugam and Gerlach (2013) stated that the co-teaching process allows teachers to learn about their strengths and weaknesses and get in-depth feedback from each other that positively influences their personal development as educators. It also helped co-teachers develop their teaching effectiveness as they learn together and from one another. In the present study, teachers shared ideas and teaching strategies, and grew from one another. This growth included professional and personal skills. They used their strengths to help strengthen each other's weaknesses. Each teacher became a better instructor from working together. In fact, this advanced process in building the co-teaching relationship occurred as the co-teaching relationship developed.

Roles and Responsibilities

The teachers in this study demonstrated strong co-teaching relationships and that had a direct impact on students' achievement. The findings in some way revealed that sharing responsibility and leadership in the classroom confirmed a sense of value and parity as both co-teachers work equally together. On the other hand, the observational field notes and classroom documents clearly showed several aspects that lacked parity in the classroom.

The data analyzed from teachers' interviews and classroom observations revealed findings similar to those of Strogilos and Tragoulia (2013) and Magiera et al. (2005). Collaborative teaching is an essential element of effective co-teaching where special education and general education teachers blend their efforts to be equally functioning members of an effective co-teaching classroom

This study, the co-teachers' desire to work collaboratively fostered a willingness to share leadership equally in the classroom. Previous research states that defining roles and responsibilities between general and special education teachers in a co-taught classroom is a complex and challenging assignment (Wood, 1998). The most common roles in co-taught classrooms are one assisting and one instructing, and the role of most special education teachers is controlled by general education teachers, who play the role of the classroom teacher (Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013; Magiera et al., 2005). The findings of this study are distinct from what the literature suggests: teachers in this study gave priority to sharing leadership, duties, and responsibilities in their working together. Each co-teaching pair arrived at the classroom on time and they collaboratively started

the instruction. They both taught. Their names were shown on the classroom door. They jointly introduced the concept, clarified lesson content, and facilitated classroom management. They both attended the IEP meetings, modified curriculum and materials, and assisted students with disabilities. Co-teaching pairs in this study also worked as a team, taking turns in the one teach, one assist model, and working in small groups and one-on-one.

The findings of this study also showed that shared responsibility and leadership was not perfect. The findings indicated three barriers hinder co-teachers' parity including the students' and their parents' view of teachers, teachers being called away during instruction time, and shared knowledge. Being between two rooms was referenced as a barrier in this study. Teachers in this study were not sure if students viewed Emma (the special education teacher) as an equal to Jane and Mary (the general education teachers). While elementary teachers often co-teach together for an entire day, Emma was teaching between two classrooms. She was co-teaching only half of the day in each classroom, so students only saw the general education teachers for the remainder of the day. Students may have also viewed Emma as subordinate to the general education teachers because she pulled students with disabilities out of the general classroom to her room for reading instruction, and students saw their classmates with disabilities in conjunction with the attendance of the special education teacher in the classroom.

Data also suggested that parents did not see Emma as equal to the other two teachers. Murawski and Dieker (2008) suggested that to ensure parity between co-teachers, they need to put "both names on the board, the roster, the report card, and any

communication home" (p.42). Findings from the current study revealed that only the general education teacher's name was on the take-home folder, grade report, and all other take-home documents. Findings of this study also revealed that Emma did seem to have primary responsibility in duties associated with students with disabilities. For example, because Emma was in between two rooms, the priority for her was to be with students with disabilities' parent-teacher conferences; therefore, she did not get to meet with all students' parents.

Another parity barrier in this study was pulling either teacher away during instruction. Findings of the current study indicated that teachers were pulled out of the classroom on a regular basis for several reasons. The data analyzed from observational field notes revealed findings similar to those of Murawski and Dieker (2008), who stated, "Co-teachers often report that they are unable to depend on each other for planning and instruction because one is often out of the class for a variety of reasons" (p. 41). Emma was called away to help with a behavior problem one day, and Jane was left to figure out how to give a test that was Emma's responsibility.

The last example of the lack of parity in this study was the lack of shared knowledge. Instead of planning the lesson together, each teacher was responsible for planning one subject for the whole team individually, which lead to the lack of shared knowledge. This was evident as Jane was not sure if accommodations were allowed on the test that was Emma's responsibility when she was left to give it all alone.

In particular, the study highlighted that shared roles and responsibilities was an imperfect process. Even though the teachers had a desire to do so, the structures implemented by the school did not always allow for parity to be achieved,

<center>Planning</center>

The third finding of this study was that teachers used alternatives to overcome the challenges of lacking co-planning time. The findings illustrated the teachers in this study were eager to use their co-planning time productively and invest in any opportunity to make the co-planning occur. The findings also suggest alternative planning provided teachers with additional benefits such as saving planning time and making co-planning easier, which lead to more co-integration and collaboration opportunities between co-teachers, although it was not perfect.

According to Murawski and Dieker (2004) and Friend (2008), the key important part of co-teaching is planning together. Teachers in this study lack the adequate time to sit together and co-plan the lesson. Instead and as a solution to the lack of planning time, they decided to have each teacher plan one subject individually and share it with the others. Researchers found that working individually in planning results in the omission of special education students' needs in the delivery of instruction (Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013). Analysis of this barrier suggests that individual planning in co-teaching practice might not be the most effective strategy for delivering the co-lesson. Planning together allows co-teachers to blend their expertise to differentiate and individualize the lesson to meet the needs of all students in the classroom. It also allows teachers to recognize and decide the right co-teaching approach to deliver the lesson. Such a barrier also suggests

that administrators can play a main role in supporting co-teachers by providing co-teachers with resources to help them find the right techniques regarding finding common planning time. Thus, planning together for co-teaching is a key to co-teaching success.

The findings of the current study mirrored the findings of the larger body of collaboration literature on common planning time: Failing to find enough time to co-plan is repeatedly described as a barrier to effective co-teaching (Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Scruggs et al., 2007; Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013; Murawski & Dieker, 2004, Friend, 2008). In the present study, teachers found it difficult to find enough time to co-plan although they gave priority to collaborative planning and discussing the needed accommodations whenever it was possible. They used alternative planning techniques to assist with lack of time including: walking together to the lunch line to discuss important issues and coming early or staying behind a minute after the bell rings. Keefe et al., (2004) suggested similar techniques for finding time for co-planning. They suggested co-teachers "use e-mail to send their thoughts about enriching an existing lesson; walk together to the lunch line to discuss concerns about students; or stay behind a minute after the bell rings to do some quick reflective practices on what went well in the class" (p.41).

Although this was a small-sized study with only two pairs of co-teachers consisting of three teachers, one special education teacher working with two separate general education teachers, it contributes in-depth information to the research base by illuminating alternative solutions for co-planning. Data from the current study revealed an example of weekly planning time that has not been clearly identified in existing literature. For example, teachers in this study decided to use alternative planning solution

that save them time in planning the lessons. The three teachers participating in this study along with two more first grade teachers decided to individually plan one subject and share it with the other. They also meet weekly to discuss specific activities and materials related to those subjects. This alternative solution provided a variety of benefits to co-teachers. These benefits included: providing more time for collaborative planning, making collaborative accommodations easier, giving teachers flexibility to change the planned activities to the fit co-teaching method, and making both teachers fully prepared by knowing ahead of time what they are going to be doing. On the other hand, this also suggests that teachers were not doing co-planning, which may affect the process of delivering the co-teaching lesson and lead to a lack of shared knowledge.

In addition, the findings also indicated that the challenge of faculty meetings and lack of administrative support adversely impacted the time needed for collaborative planning; there was a need for administrators to support co-teachers when they need extra help to have time for preparing and instructing the lessons. Filling such a need could help improve the co-teaching relationship. Earlier research suggests the need for administrators to help in providing co-planning time (Ploessl et al., 2010). In this present study, the support co-teachers received was not helpful. Administrators were in some way viewed as a hindrance to the co-planning process. Teachers in this study were not satisfied with the use of time in their weekly meetings with administrators. The results also revealed a lack of administrative support including calling either teacher away from their co-planning time for a variety of reasons, and lack of support for co-teachers when they needed extra resources to meet students' needs.

<u>Factors to Promote the Relationship</u>

A final finding of this research was these teachers were committed to use specific strategies to promote the positive co-teaching relationship they have built. The teachers in this study found a way to build and promote positive co-teaching relationships through interacting and working with one another in the co-taught classroom. The findings revealed these teachers used a variety of strategies including respecting one another, sharing experiences, and communicating.

Previous research identified self-evaluation as the best practice to promote a co-teaching relationship. Although teachers in this study did not self- evaluate, the use of self-evaluation assessments helps guide co-teachers in understanding each other's style and collaborative needs (Murawski & Dieker, 2008; Salend et al., 2002). The understanding of how teachers promote their co-teaching relationship was limited to co-teachers' awareness of what their co-partner is feeling, doing, thinking, and bringing to the school environment. For example, Condemerman et al. (2009) stated that "co-teachers can blend their expertise by first openly discussing strength they bring to the teaching situation, acknowledge their preferred communication or collaboration style, and being honest during early discussions." The use of communication was also necessary to address any conflict before it becomes more complicated (Cook & Friend, 1995). This study confirmed that teachers promote positive relationships through understanding each other and using their expertise to mentor each other. However, they also use specific strategies, such as showing respect to each other, being willing to try each other's ideas, and having open communication, to develop a closer relationship and move beyond team

work to being close friends. The teachers in this study build and promote their co-teaching relationship by establishing mutual respect to nurture their relationship, using individual strengths and expertise to consider and try different effective instructional models, and using open communication to discuss and share various personal and professional factors. For example, in this study Emma was willing to trust Mary's math teaching expertise to strengthen her own; she learned to try new techniques.

Based on the findings of this study, four conclusions were presented. The first conclusion indicated the teachers' processes for working collaboratively to reach the goal of co-teaching. The second conclusion confirmed the value of blending the expertise of two teachers. The third conclusion suggested alternatives to overcome the challenges of lacking co-planning time. The final conclusion reflected teachers' strategies to promote a positive co-teaching relationship.

The conclusions of the current study generated implications and recommendations for building effective co-teaching relationships. New ideas, possible solutions, and practical applications of how to build and promote successful co-teaching relationships are proposed for co-teachers, school administrators, and teacher educators.

<u>Implications and Recommendations for Professionals</u>

This study highlights the need to make the choice to participate in co-teaching and selecting a co-partner before embarking on the relationship. One implication of this study is that in order to accomplish co-teaching goals and to develop successful co-teaching relationships, teachers should be familiar with knowledge and skills that facilitate

collaboration. Additionally, in this study, all co-teachers have previous experience, although they expressed anxiety about working with a new co-partner.

One recommendation is that all co-teachers in inclusive schools receive effective administrative support. This suggests the need for administrative support to foster successful co-teaching relationships, especially for newly assigned co-teachers. Earlier studies showed that administrative support has an effective role in the degree of success co-teachers experienced co-teaching together (Waldron & McLeskey, 1998; Nierengarten, Hughes, & Nierengarten, 2010)

Administrators could provide choices by asking candidate co-teachers to identify two or more teachers with whom they would be most comfortable co-teaching (Friend, 2008). Administrative support could also focus on providing initial training, ongoing collaborative training, and time and recourses to support co-teachers in understanding the collaborative style and communication needs of one another. Administrators could also observe collaborative instructions and provide teachers with feedback in the areas of their collaboration effort that need to be improved. Administrators' attention and feedback give teachers a sense of how their team work is valued (Nierengarten et al., 2010). For co-teachers to build a successful co-teaching relationship, effective administrative support is needed to help co-teachers get along with each other and have an ongoing effective relationship.

Another recommendation is to ensure that both co-teachers in a co-taught classroom have productive roles and responsibilities. Successful co-teaching relationships require that co-teachers have parity that is recognizable by all school members, students,

and students' parents (Murawski & Dieker, 2008). Findings from this study showed that due to being between two classrooms and the high number of students in both classrooms, the special education teacher was unable to attend all students' parent-teacher conferences, and her primary role was to be in students with disabilities' parent-teacher conferences. This made a sense of a lack parity among teachers and lead to the general education teacher being viewed as the primary teacher by the parents. Such finding suggests that having a single special education teacher co-teaching between two classrooms might not be the most effective practice of co-teaching for elementary education. Co-teaching in one classroom for the entire day can ensure the special education teacher attend all students' parent-teacher conferences. Another suggestion is to manage the conference schedule to be on two different days, so that the special education teacher can attend all conferences. Thus, it is important for any successful co-teaching relationship to ensure parity and convey to parents, students, and school members that both teachers are equals in the classroom.

An additional recommendation is for co-teachers to ensure that they can plan the lesson together. This means it is necessary to change the schedules and structure of the school day to allow for this planning time.

Another recommendation is that co-teachers need to establish an understanding of each other's preferences, strengths, and weaknesses (Murawski & Dieker, 2008) before embarking on the relationship. In this study, teachers promoted a positive relationship by understanding each other and using their expertise to mentor each other throughout their ongoing co-teaching relationship. Such practice might not be the most effective strategy

for getting to know a partner. It might take long time for co-teachers to understand each other's styles and preferences, or they might not get along after all. Because "talking about these preferences are important to help avoid personality conflicts and other miscommunication" (Murawski & Dieker, 2008), assessments to guide co-teachers in getting to know their partners have been developed and could help facilitate building the relationship (Murawski & Dieker, 2004). These assessments investigate co-teachers' hopes, attitudes, responsibilities, and expectations to understand similarities and differences in how co-partners relate. In addition to the strategies co-teachers in the current study use to promote effective co-teaching relationships, assessments can be used to encourage conversations about the importance of creating and promoting positive co-teaching relationships.

A final recommendation is to prepare preservice teachers before they begin their careers. This can be applied to universities and teacher preparation programs so that they prepare teachers to be co-teachers and teach them how to work, communicate, and collaborate.

<div align="center">Implications and Recommendations for Researchers</div>

Future research should explore teachers' understanding of relationship collaboration factors in the co-teaching relationship using multiple case studies to allow for cross-analysis between cases. Because strategies to collaborate and build a relationship with another colleague may differ depending on the differences in personalities and teaching styles, a researcher could select multiple cases, study each case in-depth individually, and look across cases for similarities and differences.

Another suggestion for future research is to study how co-teachers work together and deliver collaborative instruction in co-taught classrooms that have students with more significant disabilities or behavioral issues and compare it with co-taught classrooms that do not. Such a study may illustrate how great of an impact having difficult issues in the classroom has on building of co-teaching relationships. The results may reveal alternative barriers and benefits. The results also may show if students with significant disabilities should be educated in a co-taught classroom.

A final suggestion for future research would be to explore the effects of respect, trying different co-teaching instructional models, and communication on promoting co-teaching relationships. The findings of this study have shown that these elements were essential in building and promoting the co-teaching relationship. Since the current study was a brief case study research, these elements should be investigated further in future research so that pre-service education and professional development programs can address these important elements. The results will provide knowledge for pre-service co-teachers, current co-teachers, and school administrators to understand and help design successful co-teaching relationships, which will improve students' outcomes.

<div align="center">Summary and Conclusion</div>

To gain an understanding of what strategies teachers use to form a positive co-teaching relationship while working together in the co-taught classroom, case study methods were used. Two pairs of first-grade co-teachers, one special education teacher, and two first grade teachers participated in the study. Data collections included classroom observation, teacher interviews, and document analyses offered in-depth information.

Each pair was observed several times during co-teaching and co-planning. Teachers also were jointly and individually interviewed during the research. The data analysis resulted in several findings in response to the research questions: How do special education and general education teachers interact and communicate with each other while co-teaching, what roles do special education and general education teachers adopt in co-teaching classrooms, what strategies do co-teachers use to plan for effective collaboration, and what strategies do teachers use to promote effective co-teaching relationships?

Within the first theme that emerged in response to the first research question, participants expressed the importance of giving teachers the choice on whether they co-teach. They also described how they struggled to define roles and limitations when co-teaching at the first time. Although they have similar co-teaching strategies, they did an excellent job in merging their different personalities to make a beneficial impact on the students. Also, they acknowledged the benefits of having a partner with different opinions and ideas on their professional growth. The finding suggests that co-teachers in inclusive schools should receive effective administrative support to foster a successful co-teaching relationship. For example, help newly assigned co-teachers choose their matched partner, and also help co-teachers get along with each other and have an ongoing effective relationship.

In the second theme that emerged in response to the second research question, all participants believed they did an excellent job of sharing leadership in the classroom; they also explained how they at the beginning of co-teaching, they chose to split the instructional responsibilities between them. Then as the relationship progressed they

became comfortable with each other and their roles became more integrated into the lesson. This integration caused the teachers to view each other as equals. Despite this feeling of equality, co-teachers express a mixed feeling in how students and their parents see them in the classroom; it is believed the students and parents see the special education teacher as subordinate to the others because she is split between two classrooms. The finding suggests that in elementary schools, the best co-teaching model is for a special education teacher and a general education teacher to co-teach together for the entire day. If the special education teacher is working between two classrooms, it is recommended that they arrange the students' parent-teacher conference schedule in a way that ensures the attendance of the special education teachers to every conference.

In the third theme that emerged in response to the third research question, participants expressed a need for adequate planning time to sit with one another and get well prepared. They also explained how the current first-grade alternative planning, where each teacher plans one subject individually and shares it with the others, has saved them some co-planning time and make co-planning easier. In addition, participants were not satisfied with the use of the faculty meetings time and the administrator's support. The finding suggests that co-teachers must make the effort to sit together and co-plan the lesson jointly. It is also the administrator's responsibility to help teachers find the right techniques regarding common planning time.

The fourth theme that attempts to answer the fourth research question is that co-teachers found a way to build and promote positive co-teaching relationships through establishing a mutual respect; respecting each other included accepting the other

personality and teaching style, sharing the work, and being on time; adapting to change by trying new and possibly beneficial alternatives and considering different approaches to teaching, and communicating openly. The finding suggests co-teachers use assessments at the beginning of their relationship to help guide for getting to know each other. Such practice can encourage conversation about the importance of creating and promoting positive co-teaching relationships.

In summary, the current study resulted in four conclusions after exploring how co-teachers collaborate to provide special education services to students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom. Several implications and recommendations concerning the building of co-teaching relationship were suggested for professionals. Suggestions for future research regarding collaboration and co-teaching relationship were offered. These conclusions, implications, and recommendations may provide knowledge for co-partners to help improve and promote their relationship.

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APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION PLAN

Frist grade Schedule

Reading & Rotation: 9:00-11:30   Lunch & Recess: 11:30-12:00   Math 12:15-1:15

Specials: 1:30-2:15   Recess: 2:15-2:30   Science: 2:40-3:15

Dismissal: 3:30

Date	Data Collected	Classroom/Individual	Time
9/19/16	Observation (Reading)	General Ed/Co-taught (Jane & Emma)	8:30-11:30
	Observation (Math)	General Ed/Co-taught (Mary& Emma)	11:45-1:30
	Observation (Teachers Meeting with Literacy Coach)	All 1st grade teachers, Literacy Coach, & The Principal	1:30-2:10
	Observation (End of the day)	General Ed/Co-taught (Mary& Emma)	2:15-3:30
9/20/16	Interview	Mary& Emma	7:50-8:20
	Observation (Reading)	General Ed/Co-taught (Jane & Emma)	8:30-11:30
	Observation (Math)	General Ed/Co-taught (Mary& Emma)	11:45-1:30
	Observation (Teachers Planning Meeting)	All 1st grade teachers	1:30-2:10
	Observation (End of the day)	General Ed/Co-taught (Mary& Emma	2:15-3:30
9/21/16	Observation (Reading)	General Ed/Co-taught (Jane & Emma)	8:30-11:30
	Observation (Math)	General Ed/Co-taught (Mary& Emma)	11:45-1:30
	Interview	Mary& Emma	1:30-2:00
	Observation (End of the day)	General Ed/Co-taught (Mary& Emma)	2:15-3:30
	Interview	Jane	3:45-4:15
9/22/19	Interview	Mary	7:50-8:07
	Observation (Reading)	General Ed/Co-taught (Jane& Emma)	8:30-11:30
	Interview	Jane	11:30-11:45
		Emma	11:45-12
	Observation (Math)	General Ed/Co-taught (Mary& Emma)	12:00-1:30
	Observation (Teachers Meeting with Math Coach)	All 1st grade teachers, Math Coach, & The Principal	1:30-2:10
	Observation (End of the day)	General Ed/Co-taught (Mary& Emma)	2:15-3:30

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE OF INITIAL CODING AND CATEGORIZATION FROM TEACHERS INTERVIEWS

Initial Coding and Categorization from Teachers Interviews					
1st joint interview (Mary & Emma)	2nd joint interview (Mary & Emma)	1st individual interview (Jane)	2nd individual interview (Jane)	1st individual interview (Mary)	1st individual interview (Emma)
In first grade there's no option for kids to be like in a self-contained classroom unless they have behavior needs

But for our students who do have academic goals, this is basically where they are

the core to good teaching is relationships

to me, developing relationships is the major thing for my philosophy of teaching

every student can learn

in our classroom and everybody is at their own level

it's important to differentiate your teaching for all your students, not just the struggling learners. I think all the students need some of that differentiation

We do a lot of planning together so we know what the day is going to look like | went over the different models of co-teaching. That's about the only training

Just taking masters classes. But they don't really involve co-teaching.

you have to have a table for both of us to work at and a spot for all of that. So we planned out that.

a lot of co-teaching is just on-the-fly. You see what's happening and you just act really quickly.

You just have to adapt your teaching as you go. It's hard to plan for those things. You just have to kind of go with it.

There's not enough time to plan for all of those things.

our two tables. Mine was in the back and hers was on that wall.

We both did. we both agreed that it was too loud. we have a nice big classroom; we really don't have a lot of ways that we can arrange the classroom.

respect is probably one of my key characteristics. | very beneficial for the students as well as the teachers.

if I can't get a concept across to the students, sometimes another person can do that. So that's an advantage of co-teaching.

If I can't get it across, maybe Mrs. Mary can or the other way around. If Mrs. Emma is doing something and it seems like the kids aren't getting it, maybe I have another way.

I always feel that when you have good classroom management then the learning will take place.
If it's complete chaos in your room, then it's going to be really hard. There's always going to be those students that can't handle that chaos.

having good classroom management, knowing the curriculum.

Right now I'm taking my stuff home every night. First grade is totally different than kindergarten.

I'm taking all of my things home, going through my lessons to | (being with a mean teacher) It was very difficult. It was very stressful. I never knew what she expected. I just didn't feel like the co-teaching went as well as what it could have.

I felt that they were all of our kids and she felt that she just had to deal with the special needs kids.

how it went was it was either she did the whole lesson or I did the whole lesson. It was like we had two teachers in the room, but we weren't co-teaching.

It was like she would do her thing; I would do my thing.

It just was not beneficial for the students at all.

There were times when we would not even talk to each other. It was just very stressful.

students could feel the tension between the teachers.

It was very detrimental to them. The outcomes were not as good as what they had been previously.

After that year I decided to transfer.

So I transferred into kindergarten, into co-teaching. Then everything else was fine. | As our relationship has grown, it has gotten easier for me to release some of that responsibility.

I like things a certain way so it's hard for me sometimes when other people do things differently. I like to see them my way. Not that anybody else's way is wrong.

It has gotten much easier as our relationship has grown. I'm perfectly comfortable with having her carry out any tasks.

I'm very comfortable with her seeing me.

we can learn from each other. If she sees me doing something that I'm not particularly comfortable wish, she can help me out and she can give me ideas.

Sometimes she'll just jump in and say something or start teaching and then I can learn from her. So that's one of the really good things.

Even if you have areas that you're not particularly strong with teaching, the other person kind of makes you stronger. | She always knows. Same thing if she leaves I know what to do.

it's never like one of us is the only one who knows what's going on.

That happens all the time. We get pulled out. We always know what the other one was going to be doing.

We kind of looked at the plans this morning and we were kind of like, "What can we do to really get the kids to understand?"

(with Mary) I'm happy to jump in. I've got our relationship figured out where to jump in and when to just let her go.

I'm still trying to figure it out with Jane. We're still kind of new at it.

It's only been a month so we're just trying to feel each other out and figure out when to jump in and when to be quiet.

if I'm competent I'm happy to let anybody jump in. I don't need to control it or be the lead teacher.

I'm just as fine working with some kids that aren't paying attention or some |

Kind of one of teaching, one of us assisting and then jumping in and switching

I think the fact that we've taught together for several years now. That makes a big

The first year that we co-taught it was kind of like 'I don't want to step on Emma's toes. What's my job? What's her job? What kind of roles are we each going to play?

I think just having the time together. Emma and I can sometimes kind of read each other's minds

we respect each other and we respect each other's teaching styles

sometimes she might have a way to explain something that I hadn't thought about.

Sometimes it's just looking at it from a new lens

we like each other

It's hard to teach with somebody that just irritates you.

we get along really well.

If you have tough students and you don't get along, that just

I think that's a key characteristic. But also just making learning fun. I think the kids enjoy coming to class. I hope they do. They tell me that they like being here and they like school. I try to make it fun.

If I'm excited, then they are excited about the learning.

Before the lessons, a lot of times at lunch we just kind of run through it and think about it. We kind of plan ahead who can work together and who's going to need a little extra support.

I know I'm not going to probably pull him into a group to do the story problem today.

But I already had in my mind Jala probably will need help, Kyle is gonna need help. So right away I just ask, "Ms. Elaina, can you take those two kids up front?" and I took a small group too.

we want to include kids as often as we can. But we know ahead of time who might struggle and kind of anticipate for those kids.

A lot of times we pair them up with somebody who's got the concept. So then they don't always have to be stuck with us.

They like to work with partners. So that's what we try to do.

it's not just me in the corner with the four special ed students. Whoever is there jumps in and we'll

make sure that I'm doing what I need to be doing. This is my first year in first grade.

we're both very open to new suggestions.

I'm very surprised how quickly we were able to just bounce off ideas.

I think we're doing an awesome job so far.

the teacher in kindergarten I had done it for three years with her. We could almost finish each other's sentences. Our brain waves were right.

I was kind of worried if I was going to be able to do the same with Mrs. Emma or would it take time.

I was excited to have somebody new. I think new is always good.

I was feeling in kindergarten that I was kind of getting into a rut and I needed a change.

I've learned that I have good ideas, but I also can learn more ideas.

Even though this is my 25th year, I've learned a lot from Mrs. Emma in just the 17 days that I've worked with her.

I'm kind of a go-with-the-flow type of person and just learn as you go.

There's just not a whole lot of classes that are being offered for co-teaching

We actually talked as a team a week ago to stay. The Tuesday meeting that you were in, we did it the week before and we talked about how we were going to be doing that.

Actually just on a whim. We were looking at this and we were saying, "Okay, what should we do?"

I think I'm willing for her to do whatever she wants. I think that we do a really good job of both of us doing the teaching.

Sometimes like during writing we were both doing it at the same time.

I think it's really important for kids to know that we are both teachers. Mrs. Emma isn't the one just for a few friends.

She is everybody's teacher. Same way with me. I am everybody's teacher.

Even though I've taught for 25 years, I know that I can always improve.

I am always willing to hear ways that I can improve.

We are Leader in Me, so we both need to listen o each other.

I think that if something happens where I would really disagree with her, we could sit down and I could explain my part and why I disagree with her.

I would also want to listen to her part because maybe she did have a reason for doing something.

I know when she first started, she wasn't as comfortable with the math. I was able to help her out with that a lot. With the behavior stuff she was able to help me out a lot.

It's just kind of a give and take relationship.

Honestly, that hadn't come up a lot. We really haven't had a lot of things that we don't see eye to eye on.

If there were something, I feel like our relationship is open and honest, that I would feel comfortable telling her if there was an issue that I had a problem with.

I think it has definitely gotten better as the years progressed.

When you first start, it's kind of like you don't want to step on the other person's toes. You don't want to offend them and you're still trying to figure out what's your role and figure out those boundaries. So it wasn't as easy when we first started.

now I think we're a lot more comfortable together.

(feedback) at lunch or after school or in the mornings we're kind of like, "Hey, how do you think that went?" or "Man, that lesson didn't go very good today" or things like that.

Usually it's kind of just in passing. But we have those quick

things like that and then jumping in. I really don't need to be the lead teacher all the time.

(a new writing program this year) so it's new to all of us. So it's different because we're all new to it.

I think if it would have just been me not new to it then I would have kind of been more reserved and really sat back and kind of watched instead of jump in as much as I do.

But since it's new to all of us, we all just kind of, "Okay, let's do this. Let's try this. It worked this way last time."

Everything was new to me the first year. I would say the first year I did not as much jumping in as I do now because I was just so new to it and I didn't want to mess it up. I would say that was true of the first year.

(disagree issue) That could be a little difficult.

I'm really easy going. I don't have to win or be the let's do it my way or not my way. I'm happy to do it a different way and then if it doesn't work out say, "Okay, this happened. Let's try it this way instead."

(disagree issue) Talking about things like that is a little harder. But that could be a point that's kind of hard.

I'm pretty willing to compromise, but maybe to speak my

makes it really hard.

We just kind of do our best every day.

At the end of the day we're like "Wow, that was tough. What could I have done better? What could we figure out together?

It's just a mutual respect.

She knows what she's doing and I know what I'm doing.

Let's do the best we can for the kids that we have

special needs are having a hard time keeping up with the general curriculum.

Finding the balance between giving them the curriculum that they need but also doing the skills that they require that are above where they're at right now

the amount of planning has been really tough.

Obviously, Ern and I don't live together so we can't take stuff home to work on it.

This year we're kind of changing how we do our planning and everybody is kind of taking a little chunk of

move from that group to that group.

It's not just like 'these are my students and these are her students.' They're all of our students.

This year is a little bit different because you're only in here half the time.

In previous years if you say, "Who's your teacher?" half of the kids would say Mrs. Mary and half the kids would say Mrs. Mary. We're both equals.

It's not like I'm the main teacher and she's my helper.

"She's not a helper, she's a teacher."

People who aren't in the education field. They don't always get it. It's hard to explain to some people what it's like to have two teachers.

We just say there's three adults in the room and talk to any of us about anything.

It works out pretty well. The three of us don't get into any power struggles.

This is our second year with Miss Elaina and she's wonderful. She jumps in, she's kind with the kids, she's just really good. We're really lucky to have her.

If you don't have a good associate, it makes more work for the teacher. Send her and she goes and she does exactly what you asked her to and even more. That really helps too.

(mentoring) I would love to because I' think it's really important

we meet as a team and we choose the stories that we're going to read. So all of the first graders get the same books read.

We start with the large group. We go into the small groups. Then if we see that a child is struggling, like some of the kids … Miss Elaina will go into the little office area. Those are kids that are really struggling with writing we had noticed.

Mrs. Emma and I just talk constantly. In the hall we'll just talk about things.

When we come in in the morning we discuss what the day is going to be like.

A lot of it is we'll have our lesson plans out. For example, last night with the writing. It's like, "How about if I do the starch of this and then you can chime in and you can start from here on down."

(regularly scheduled times) It's whenever we can have a time together. But usually it's after school or before school.

(from meetings) we know what we're going to be doing. That's the biggest part of teaching, knowing what you need to be doing.

I think I do a better job of giving directions. I learned this from my second

We have the same philosophy of teaching and I think that's a key too when you're doing co-teaching – that you have the same philosophy.

Philosophy is how we think that students learn best.

(feedback to each other) Usually we just talk after the lesson or during breaks or right after school.

(responsibilities) We usually just kind of discuss, "What part do you think would be good for you to do? What do you think would be good for me to do?"

This morning during the CFA, Mrs. Emma was going to do that, then she got called out so I just had to jump in and do it.

I think one thing that could improve is just having more time for planning. Not doing it really quick.

we decided to do the writing one one minute before writing started. I would have liked to have had more time.

(advice) The first thing is to be open and to have good communication with your co-teacher. And to be honest with them.

(recommendations to teacher preparations) be open minded.

tell them …especially for new teachers coming in, there's lots to learn.

Even somebody that has taught for 25 years, I can still learn new things.

Sometimes the first year teachers are afraid to ask because they think it's a

conversations. We don't formally sit down and meet or anything like that.

Typically, if something is up or something is kind of off we both kind of know and we'll discuss it later that day.

within teaching we kind of get to decide how we teach it.

this year our lesson plans are a little bit different.

Before work Emma and I would sit down and decide how we want to teach certain concepts. now our whole team teaches it the same way.

At the beginning, our first year, we would decide, "You teach part of the lesson and I'll teach this part of the lesson."

But as we got more comfortable with each other …I'm comfortable with just jumping in.

If I see that she's struggling or if I think that there's a way that I think I can explain it differently then I'm comfortable jumping in and so is she.

We just go with the flow and take turns going back and forth. I'm never offended if she starts the lesson or if she teaches. It is just a give and take.

we work with all the students. So if I see some students that need a little bit of help, I'll go over and

mind might be a little bit harder

(Responsibilities to teaching) Megan and I kind of have that down.

We'll just kind of take each other's leads. Like we read a book the other day. She read a page, I read a page. That wasn't even said. We just kind of jumped in.

Jane and I are trying to figure that out. Jane has had so much experience co-teaching that it's really easy for her.

If somebody didn't I can see that you'd need to talk about "Okay, I'll do this part, you do that."

because she's had so much experience, it's really not that hard to jump in and she works well with it. I feel like Jane doesn't feel like I'm stepping on her toes.

I said this the other day, "Is everything going okay?" Checking in with them and just saying, "Is it going okay? Could I do something differently?" Hopefully that helps the relationship.

Last year was easier because there was Justin there. This year at the conferences, I was kind of in between both.

I like to be at everybody's conference, but it just didn't work out that way.

Last year was kind of unique because Megan had a baby last year.

the planning and as a team we're helping each other out.

Before that, Emma and I were in charge of doing all of our own lesson plans

we had to get all that done at school

there's no time for us to really work on the lesson plans

we always had to either come early and work on them or stay late

one of the bigger challenges. Just finding the time to collaborate.

If you don't have the time to plan together then you're always "What are we doing next? What's next?"

our co-teaching relationship works so well, because we both come early. We have time to talk about things

Make it flow.

we'll plan. So this week I planned reading for the whole team and Emma planned math for the whole team. So our plans are kind of already done for us.

In the mornings Emma and I usually meet up quick and say, "Okay, here's what our plan is

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This year, we don't do a lot of planning anymore. I'm in charge of one subject, Emma is in charge of one subject and then Juanita is in charge of one subject. The other two teachers as well.

Our co-planning comes in the morning when we just look at it and say, "Let's do this, let's not do this." That's pretty much what it comes down to this year.

Before, we sat and read everything together. We say with the computer and we would type lesson plans together

Which has pluses and minuses both. Us sitting together doing it allows for the thoughts to happen then. But then that takes an awful lot of time.

Now we just look at the plans and think how we're going to make it work. There's pluses and minuses to both ways of doing it.

I wrote those and all of the first grade teachers taught them. Juanita wrote those plans and we're teaching them. Emma did our math plans this week, but all of us are teaching the math plans.

We're just sharing them, which is a time saver.

everybody has a little different teaching style. I get nervous that other people aren't going to like my lesson plans. That they're not how they teach or something.

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co-teacher that I worked with.

a lot of times you are told that you're going to be co-teaching. I think that it needs to be a passion of yours.

It is a passion of mine so I love doing it. But for some people, they like the control of the classroom and they don't like other people coming in. I think then it's a detriment to the students.

(attitude of) accepting other ideas, even if you've never tried it before.

(Co-teachers must always be thinking) What is best for all students. They don't always come to me. Even though since I had them last year they feel more comfortable with me. But they will go to Mrs. Emma.

I've learned lots.

I've learned patience because special education teachers probably have the most patient personalities of anybody I've even been around.

They've taught me how to be patient and not jump in right away. To kind of step back, look at the situation to help what is best.

I just feel like we're rocking it. I just feel like we're in sync and we're benefiting all of the students.

I wish that we would have more time to collaborate. That they would give us more time.

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weakness. It's not a weakness.

They think 'this is how it needs to go'. Maybe somebody who has more experience, maybe a co-teacher will come in and say, "Let's do this." Please be open about that.

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help them and she'll teach or she'll go over and help them and I'll teach. We kind of just go back and forth.

just kind of keep their goals in the back of our mind as we're planning and delivering the instruction.

At math time, we have some students who their IEP goal is number identification. So when we're doing story problems and they're required to write 4 plus 6, we know ahead of time that if they can't identify the number 10 it's going to be difficult for them to get the answer written down. So just kind of keeping those things in the back of our mind as we're teaching.

(assist students) one-on-one or in small groups. We both do that. We just both pull kids as needed.

One of us can pull some kids and work one-on-one or two-on-one. Even up to 3 or 4 kids. Then the other person can kind of roam and help the other students.

Even the gen ed kids who aren't identified – they still need to know that their teacher is there supporting them and they need attention too.

We try to kind of divide that up so she's not always the one who pulls the group or I'm not always the one who walks around. We

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So I was more the lead teacher last year and then we had a substitute.

This year probably not. I would say a lot of them think she's the teacher for those kids that need help. I would say so far that would be my opinion of what people would think.

I hope I get to work with Miss Jane again.

Miss Jane, our month and a half together has been great. She's fun, she does fun things. She doesn't take it too seriously. She's tough on the kids when they need to be tough.

I'm open to work with just about anybody.

They're both different styles though. She's a lot more laid back with the noise. Megan likes it a lot quieter.

I just have to remember when I'm at. At writing time it got a little loud and Jane brought it down.

So just knowing which teacher like what. But I would be happy to work with both of them again.

If I had to pick one I'd say Megan just because I know her better. But I really like what I'm learning from Jane.

If I'm made to choose, I'd choose Megan just because I'm used to her.

I would be just as happy working with Juanita. I think I'd learn a lot from her too.

for the day. Here's our math lesson. So we kind of have an idea in our mind of the order. We make accommodations a lot for our students. "Here's a lesson that might not work for this hand full of students. What are we going to do to meet their needs?" We'll say, "Okay, here's what we'll do. You take them for 15 minutes and then I'll take them and I'll work with them for 15 minutes." We discuss our accommodations, how we're going to … we already know ahead of time that these students are going to struggle or these students are going to need some enrichment. What are we going to do for those students? You're always a little worried or nervous what the person you're going to be with is like. That's the hard part. That's any job, working with somebody new. who I was working with was the part. I knew I could co-teach.	Right now is our planning time. Mondays we meet as a team in the conference room. Tuesdays we meet together with all the first graders there. This is usually our time by ourselves to plan. We'll sometimes talk then. Thursdays we're back together at the meeting again. Friday we have time by ourselves to get something done. Wednesdays and Fridays we sometimes meet. Sometimes by Friday we just have to do our own thing too. When we have small groups we're all in charge of planning those lessons. before you leave on Friday afternoon you have to have your books picked out and all that stuff ready to go. So Fridays a lot of times I use to pick out books and stuff for the following week. Those meetings are difficult because our team meets together and we discuss things. Even just like in passing. Like we're all walking out to get the kids at lunch and we'll quick, "Hey what did you do for this?" and talk like that. When we go in the conference room, those people that are in there weren't in on our conversation, so we're always having to catch them up before we can move forward. So sometimes it just takes a little bit of our time to kind of catch them up on what we've been working			kind of just take turns. This year is a little bit different because she's between two rooms. Her priority for the conferences would be to make sure that she sees the identified students and their parents at conference time. Then past that, I would want her to be in on a conference that I could anticipate might be difficult, if a student is struggling or having behavior issues or things like that. Sometimes it's nice to have a second person to kind of back you up. Sometimes parents get defensive. Like when you tell them what their child is doing at school, right away they're like, "Oh no no, my student wouldn't do that." So it's nice to have a second person say, "Well, this is what's happening" and kind of help back you up on that. So she'll divide her time between all the students. She has 40 students this year so she obviously can't be at 40 conferences because they overlap. But she does participate in the conferences as well. I would choose Miss Emma definitely. We get along very well. We like each other. If it was somebody who gets under your skin, they kind of irritate you, then I	(improve relationship) Just time. That's really what it is and it's something we don't have a lot of. More time together to talk and plan and be prepared. We try real hard to be prepared, but it doesn't always happen. I guess I would like a little more time. Juanita and I are kind of on different schedules. I like to be gone by about 4:15 and pick up my kids. She doesn't come as early in the morning so that's a little hard. both of us are always willing to stay late or come early if we need to talk. But time would be what would make it all better I think. Megan and I haven't had anything that we need to talk to Miss Sara about. We usually talk to her together or send her an email with both of our names on it if we need something. If there's a big concern, I'll go talk to her about it. Otherwise I just handle stuff on my own. If we had a big concern, we usually go together to talk to her about it Time is a swear word around here. That's what everybody wants. There's nothing Miss Sara can do to give us more time. You're always pulled in a thousand different directions. We have not told her that we'd

I learned from other people really well. I learned so much from Megan my first year. If I was on my own I would have floundered. The only hesitation I had was, what was she going to be like. Other than that, I thought I could do it. it wasn't a decision. My principal just told me, "You're going to co-teach" so I didn't really have an option. I was nervous, I was scared. I honestly hadn't had experience with special ed students before. I was nervous that I wasn't going to be able to handle it. not going to be able to teach them. I was just nervous that I wouldn't know what to do to help them to learn. That was my major fear after the first year we kind of figured it out. Emma and I got along well, I overcame my fear of special ed students. I realized they're just like any other students. after that you just get used to it. Experience is	on before we can move on to the next topic. I've learned a lot from Emma. I think she's learned a lot from me too, which is good. When you're in a room by yourself you don't see anybody else teaching. One of the main things that I've really amped up since I started with her It's nice to see how someone else does it. But once Megan showed me, I'm like, "Oh, I get it. That's easy." The same thing with being in Juanita's room this year. I'm learning how to do things differently too. Most teachers don't like other teachers watching them. But if people are just there to learn, then it doesn't affect it. I like being able to watch other teachers and what they do. It really helps me see "Oh, I should try that." That's a part I really enjoy. It would be nice to have more time to collaborate. I think we could be even better if we had more time. But you can't make the day any longer We could probably do better about doing different models of co-teaching. We kind of do the same model every day for the most part.	would say somebody else. we get along very well. (changes to improve co-teaching relationship) I know we could improve on our collaboration time. It would be nice to have some time to sit down. Her role is she's the person who's in charge of keeping the data on all their goals. she's the person who works on that goal with them. I support their needs as well she's the one that keeps the data. We honestly don't have time to communicate on that data. I don't ever have time to say, "How are they progressing?" It would be nice to have a little bit time to check in periodically and see how they're making progress towards their goals on their IEP. (administrator) I think it's important to keep them aware of what's happening. Sometimes I don't always know if they even understand what it's really like to be a co-teacher. I think they take some things for granted and they don't realize how much time it involves being a co-teaching with all the planning and things. we don't really have a lot of time to	like more time to plan together (teacher preparation days) On those days they have us at meetings, trying to teach us something new Let's say we have 10 teacher days. It's probably a half day out of all those that we would have time to actually work together. We're never in our rooms doing anything Next year, that would be the only thing – whether to take them out of the classroom or not for that reading instruction. noticed how loud that group gets in our room. I like to do fun, wild stuff. Sometimes there's different stuff I like to do, like messing up the letters or making the animal sounds or things like that. That's really distracting in the classroom. But if we're together again next year I'd like to decide if I should take them out or should not remove them from the general ed classroom. (in relationship) We didn't do anything this summer together. It would be nice to do something outside of school together. Go to lunch together. Do something together so that we can build our relationship that way She and I get to see each other. We're both taking masters classes so I always ask her if I have questions. She and I text each other, so does Jane Mary.

everything. You just need time in the classroom and experience. I'm between two rooms. So that's a little bit different for us. I feel like we're kind of in the groove We know where to jump in, where to meet. Especially with math, who's going to need a little more of this or how we can change it to be better for each student. getting used to being between two rooms is kind of different for me.	We kind of are both up there jumping in, jumping out. For certain lessons, like in the math book, we'll put a sticky note 'today let's do stations' or 'today you take a group and I'll take a group.' If you respect each other and you assume they're both good teachers. So to me it's an attitude of respect that will help with co-teaching. Yes, it's an attitude of respect. It's like a partnership really. Some people compare it to a marriage. Honestly, I spend more time with Emma than I do with my husband. They say it's like a marriage. You have to have the give and take just like in a marriage. You have to compromise. I've heard it compared to that before with good reason. There are a lot of similarities. So to me how can we do it differently, how can we do it better? How can we share the work? Just be cognizant of where she's going with it and where I would like to go with it. Sometimes we'll jump in and say, "I think we could try it this way" and then Megan is like, "Okay, we can try that way." So always thinking how to get along with			ourselves because we have a lot of meetings and things. It's important that they support us because we do a lot of times have difficult students. We want them to support us if we need extra resources or if we need help. (changes will make) we can always get better at trying different idea and trying different strategies for the kids. I really liked how she said yesterday that even if the lesson goes well you always in the back of your mind think 'how can I do it better?' I think it's just nice to hear from other teachers, "How did you do this activity" or "how did you teach this?" So many people have things that you haven't even thought of. communication is probably one of the biggest things. If I was over here in my little corner and I don't communicate well with my co-teacher, then things probably aren't going to go as smoothly. make sure that you communicate openly if there is a problem. Even if things are going well. "Hey, that went really good today. Let's try that again." Communication is a big thing. use your time wisely. It is hard to get	I just enjoy spending time with her I think if I made any changes if I get to work with her, it would be different styles of co-teaching. She said the other day, "Let's try this, let's try something else" and not get stuck in our same rut. That would be the only thing I'd like to change – try a few different strategies of co-teaching. (advice) Be open minded. You don't have to be the boss. Just let it flow. Use other people's ideas. Not so much control – you can't control it all. Let somebody else take it or be flexible. Have fun together (recommendations) I think a lot of observing of it. there's really no other way to do it besides coming and watching. Or give it a try. If we had a teacher in here that wanted to give it a try, I'd step out and let them try it. Just actual practice because some people don't like it. For some people, it's just not for them. And that's okay. If you're a real control person and like things your way and it's gotta fit in this way, it's probably not for you. You'd have to have the disposition "Oh okay, I can go with the flow. I can use other people's ideas. I don't have to be in control."

	the other person or share ideas or share the work. specific math skills I would say. Being a better math teacher. behavior management. Skills that you can use for those difficult students that have a lot of behavior problems.			everything done in a day. (recommendations) teaching students (teachers) more about behavior management. if you don't have a good management system, you're not going to get a lot of learning done. To be honest, my first few years I really struggled with that.	Otherwise, it would be more difficult. Experience and a flexible attitude would be the advice I would give.

APPENDIX C

EXAMPLE OF INITIAL CODING AND CATEGORIZATION FROM FIELD NOTES

Initial Coding and Categorization from Field Notes		
Morning classroom (Jane & Emma)	Afternoon classroom (Mary & Emma)	Meetings
Both teachers taking turns in piking up students to but the words in the right column in the Promethean Board Whole group instruction with both teachers involved during the delivery of the lesson Special education teacher palls the identified students to her room during the reading rotations All three adults are working with students and seem to know what to do without need to ask They are prepared and planed for the daily five rotations (in the Promethean Board students' names are assigned to each of the daily 5 literacy station to make sure every student knows what to do and is visiting all five components) While Ms. Jane is working with reading groups, Mrs. Emma is roaming to help other students who are engaged in one of the five components of the Daily Five. Bothe teachers dance with all students to get refresh for the next activity Both teachers walk with students to the lunch Jane did not introduce me to the students Emma introduce me to her reading group wen we get to her room Morning quick planning, distributing roles, and righting learning goals and success criteria Emma bring ID students who do not know how to get t the classroom yes from the school bus Morning routine (Emma ask students if they have something to share with the class, practice a letter sounds and motions.)	Mary introduce me to her students At lunch time they prepare and plan for the afternoon activities While Emma is reading a book with two characteristics, Mary jump in, pick one character and takes turn with Emma in reading the book (that was not even said). While Mary is playing a game (Double Compare) with one student to show the other how to play it, Emma jump in and engaged in the game to make more clarification. Bothe are actively involved during math workshops and are engaging in many math games Bothe smoothly transitions from whole group instruction to groups of two. Both are circulating through the classroom assisting students and provide them with feedback Emma claps her hands 5 times (everyone back to the carpet when I count to 10); Mary (raise your thump up if you know the game, flip it to the side if you are not sure, and thump done if you don't know) Both teachers lead students to the Art Room They walk together to the conference room Both take students from Art room and walk with them to outside recess eat lunch together in the classroom to plan for the day	Bothe share information about their instructions and students to catch the members up with what they have been working on All carry the Iowa Core curriculum to the meeting They have their computers open and share data about students They have their calendar and add notes to these charts All discussed first grade academic goals and ask (how will we respond when some students already know the skill) All first grade teachers meet to plan for the week They all discuss the goals they have to work in from the curriculum and look for activates from teachers and students book Mary and Jane are sitting next to each other and taking about what they have been working on with math Mary, Emma, and Jane engaged in a conversation and are looking for ideas together

APPENDIX D

EXAMPLE OF INITIAL CODING AND CATEGORIZATION FROM EMAIL

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Initial Coding and Categorization from Email Questions and Answers		
Emma	Mary	Jane
We took time to discuss what went well last year and what we wanted to improve on for this year	Discussed which students would be in my class and how we wanted to to split up Emma's time between two classes. Shared new ideas we had seen over the summer for our class.	This year was different since I was able to loop my students from Kindergarten so I had a lot of insight that I already knew that I could share with Mrs. Emma. This year we didn't have to "get to know the students" since I already knew their strengths and weaknesses.
Both worked on getting the room ready. Especially Jane since she was new to 1st grade	Yes. I feel like I may do a bit more of the preparations since I am the gen ed teacher but Emma is great about helping with anything or purchasing supplies we need.	(organize the materials and supplies)? yes
each general education teacher attends the meeting; they have a ton of good information about the student and also peer comparisons	Hold classroom meetings, show students how to embrace differences, have all students work together throughout the year	inclusive classroom community? we speak throughout the day and before/after school. We also send email and texts when we think of something after we are home.
I keep all the data on students iep goals	(IEP meetings) Yes, it is a requirement by law	Do you both attend the IEP meetings? yes
I go over the iep with each teacher at the beginning of the year but do not give a copy	(data) Special ed teacher - Emma	(data on students' progress toward their goals on the IEP? Mrs Emma
I plan for the iep goals but we talk about how we can all meet the iep goals for small group reading	Emma has those but fills me in at the beginning of the year and gives me the accommodation page from the IEP.	(copy of their IEP goals) I have access to IEP at a glance
Each student goes to each rotation and we modify for all students	Emma plans for their goals but we both help to implement lessons to meet them. IEP students work with both teachers throughout the day.	(planning for their IEP goals) Mrs. Emma
We sometimes modify the tasks students need to complete we also offer students more teacher support and scaffolding for higher level skills	We use a workshop approach (dont call it Daily 5 anymore). It is the basic same premise but has more authentic tasks that are tied to the mini lessons we teach.	In certain situations we try to pair an IEP student with a stronger student because it has been my experience that peer support is much more valuable then having a teacher helping them all of the time.
(co-teaching relationship) respect and understanding, wiliness to compromise	Co-teaching is a give and take relationship. You have to support the other person and lean on them for support as well. Co-teachers should have a similar teaching style and philosophy of teaching in order to be successful.	We technically don't do the daily 5. We do reading rotations where I set up the rotations with a mix of student abilities during each rotation with the exception of the reading group which is grouped by ability.
(strong co-teaching relationship) listen to each others ideas and willing to try different teaching styles		
(describe relationship) respect		
(promote) we take the time before and after school to communicate	Communication is key. Talk through the problems and kinks before they become larger issues. Be open to the other person's ideas and ways of teaching things.	Ms. Elaina our instructional support assists students when they are not with a teacher. (definition of a good co-teaching relationship) 2 people who have great communication skills and who are willing to be open to new ideas.
	(relationship) Balance	

	(promote) Be positive and open. Avoid criticizing the other person or their ideas. Find time to talk and share things. Sometimes this is just venting but its important to keep each other up to speed on what you are noticing. This helps to plan next steps.	(build a strong co-teaching relationship) having good communications (relationship with your co-partner/s) wonderful (promote) communicating during planning time, before and after school, during lunch, and through email and text when we are not at school.

APPENDIX E

KEY THEMES, SUBTHEMES, AND CONCEPTS

Key Themes, Sub Themes and Concepts Identified in the Analysis		
Themes	Sub Themes	Concepts
Building the Relationship	First year co-teaching: "I don't want to step on her toes"	What's my job? What's her job? What could we figure out together? Little worried or nervous what the person you're going to be with is like who I was working with was the part. I knew I could co-teach. I honestly hadn't had experience with special ed students before. I was kind of worried if I was going to be able to do the same with Mrs. Emma or would it take time. I just feel like we're rocking it. I just feel like we're in sync You don't want to offend them and you're still trying to figure out what's your role and figure out those boundaries. It's only been a month so we're just trying to feel each other out I was just so new to it and I didn't want to mess it up
	As the years progressed: "we kind of figured it out"	Emma and I can sometimes kind of read each other's minds Emma and I got along well We could almost finish each other's sentences. Our brain waves were right. it has gotten easier for me to release some of that responsibility I'm perfectly comfortable with having her carry out any tasks I'm very comfortable with her seeing me If I'm made to choose, I'd choose Mary just because I'm used to her
	"that's a Key": Teachers teaching style and philosophy	We have the same philosophy of teaching Philosophy is how we think that students learn best. Our main goal is to keep teaching Co-teachers should have a similar teaching style and philosophy of teaching in order to be successful. Let's do the best we can for the kids that we have just making learning fun. Have fun together. she does fun things. I like to do fun, wild stuff They're all of our students. Jane did not introduce me to students, while Emma and Mary did.
	"You have to have the give and take just like in a marriage": Grow from one another	I like being able to watch other teachers and what they do There's lots to learn Even if you have areas that you're not particularly strong with teaching, the other person kind of makes you stronger She wasn't as comfortable with the math. I was able to help her out with that a lot. With the behavior stuff she was able to help me out a lot. You have to support the other person and lean on them for support as well. When you're in a room by yourself you don't see anybody else teaching.
	"it's not really up to us": Teachers choice to be in a co-taught classroom	In first grade there's no option for kids to be like in a self-contained When I first got into this role, I didn't have a choice. They said, "You're going to co-teach." If I want a job, I'm going to say okay. Would we like to still be doing this? Yes. Will it be our option? Probably not. A lot of times you are told that you're going to be co-teaching. I think that it needs to be a passion of yours.
Setting Roles and Responsibilities	"you're not really on your own": Advantage of sharing the classroom"	I think we're doing an awesome job so far It is easier when we are together t's really stressful when she's not here because I know what to expect If I can't get a concept across to the students, sometimes another person can do that If I was on my own I would have floundered I would want her to be in on a conference that I could anticipate might be difficult kind of help back you up on that
	Associate	It works out pretty well. The three of us don't get into any power struggles. This is our second year with Miss Elaina and she's wonderful. She jumps in, she's kind with the kids, she's just really good. We're really lucky to have her. If you don't have a good associate, it makes more work for the teacher. Send her and she goes and she does exactly what you asked her to and even more. That really helps too. Then if we see that a child is struggling, like some of the kids … Miss Elaina will go into the little office area. Those are kids that are really struggling with writing we had noticed.

	"She is everybody's teacher. I am everybody's teacher": Shearing leadership in the classroom we are both teachers	We'll just kind of take each other's leads. Bothe smoothly transitions from whole group instruction to groups of two. Both are circulating through the classroom assisting students and provide them with feedback Bothe teachers dance with all students to get refresh for the next activity Both teachers walk with students to the lunch, act out students' personal narratives. lead students to the Art Room I think that we do a really good job of both of us doing the teaching. Sometimes like during writing we were both doing it at the same time. I think it's really important for kids to know that we are both teachers We just both pull kids as needed. They don't always come to me. Even though since I had them last year they feel more comfortable with me. But they will go to Mrs. Emma. I think it's really important for kids to know that we are both teachers. Mrs. Emma isn't the one just for a few friends In previous years if you say, "Who's your teacher?" half of the kids would say Mrs. Emma and half the kids would say Mrs. Mary. We're both equals.
	Determine who will do what: "I'm happy to jump in" Organize the classroom Make it flow duties	Both worked on getting the room ready "setting up classroom" you have to have a table for both of us to work at and a spot for all of that. So we planned out that. We both did. we both agreed that it was too loud. we have a nice big classroom; We start with the large group. We go into the small groups. Kind of one of teaching, one of us assisting and then jumping in and switching We know where to jump in, where to meet. Sometimes she'll just jump in and say something or start teaching I'm just as fine working with some kids that aren't paying attention or some things like that and then jumping in I've got our relationship figured out where to jump in and when to just let her go She knows what she's doing and I know what I'm doing All three adults are working with students and seem to know what to do without need to ask we work with all the students. Both teachers taking turns in piking up students to but the words in the right column in the Promethean Board I'm not always the one who walks around. We kind of just take turns Make it flow. I'm kind of a go-with-the-flow type of person and just learn as you go. Be open minded. You don't have to be the boss. Just let it flow. You'd have to have the disposition "Oh okay, I can go with the flow. I can use other people's ideas. I don't have to be in control." Otherwise, it would be more difficult. We just go with the flow and take turns going back and forth. I'm never offended if she starts the lesson or if she teaches Her role is she's the person who's in charge of keeping the data on all their goals. she's the person who works on that goal with them. I support their needs as well she's the one that keeps the data. Special education teacher palls the identified students to her room during the reading rotations Emma bring ID students who do not know how to get t the classroom yes from the school bus I keep all the data on students iep goals Emma has those but fills me in at the beginning of the year and gives me the accommodation page from the IEP.
Planning	"you can't make the day any longer: Lack of Co-planning time	the amount of planning has been really tough. we had to get all that done at school there's no time for us to really work on the lesson plans we always had to either come early and work on them or stay late one of the bigger challenges. Just finding the time to collaborate. If you don't have the time to plan together then you're always "What are we doing next? What's next?" I think one thing that could improve is just having more time for planning. Not doing it really quick. use your time wisely. It is hard to get everything done in a day. Time is a swear word around here. That's what everybody wants.
	"this year our lesson plans are a little bit different": the value of teamwork **weekly planning** **Advantage** **Challenges**	Obviously, Ern and I don't live together so we can't take stuff home to work on it. Which has pluses and minuses both. Us sitting together doing it allows for the thoughts to happen then. But then that takes an awful lot of time. now our whole team teaches it the same way. This year we're kind of changing how we do our planning and everybody is kind of taking a little chunk of the planning and as a team we're helping each other out. This year we're kind of changing how we do our planning and everybody is kind of taking a little chunk of the planning and as a team we're helping each other out. I wrote those and all of the first grade teachers taught them. Jane wrote those plans and we're teaching them. Emma did our math plans this week, but all of us are teaching the math plans. We're just sharing them, which is a time saver. we know what we're going to be doing. That's the biggest part of teaching, knowing what you need to be doing.

	Everyday planning and accommodations	This is usually our time by ourselves to plan. everybody has a little different teaching style. I get nervous that other people aren't going to like my lesson plans. That they're not how they teach or something. Before the lessons, a lot of times at lunch we just kind of run through it and think about it. We kind of plan ahead who can work together and who's going to need a little extra support. Our co-planning comes in the morning when we just look at it and say, "Let's do this, let's not do this." That's pretty much what it comes down to this year. We'll say, "Okay, here's what we'll do. You take them for 15 minutes and then I'll take them and I'll work with them for 15 minutes." Morning quick planning, distributing roles, and righting learning goals and success criteria At lunch time they prepare and plan for the afternoon activities They eat lunch together in the classroom to plan for the day So we kind of have an idea in our mind of the order. We make accommodations a lot for our students. Now we just look at the plans and think how we're going to make it work. we already know ahead of time that these students are going to struggle Wednesdays and Fridays we sometimes meet. Sometimes by Friday we just have to do our own thing too. before you leave on Friday afternoon you have to have your books picked out and all that stuff ready to go. So Fridays a lot of times I use to pick out books and stuff for the following week.
	facility meetings (Monday, Thursday)	All carry the Iowa Core curriculum to the conference room They have their computers open and share data about students They have their calendar and add notes to these charts So sometimes it just takes a little bit of our time to kind of catch them up Right now is our planning time. Mondays we meet as a team in the conference room. Tuesdays we meet together with all the first graders there. This is usually our time by ourselves to plan. We'll sometimes talk then. Thursdays we're back together at the meeting again. Friday we have time by ourselves to get something done
Ongoing Relationship	It's just a mutual respect **Respect/ Experience/ compromise**	respect is probably one of my key characteristics. If you respect each other and you assume they're both good teachers. So to me it's an attitude of respect that will help with co-teaching. respect and understanding, wiliness to compromise after that you just get used to it. Experience is everything. You just need time in the classroom and experience. They say it's like a marriage. You have to have the give and take just like in a marriage. You have to compromise. I've heard it compared to that before with good reason. There are a lot of similarities.
	Trying different ideas	So to me how can we do it differently, how can we do it better? we can always get better at trying different idea and trying different strategies for the kids. I think if I made any changes if I get to work with her, it would be different styles of co-teaching.
	Keep communication alive communicate openly/ positive and open/listen	communication is probably one of the biggest things. If I was over here in my little corner and I don't communicate well with my co-teacher, then things probably aren't going to go as smoothly. (build a strong co-teaching relationship) having good communications I would also want to listen to her part because maybe she did have a reason for doing something. The first thing is to be open and to have good communication with your co-teacher. And to be honest with them.