A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS'

EXPERIENCE WITH GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS NOT IN A CO-TEACHING

MODEL OF INCLUSION IN NORTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOLS

by

Desmond Denard Coble

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

Angela Marguerite Smith, Ph.D., Committee Chair

James Eller, Ed.D., Committee Member

Paul Leslie, Ph.D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of special education teachers with general education teachers who are not in a co-teaching model of inclusion in North Carolina high schools. The study examined how inclusion is implemented at the school level and how special education teachers and general education teachers collaborate for students with disabilities. Special education teachers working at the high school level in North Carolina are the participants in this study. The setting for the study is high schools within the state of North Carolina. The central question for this study asks how special education teachers describe their experiences working with general education teachers within the high school environment when working with students with disabilities in the model of inclusion. The theory guiding this study is Kahn's (1990) social exchange theory, which focuses on meaningfulness, availability, and safety within an organization. The data were collected through interviews, focus groups, and a writing sample and organized into themes. Data analysis was completed through bracketing, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. The results from the data analysis focused on three themes: Challenges with Collaboration, General Education Teachers' Lack of Understanding of the IEP, and Challenges with Special Education Teachers Meeting all Responsibilities.

Keywords: teacher, school, students, high school, experience, special education teacher

Dedication

Before I believed in myself, you believed in me. You were my first cheerleader, best friend, guide, mentor, mother, and confidant. You believed in the vision God had set for me even until your last days on earth. Even during your last days with us on this side, you gave me my frame for my doctorate diploma. You believed that God would use me for a higher purpose. I had my doubts, and you proclaimed to me I was going to achieve the goal. This dissertation and all of the work toward my final degree are in honor and memory of my grandmother, Mary Alease Rice Coble. I want the world to know I will always be "your baby."

Thank you, God, for blessing me with a piece of heaven on earth in the form of my grandmother.

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List of Abbreviations

Behavioral Emotional Disorder (BED)

Behavioral Improvement Plan (BIP)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of special education teachers working with general education teachers who are not in a co-teaching model of inclusion in North Carolina high schools. Chapter One provides the background for this research and provides information on the relationship between the general education teacher and the special education teacher within the research and phenomenon being studied. Chapter One also includes the problem statement, statement of purpose, significance of the study, and research questions with sub-questions. Definitions of key terms are also provided to explain the nature of the research, and the chapter concludes with a summary.

Background

Special education teachers who are working with general education teachers teaching students in a non-coteaching classroom need to collaborate to ensure students with disabilities are provided with services and accommodations according to their individualized education plan (IEP). In order for special education teachers to fulfill their responsibilities, they must retrieve data and other information from the general education teacher that can be used to measure current goals and create new goals for the next IEP. One of the benefits of the special education teacher coteaching with the general education teacher is the ability for special education teachers to get a first-hand look at students with disabilities to monitor progress and collect data on IEP goals. Teachers who are in the inclusion model of teaching are expected to function as a unit and collaborate (Chan & Yuen, 2015). Students with disabilities are not always placed in a classroom where the coteaching model is present at the high school level. The general education teacher is often solely responsible for directing the content instruction in the classroom as well as properly

implementing IEPs and collecting evaluative and assessment data to be provided to the special education teacher. Students with disabilities may not be in a classroom where a special education teacher is teaching alongside the general education teacher.

Historical

Education should be a right for all humans, and the inclusive classroom limits discrimination and aids the development of human society (Mezquita-Hoyos et al., 2018). The coteaching model of inclusion has become the preferred way of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom over the past 10 years since 60% of students with disabilities spend at least 80% of their day in the general school environment (Gilmour, 2018). Gilmour (2018) stated inclusion was not considered a method of teaching students with disabilities until the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1975 (IDEA) and the Handicapped Children Act were signed, which ensured all students would receive free, appropriate education within the least restrictive environment (LRE) as determined by the IEP team. Other federal guidelines expanded the prevalence of keeping students with disabilities in the general education classroom, including the reactivation of the IDEA in 2004 and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; Ballard & Dymond, 2017). The 2004 reactivation of the IDEA stated all students must be presented with a general education curriculum on their grade level, be given grade level assessments, and have an IEP stating how they will participate in the general education classroom environment (IDEA of 2004; Olson et al., 2016). The laws enacted by the federal government have caused school systems to implement ways to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Each school developed a culture of inclusion based on cultures, beliefs, and policies in place by the organization (Vroey et al., 2016).

Social

Special education teachers are responsible for the instruction of students with disabilities as well as ensuring all laws and other guidelines are being followed, such as access to the general education classroom for students with disabilities through modifications and accommodations. One of the purposes of inclusive education is to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to the general curriculum as their non-disabled peers (Grynova & Kalinichenko, 2018). In the coteaching inclusion model of teaching students with disabilities, the general education teacher is the primary deliverer of curriculum content. The special education teacher is responsible for keeping track of data and assisting struggling students in the room (Bray & Russell, 2018). General education teachers who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion have the responsibility of making sure the IEP is implemented correctly for every student in the room. One of the concerns of teachers is that they do not have the training or knowledge to ensure they are implementing the IEP correctly for the student. In one study, general education teachers noted the information they had received on students with disabilities did not reflect the current situation of the student (İlik & Sarı, 2017). The teachers in this study reported they were not informed of students' IEP progress or the formation process of the IEP.

Theoretical

John Dewey (1938) has influenced the understanding of the way children learn socially and how the teacher is to direct the students in the classroom. According to Williams (2017), Dewey's (1938) view of the classroom is that it is a social hub for children to learn and work together collaboratively. Education should be viewed as a social experience for all in the classroom, and the teacher becomes the leader of group activities (Dewey, 1938). In the inclusion classroom, teachers set up activities, and students work together. There is an interaction

between the student and their surroundings in which teachers are responsible for cultivating learning situations (Hironimus-Wendt & Lovell-Troy, 1999). According to Cook and Friend (1995), one of the goals of the coteaching classroom is for a diverse population of students, including those students with disabilities, to be taught together.

Jean Piaget's (1952) cognitive development theory has also influenced classroom instruction. Cognitive development theory breaks childhood development into four parts: sensorimotor (birth to two years), preoperational (2–7 years), concrete operational (7–11 years), and formal operational (11–15 years; Ahmad et al., 2016). According to Al-Shammari et al. (2019), cognitive-based inclusion practices have always shown positive results in the classroom, and the strategies used are able to help students communicate and organize what they are learning. When students are learning in school, they must have the knowledge from previous lessons in order to be successful with future tasks. Cognitive learning environments are created to allow students to make connections with previously learned lessons. Cognitive classrooms provide the best environment for teachers to be able to assist students with handling information (Al-Shammari et al., 2019).

The goal of special education is for students with disabilities to have equal access to education as their non-disabled peers. For students with disabilities, there are laws in place to ensure their place in the general education classroom. Collaboration allows the special education teacher to work alongside the general education teacher to ensure the IEP is being followed correctly, students are receiving the correct accommodations, and the special education teacher can assist the regular education teacher with modifications of the curriculum. Dewey's (1938) and Piaget's (1952) theories serve as foundations for the inclusion classroom. Students with disabilities are not always in a coteaching classroom where the special education teacher and

general education teacher are together. Students with disabilities are also in classes where the coteaching model is not used. Special education teachers must have collegial working relationships in order to fulfill their responsibilities to students with disabilities (Garwood et al., 2018; Langher et al., 2017).

Situation to Self

I have worked in the field of special education for over 17 years, and I have been a special education teacher at the high school level for the past 10 of those years. As a special education teacher, I have more responsibilities than only conducting coteaching inclusion classroom duties with general education teachers. I am also responsible for collecting and gathering data to conduct IEP meetings and other meetings necessary for students with disabilities to be successful in the general education setting. The data collected from general education teachers are used to track students' progress toward IEP goals, make adjustments to service delivery, and interpret the information to parents and other stakeholders on the progress of students. In some instances, to gather the information that I need to complete the tasks for students on my caseload, I have to collaborate with general education teachers. The special education teacher may not be present in classes where the general education teacher is teaching students with disabilities.

As a special education teacher, it is essential to ensure I can connect and collaborate with general education teachers for the students to be successful and make progress in the school environment. I have had positive and negative relationships with general education teachers at the high school level. Positive working relationships with teachers made it possible for me to complete my tasks to support students with disabilities as well as further assist the general education teacher with strategies for teaching students with disabilities. The positive

relationships also allowed me to take more of an active role in the classroom. Negative relationships with teachers were complicated, as some general education teachers may not have understood my role as the special education teacher in the coteaching model of inclusion. The negative experiences came from the regular education teacher not wanting to collaborate as well as the lack of professional development in the area of coteaching. The motivation for this research was to gain information on other special education teachers' experiences working with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model of inclusion. The information gained provides a better understanding of collaboration in the high school setting. I wanted to have a better understanding of what is needed to improve working relationships between special education teachers and general education teachers who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion at the high school level.

I bring to this study ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), ontological assumptions are defined as opinions based on reality. The researcher must be able to accurately report the different opinions and views presented by the participants of the study. Awareness of epistemological assumptions allows the researcher to distance themselves from the phenomenon researched in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To gain knowledge from my participants, I used interviews and writing samples that defined the experiences of special education teachers. The axiological assumption pertains to the role of the values which were to be presented in the study (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, I assumed my views would be very similar to the participants because of my relationship with the study as a special education teacher. I also had the experiences of past coteaching relationships, positive and negative, which have formed my personal views on how collaboration should take place within the school. I personally believe all teachers within the school

environment should collaborate to fully support students with disabilities in the school environment.

The study was based on the research paradigm of social constructivism. The researcher sought to understand the world in which they work and live. The goal of social constructivism is to rely on the subjects participating in the study to learn their views of a situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal of this research was to gain a better understanding of how special education teachers in the high school environment collaborate with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model of inclusion. Therefore, data from the participants was imperative, as it was evaluated for common themes.

Problem Statement

The problem that prompted this study is that when special education teachers and general education teachers do not collaborate collegially, students with disabilities are less likely to be successful in the general education classroom (Al-Natour et al., 2015; Belknap & Taymans, 2015; Garwood et al., 2018; Hester et al., 2020; Langher et al., 2017; Pellegrino et al., 2015; Zagona et al., 2017). In a study by Zagona et al. (2017), special education teachers felt disconnected from general education teachers due to the lack of communication. Lack of collaboration among general education teachers can cause special educators to leave the profession of special education (Langher et al., 2017; Park & Shin, 2020). Inclusion practices have been thoroughly researched (Hagiwara et al., 2019), and the literature supports the need for general education teachers and special teachers to collaborate and to receive continuous professional development (Chan & Yuen, 2015; Nilsen, 2017; Olson et al., 2016). Special education teachers and general education teachers may have different teaching philosophies, which can cause a disruption within the relationship (Cook & Friend, 1995; Forbes & Billet,

2012). General education teachers' attitudes toward the inclusive classroom can also cause another problem for special education teachers who are attempting to collaborate for the benefit of students with disabilities (Priyadarshini & Thangarajathi, 2016). There are limited studies focusing on the success of the implementation of the coteaching model (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2011). Furthermore, literature has provided minimal research on best practices for working with students with disabilities at the public high school level in the inclusion model.

One of the ways special education teachers and general education teachers are to work together is through collaboration. Teachers can collaborate in a way in which all groups involved have respect and understanding for one another (Pettersson & Ström, 2019). One of the challenges of collaboration is that it forces teachers to get out of their comfort zones (Pellegrino et al., 2015). Collaboration is a concern addressed by educators when working with students with disabilities (Bray & Russell, 2018; Nilsen, 2017; Olson et al., 2016; Petersen, 2016). Special Education Teachers must work alongside General Education Teachers to collaborate on strategies for students with disabilities as well as retrieve data and other information needed for the special education teacher to perform their responsibilities. Special education teachers are responsible for creating IEPs for all students with disabilities on their caseloads. Special education teachers are limited in the amount of time they have to collaborate with general education teachers and must be able to navigate this challenge in order to fulfill other responsibilities outside of the classroom, such as attending meetings required by the school, such as faculty meetings and completing duties assigned by the school. Petersen (2016) stated that collaborations between special education teachers and general education teachers are often strained due to teacher schedule conflicts.

When an IEP is being developed, special education teachers are responsible for contacting every stakeholder in order to collect information (Patti, 2016). The general education teacher is responsible for having an understanding of the IEP and delivering the curriculum to all students. General education teachers are often confused about the definition of curriculum access and how it applies to their students in the classroom (Petersen, 2016). If the general education teacher is not with a special education teacher in the coteaching inclusion model, the general education will not have frequent contact with a special education teacher for assistance in their classroom. The problem is that when special education teachers and general education teachers do not collaborate collegially, students with disabilities are not successful in the general education classroom.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of special education teachers with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model of inclusion in North Carolina high schools. At this stage in the research, "special education" is defined as an education program for students with disabilities to receive specialized assistance to reach their educational goals (ASCD, n.d.). The theory guiding this study is Kahn's (1990) social exchange theory, which focuses on meaningfulness, availability, and safety. The theory was later expanded by Saks (2006) to include economic and socioemotional resources as factors when considering employee engagement and disengagement with an organization. The theory provides information on the causes of engagement and disengagement of special education teachers in their collaborations with general education teachers. Kahn's (1990) theory also provides insight into what aspects of the school environment affect collaboration between teachers.

Significance of the Study

The research has empirical, practical, and theoretical significance to general education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, researchers, and other stakeholders who work with students with disabilities in the high school setting. The study's purpose is to provide an understanding of the phenomenon of how special education teachers collaborate with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model of inclusion. The researcher obtained the views of special education to get a better understanding of collaboration and how to improve collaboration practices in the high school setting.

Empirically, the research provides information about the unknown experiences of special education teachers working with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model of inclusion in North Carolina high schools. Teachers are concerned with low support from the community for students with disabilities (Priyadarshini & Thangarajathi, 2016). Low support from the community and a lack of opportunities for collaboration can cause teacher burnout or ultimately have teachers leave the profession, which can have adverse effects on IEP outcomes for students with disabilities (Wong et al., 2017). Even though training and professional development have been created for teachers to learn how to collaborate with others, administrators cannot depend on the training alone. It is suggested that administrators evaluate observable behavioral changes among teachers when working with students with disabilities in the classroom (Brock & Carter, 2017).

Theoretically, this research furthers the understanding of how special education teachers operate and gain information on their students through the general education teacher when they are not working in a coteaching model. The theory by Kahn (1990) was used to further explain how special education teachers and general education teachers work together to serve students

with disabilities when not in a coteaching model classroom. The theory explains the relationship between special education teachers and general education teachers at the high school level. Furthermore, Kahn's (1990) theory explained the positive and negative experiences of collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers.

The research furthers the understanding of the expectations as well as concerns of the special education teacher in the high school environment. Teachers need to understand how students learn in inclusive environments, and teachers are dependent on each other to create environments for all students to learn. Al-Shammari et al. (2019) stated that students learn using behaviorism-based, cognitive-based, and constructivism-based practices. In the inclusion classroom, students should be able to gain knowledge and abilities with the information presented to them (Al-Shammari et al., 2019). Teachers can use constructivism-based methods to create strategies for students to learn new material which is involved in their educational environment (Al-Shammari et al., 2019).

Practically, this research can be used to help increase special education teachers' effectiveness within the high school environment when not in a coteaching model of inclusion with the general education teacher. For students with disabilities whose services are delivered within the general curriculum, special education teachers may not be coteaching with the student's general education teachers. The high school level presents a unique situation, unlike in elementary and middle school, as students are on different schedules and in different places within the school building. The research was able to provide insight into how teachers can collaborate with students with disabilities without the use of the coteaching model. Special education teachers have many responsibilities, and the research provides information on what is needed for all teachers involved in the high school environment. Special education teachers not

only perform duties for coteaching classrooms, but they must also keep track of students who are not placed in coteaching classrooms. The special education teacher is responsible for ensuring that students with disabilities are making progress as well as having the correct modifications and accommodations to be successful in the classroom. Schools must provide "effective supports for inclusive education that are aligned with students' needs" (Hagiwara et al., 2019, p. 4).

Research Questions

The research questions are based on the goal of discovering the experiences of special education teachers with general education teachers not in the coteaching model of inclusion in the high school environment. The data collected in this research was based on the phenomenon of the experiences of special education teachers working in the high school environment. The research questions are designed according to Creswell and Poth (2018); the central question and sub-questions attempt to address the phenomenon being researched.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of special education teachers who collaborate with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model of inclusion in North Carolina high schools?

Sub-Question 1

What aspects of collaboration make a special education teacher feel united with a general education teacher who is teaching students with disabilities, not in a coteaching model of inclusion? Meaningfulness is the feeling a person experiences when they feel useful and accepted (Kahn, 1990). Lack of meaningfulness could be connected to a person feeling as if there was minimal expectance for them to provide and accept work (Kahn, 1990).

Sub-Question 2

What aspects of collaboration allow the special education teacher and the general education teacher not in the coteaching model of inclusion to best meet the needs of students with disabilities in the classroom? People perform best in situations without the fear of losing status, self-image, or career (Kahn, 1990). When students with disabilities enter the inclusion classroom, it is important to ensure welcoming environments are being created (Stefanidis & Strogilos, 2015). Fonte and Barton-Arwood (2017) reported the teacher candidates surveyed in their study felt very strongly about the need to have productive conversations with teachers. When working with other teachers, conflict is unavoidable, and teachers need to be aware of arising situations (Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017).

Sub-Question 3

What factors prevent special education teachers and general education teachers who are not in coteaching classrooms from successfully collaborating on behalf of students with disabilities? People need physical, emotional, and psychological resources in order to be engaged with others (Kahn, 1990). Availability also addresses the demands that occur inside and outside of work (Kahn, 1990). Special education teachers have a very complex position and feel capable of meeting all of the requirements of their role to successfully support students with disabilities (Lavian, 2015). One of the ways for inclusion to be implemented effectively is for general education to have a positive attitude about working with students with disabilities (Priyadarshini & Thangarajathi, 2016).

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Definitions

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1. *Coteaching model* – A team teaching model where the general education teacher is responsible for teaching content to students, and the special education teacher

provides the accommodations and modifications to students with disabilities inside and outside of the classroom (Vostal et al., 2019).

2. *General education teacher* – A teacher who provides general curriculum instruction to students in a classroom (Vostal et al., 2019).

3. *Inclusion* – The mixture of students with and without disabilities in a mainstream classroom (Ewing et al., 2018).

4. *Special education teacher* – A teacher who provides modifications and accommodations in the general education classroom (Vostal et al., 2019).

5. *Student with disabilities* – A child (student) with a disability such as an intellectual disability, hearing impairment (including deafness), speech or language impairment, visual impairment (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, or specific learning disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

Summary

The problem for general education teachers and special education teachers is they do not have the time during the school day to effectively collaborate with each other. Several federal guidelines have pushed educational agencies to use the method of inclusion to teach students with disabilities. The purpose of this study is to uncover the experiences of special education teachers working with general education teachers who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion. With schools continuing to mainstream students with disabilities into the general classroom with nondisabled peers, it has become very important for special education teachers to work with general education teachers. This collaboration must take place in order for students with disabilities to have access to the general education curriculum. In the coteaching classroom,

the general education teacher and the special education both have a role in order for the classroom to be effective for students with disabilities. The literature review discusses the literature related to the topic of teachers collaborating in the inclusion classroom as well as the school environment.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter addresses the theoretical framework for the study. The theories used for the development of the framework are social exchange theory, which was developed by William A. Kahn (1990). The literature review in this chapter provides an in-depth overview of the current research within the area of inclusion, teachers working with students with disabilities, and concerns with IEP implementation by teachers. The review reveals the gap in research regarding the special educator's experience of working with general education teachers at the high school level.

Theoretical Framework

Kahn's (1990) social exchange theory explains that job performance is based on meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Meaningfulness is defined as a sense one receives on the investment they have made in their role. Safety is described as the ability to show fear without the risk of losing employment or status within the job. Kahn (1990) defined availability is defined as having the "physical, emotional, or psychological resources to personally engage at a particular moment" (p. 714). Kahn (1990) expressed the importance of employees believing they are contributing to the organization without the fear of losing power or position. Teachers collaborating must be able to communicate freely with each other in order to work effectively with students with disabilities who are placed in the inclusion classroom (Al-Shammari et al., 2019). This study revealed how special education teachers collaborate with general education teachers for students with disabilities. The intention of this research is to add to the collaborative practices currently in place for schools and teachers who practice the coteaching model of inclusion within their schools. The purpose is to provide insight into the experiences of special

education teachers collaborating with general education teachers on the high school level for students with disabilities.

Special education teachers are not always in the classroom with students with disabilities. Still, they must ensure the regular education teacher is keeping data on IEP progress special education students and correctly providing accommodations and modifications according to the IEP in courses not using the coteaching model. General education teachers in the classroom usually are not informed about the processes used to create an IEP for a student with a disability (İlik & Sarı, 2017). One of the reasons the coteaching model is preferred among general education teachers when teaching students with disabilities is the workload of the classroom can be equally shared among two teachers in the room instead of one (Turan & Bayar, 2017). Turan and Bayar (2017) reported general education teachers prefer to be in a coteaching model of inclusion to have assistance with behavioral concerns in the classroom in order to teach the content to all the students with minimal interference.

Related Literature

The idea for inclusion for students with disabilities originated from the civil rights movement decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 (Morgan, 2015). *Brown v. Board of Education* determined segregation based on the race of the student was illegal (Esteves & Rao, 2008). Even though *Brown v. Board of Education* did not have any relation to special education, the court case is the foundation for special education law (Esteves & Rao, 2008). One of the most critical impacts of the *Brown v. Board of Education* case was it overturned the decision from *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) by eliminating "separate but equal" practices. *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) determined races could be separate as long as the facilities were equal. In 1975, the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act promised all children the right to a

free, appropriate public education regardless of handicap or disability (Mackey, 2014), which ignited the movement for inclusion. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 demanded state and local agencies who are responsible for education provide accommodations and other services to meet the needs of special education students.

The term "students with disabilities" varies in definition, and the research are not constantly defined across studies (Arndt & Liles, 2010). Morgan (2015) stated mainstreaming students with disabilities started in the 1980s for those who needed relatively little support to gain access to the general curriculum. The United States cannot achieve equality in education without inclusion because social injustice would be committed against those who will one day contribute to society (Miller & Oh, 2013). The movement for inclusion requires all teachers to create a learning environment that will encourage the use of teaching practices to benefit all students in the room (Stefanidis & Strogilos, 2015). The determination of whether a student with a disability will be placed in the inclusion classroom is made based on the LRE by the IEP team. According to Kurth et al. (2019), there are key legal decisions that mandate students with disabilities have full access to the general education classroom. Students with disabilities who are placed in the general education classroom make it more challenging for general education teachers because the teachers must understand and implement IEPs as well as add supplemental materials to the curriculum (Keely, 2015). Teachers who are in the inclusion classroom must feel comfortable and prepared in order for students to be successful in meeting IEP goals, as teachers need to incorporate the IEP in the everyday life of the classroom for students with disabilities (Alfaro et al., 2015). General education teachers, in a study conducted by Mackey (2014), reported their undergraduate programs did not prepare them to teach students with disabilities in their classrooms, but their master's programs did.

Administrators are cultivating inclusive environments in their schools through the hiring of their teachers. Kozleski et al. (2015) explained that principals saw the hiring process as a way to identify people who can work with a diverse population of students as well as implement research-based strategies for teaching students with disabilities. Administrators should hire staff who support the inclusion model and give teachers the resources and time needed to collaborate with each other in order for the inclusion classroom to be most effective for students (Kozleski et al., 2015).

Planning for the Coteaching Classroom

Coteaching is when two teachers (one general education teacher and one special education teacher) plan and teach students with and without disabilities in a classroom (Keely, 2015; Kelley et al., 2017). Kelley et al. (2017) stated this type of classroom would allow the general education teacher to teach content while the special education teacher collects data on students. Cook and Friend (1995) found coteaching was an effective method of teaching students with disabilities in the general education classroom. According to Cook and Friend (1995), the purpose of the use of coteaching models is to use the expertise of the general education teacher and the special education teacher for all students in the classroom.

Hedin and Conderman (2015) explained that there are two types of coteaching teams. The traditional coteaching team, as explained by Cook and Friend (1995), is when the general education teacher and the special education teacher collaborate for students with disabilities. However, a coteaching team can also be made up of two teachers from different content areas and a general education working teacher with English as a second language students (Hedin & Conderman, 2015).

The goal for any coteaching team is to reach the level of critical colleagueship, which allows the teachers in the partnership to move beyond the surface and simple solutions (Glazier et al., 2017). This type of relationship allows the coteachers to critique themselves and each other honestly, and self is encouraged in this partnership (Glazier et al., 2017). Glazier et al. (2017) stated that when teachers are working in collaborative settings, they should have dialogue as critical colleagues in order to move forward professionally. Teachers should consider the students in the classroom and how the coteaching method will be implemented. Embury and Kroeger (2012) state the implementation of the coteaching methods has a negative impact on the students' perceptions of the classroom.

The inclusion classroom's purpose is to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the general curriculum classroom with their nondisabled peers (Gilmour, 2018). Traditionally, students with disabilities receive the most accommodations and adaptations in the area of mathematics and reading comprehension (Kurth & Keegan, 2014). This means science and history teachers are less likely to have a special educator as a coteacher for assistance in the classroom for students with disabilities. For inclusion to take place in the school, coteaching teams in the building must be on the same page when it comes to making sure they are properly collaborating; the school must make collaboration a priority within the school to ensure students are treated as equals (Mintz & Wyse, 2015). Several studies have stated planning is viewed as a high priority for teachers working with special education students in the general education classroom (Nilsen, 2017; Olson et al., 2016; Turan & Bayar, 2017). Teachers who participated in a study by Olson et al. (2016) reported taking an active role in planning to make sure all students in the classroom had access to the curriculum. The teachers in this study reported they used several methods of teaching to reach every student and designed the curriculum in order to adapt

to the student's level. Collaboration was a highlighted component of the inclusion classroom due to the shared responsibility of teachers in the classroom (Olson et al., 2016). In the inclusion classroom, the teachers want students to feel included in the learning environment of the classroom. Grynova and Kalinichenko (2018) concluded that a diverse learning community is necessary to address all the needs of the learners in the room. This is essential because the purpose of inclusion is to serve the students with special needs in the classroom. Sweigart and Landrum (2015) provided several reasons the model of inclusion works for students with disabilities. Students have more chances to respond in the classroom with positive and corrective feedback from the teachers and students in the room. The teachers in the classroom can also have close proximity to their students.

Kelley et al. (2017) suggested teachers take advantage of other forms of communication like email, video conferencing, and tools available from Google to help them with planning for the coteaching classroom, which is a process called cooperative planning. Cooperative planning allows both teachers to use their expertise to plan the instruction for all students in the classroom (Nilsen, 2017). For teachers to be successful in the coteaching classroom, they must be able to work together and have a clear understanding of the responsibilities they share in the classroom (Brendle et al., 2017). Special education teachers, unlike general education teachers, have the training and the professional skills to correctly make the adaptations necessary for students with disabilities to have access to the general education classroom along with their nondisabled peers. Teachers must work with each other to continue to build a relationship that benefits the students in the inclusion classroom.

Collaboration

Collaboration is a major component of the coteaching classroom, and it can be best described as a "marriage" between the special education teacher and the general education teacher (Howard & Potts, 2009). Friend (2008) stated that the relationship is designed as a marriage so teachers can work together, solve problems, and resolve differences within the classroom. Glazier et al. (2017) reported teachers showed collaboration occurs differently among groups of teachers based on the level of comfort between the coteachers. Instructional parity is when both teachers in the coteaching classroom feel as if they share in all of the tasks in the classroom equally (Conderman & Liberty, 2018). Teachers can continue to build on instructional parity by coplanning, coinstructing, and coassessing in the coteaching classroom (Conderman & Liberty, 2018). For coteaching pairs to be most effective, it is strongly suggested that the administration of the school keep a pair together who work well with each other, especially if the teachers in the room are compatible and show "instructional parity" (Simmons & Magiera, 2007). This is imperative, as some students in the room may not see both teachers as equals. In their study, King-Sears et al. (2020) reported most of the students with disabilities viewed the teachers as equal. Before entering the classroom, both teachers in the classroom must have discussions on what will occur during the lessons, who will be responsible for teaching the components, the models of coteaching that will be used during the lesson, and how modifications and accommodations will be given to the students in the classroom (Pratt et al., 2017). Their study suggests that since the teachers share a classroom, both need to communicate effectively and take responsibility for the education of the students in the classroom (Brown et al., 2013). Fonte and Barton-Arwood (2017) stated the importance of effective communication but also stated teachers in the coteaching classroom must understand the importance of having time to

plan and the gaps in content knowledge for special education teachers. Special education teachers view the following skills as important for collaboration and coteaching: communication, advocacy, and differentiation (Brinkmann & Twiford, 2012). Behavior management, IEP writing skills, lesson planning, problem-solving, and discipline were all low among special education teachers in the study (Brinkmann & Twiford, 2012). In contrast, general education teachers in the Brinkmann and Twiford study (2012) rated the following skill sets as important for collaboration: training, differentiation of instruction, communication, interpersonal skills, and classroom management (Brinkman & Twiford, 2012).

Teachers in the coteaching model have to be able to shift the teacher who delivers the content and the teacher who is then responsible for giving the primary support to students with disabilities in order to double the time of delivering instruction (Brawand & King-Sears, 2017). Teachers feel very limited in the amount of time they can spend collaborating with other teachers, but teachers feel collaboration allows them to have a support system in providing students access to the curriculum (Petersen, 2016). Often, general education teachers lack the skills needed to work with other teachers in a collaborative environment to resolve concerns and problems with others when they arise in the classroom (Weiss et al., 2017). One school, in a study by Chan and Yuen (2015), reported using a central computer to gain information and data on students. Chan and Yuen (2015) also noted that teachers who had access to student data were more likely to collaborate and provide information on students who received special education services. It is challenging for teachers who need to plan together to have a common planning time where they can collaborate. Draper (2019) stated it is complicated for teachers to collaborate because they have different professional development activities according to their content area, which causes them not to be able to collaborate effectively. The collaboration

between the veteran teachers in the Tschida et al. (2015) study provided them with the opportunity to observe current curriculum trends as the interns were able to practice the skills they learned in the teacher preparation program. The significance of the interns participating in the Tshida et al. (2015) study was to give the interns the opportunity to get real-world experience in collaboration. In order for teacher candidates to be successful with the different models of coteaching, they must be able to engage in the strategies used in coteaching so they can implement them in their classrooms (Murley et al., 2014).

There must be an understanding that collaboration will look different among coteaching teams based on the variables present in the classroom. Some teachers do not have an understanding of collaboration or the role each teacher should have in the coteaching class (Al-Natour et al., 2015). When teachers are in the coteaching model of inclusion, special education teachers and general education teachers must continue with professional development to grow in their ability to teach students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Brock and Carter (2017) stated that teachers must continue to have continuous feedback after professional development. The feedback to the teachers should include data and research-based strategies for the coteaching team to use. Brock and Carter (2017) mentioned the importance of closing the research-to-practice gap as one of the reasons for practical training on research-based practices. For example, the general education teacher and the special education teacher must understand their strengths and weaknesses when working together in the coteaching classroom. Special education teachers can make more quality accommodations and modifications for students in the classroom than general education teachers (Kurth & Keegan, 2014).

The Coteaching Models of Inclusion

Cook and Friend (1995) gave the guidelines for implementing effective practices within the different coteaching models for teachers who are in the inclusion classroom. Within the coteaching classroom, several styles of teaching have been created and can be found throughout the literature (Ashton, 2016). In the coteaching model of inclusion, the general education teacher is responsible for presenting all students in the classroom with the general curriculum, while the special education teacher is solely responsible for making accommodations and modifications for students in the classroom (Cook & Friend, 1995; Vostal et al., 2019). Teachers still have different views on the inclusion model. One of the concerns is that students with disabilities may not be able to adapt to the pace of the classroom like their nondisabled peers in the general education setting (Tungaraza, 2014). Sweigart and Landrum (2015) suggested the general education teacher and the special education teachers must be trained and able to perform coteaching effectively, because if the teachers are not trained well, then it is less likely to get the desired results from the partnership between teachers.

Hedin and Conderman (2019) described the different types of coteaching pairs. The mentor-novice pair is when a more experienced teacher works with another teacher with less experience or who is a beginning teacher. Perennial partners are teachers who have worked for at least several years with each other. The long-term relationship causes the two teachers to become friends and supportive of one another. New arrival pairs are two teachers who are just beginning in the coteaching model. The purpose of the two new teachers working together is to learn about inclusion and grow together in collaboration.

One Teach/One Observe

Dooley (2014) described the six types of coteaching models that can be used within the classroom. One teach/one observe occurs when one teacher is teaching the curriculum, and the other teacher observes the students and collects data (Forbes & Billett, 2012). The one teach/one observe method is useful when a teacher has to collect data on IEP goals (Forbes & Billet, 2012). Teachers have to be careful when using the one teach/one observe method as it may cause the teacher who has less experience in the coteaching model or content area to become a glorified teacher assistant instead of the teachers being seen as equals in the classroom (Cook & Friend, 1995). Even though the general education teacher is usually the one responsible for teaching the content, the special education teacher can also teach if they are comfortable with the content. If the special education teacher is comfortable with teaching the content, the teachers can switch roles and become the deliverer of content while the general education teacher collects data. One teach/one observe is a good method for teams who are beginning to coteach together. Burks-Keeley and Brown (2014) researched five of the six coteaching models of inclusion, which revealed the one teach/one observe model of coteaching as ineffective compared to the other models of coteaching. In the areas of classroom management, teacher modeling, student perspectives of learning, and parity within the classroom, the one teach/one observe rated the lowest among all methods (Burks-Keeley & Brown, 2014).

One Teach/One Drift

Dooley (2014) described the one teach/one drift method of teaching as a way for new coteaching teams to learn about each other's strengths and weaknesses. One teacher is the main instructor, while the other teacher goes around the classroom working with students one on one without having to stop the learning environment for the rest of the students. In this model, any

one of the coteachers can switch between teaching content and drifting around assisting students. One teach/one drift can also be called one drift/one assist (Stobaugh & Gichuru, 2016).

Parallel Teaching

In parallel teaching, the room is split into two groups. It allows both teachers to work on missing skills or reteach content. Parallel teaching also works with students who need remediation with concepts (Forbes & Billett, 2012).

Station Teaching

Station teaching is similar to parallel teaching, except the station can be created to cater to the diverse learning styles present in the room (Dooley, 2014; Forbes & Billet, 2012). One negative aspect of using station teaching is the stress of having teachers with less experience teaching content to students (Cook & Friend, 1995). Station teaching may not work at the middle or high school level due to the fact content may become more difficult to chunk between subjects (Forbes & Billet, 2012). Gurgur and Uzuner (2011) implemented station teaching, and the following were their concerns: the independent study zone (where students are required to study independently), the number of students at each station, the noise level of the classroom, and controlling the students' movement from station to station.

Alternate Teaching

Alternate teaching is similar to parallel teaching, except the students are separated into two different groups, and one group is given a more intensive review before starting with the current lessons (Dooley, 2014). This method of teaching is used when students need specialized attention, and it works well with students who need extra teaching support (Forbes & Billet, 2012). Parallel teaching allows students to experience a lower student-to-teacher ratio, but the

teachers have to be concerned with the noise level in the classroom when using this method of teaching (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Team Teaching

Team teaching is when both teachers in the room are very comfortable with teaching the content, and the teachers can change roles within the room throughout the class (Dooley, 2014). Team teaching is the preferred method of coteaching, but it can be stressful as there must be an atmosphere of trust and commitment between the teachers (Cook & Friend, 1995). Implementing the team-teaching model in the classroom can create concerns with the noise level of the classroom and both teachers in the room using the proper assessment tools needed to measure the growth of learning in the room (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2011).

Oh et al. (2017) stated that teachers should try the different types of coteaching models and provide open and honest criticism in order to build the relationship as well as improve the practice of coteaching. If an observer came into a coteaching classroom using the team-teaching model, the observer should not be able to tell the difference between the general education teacher and the Special Education Teacher (Dooley, 2014). According to a study of coteaching teams completed by Stobaugh and Girchuru (2016), 26% of teachers used one teach/one assist, 20% used team teaching, 5% used alternate teaching, and 9% used parallel teaching. Middle school teachers used mostly team teaching and one teach/one assist, while high school teachers used one teach/one assist. Teachers in a study by Faraclas (2018) relied heavily on one teach/one assist and one teach/one observe methods when working in coteaching classroom. When combining students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers, it is a possibility that class sizes will increase, which can be a factor in the overall management of the classroom. Teachers

also have to consider the different specialized needs of students in the inclusion classroom when creating lesson plans, teaching aids, and behavior management programs (Ali et al., 2014).

Professional Development and Teacher Preparation

Teaching programs for general educators focus on the mastery of the content, while teaching programs for special education teachers focus on the mastery of learning differences and how to provide accommodations effectively (Diker & Murawski, 2003). Shaffer and Thomas-Brown (2015) stated that having professional development on inclusion is one way to address the inclusion classroom because it increases the chances for students to grow in the classroom. Teachers who are teaching in public schools should have an understanding of how to implement the coteaching models, which can be provided through district training. Faraclas (2018) concluded from their study that special education teachers had more training in coteaching than regular educators who are also a part of the coteaching teams in school. Training for the inclusion classroom should also be received at the university or college level for teacher candidates (Ricci & Fingon, 2018). In elementary teacher preparation programs, an average of seven credits toward the teaching degree focus on educating students with disabilities (Allday et al., 2013). Allday et al. (2013) revealed three credit hours were typically dedicated to the inclusion of students with disabilities and classroom management, but only 6% of universities have a course on collaboration. Another concern is the professional development opportunities needed for teachers to collaborate effectively with each other. Due to minimal professional development on the inclusion classroom, general education teachers do not have the knowledge needed to best serve students with disabilities in the classroom and have negative attitudes about the inclusion classroom (Royster et al., 2014).

The limited preparation of general education teachers related to special education is recognized by universities, which have begun to focus on training teachers for coteaching (Oh et al., 2017). Even though the inclusion model has been addressed through public schools' professional development, teacher education programs have been making changes to address the inclusion movement (Allday et al., 2013). Teacher programs have faced many problems due to not preparing new teachers for coteaching through their current programs (Bacharach & Heck, 2012). The teaching experience is a crucial period for student teachers in training programs to be mentored and tutored by teachers who are already participating in the collaborative teaching environment (Bacharach & Heck, 2012). Preservice coteaching teams allow students to get practice working in collaborative environments while in their teacher education programs (Hedin & Conderman, 2015).

In their study, Chitiyo and Brinda (2018) reported 44% of teachers had heard of coteaching and inclusion through the university or college training, which suggests more than half of school personnel had no training in inclusive practices. Teacher education programs should make sure the skills needed to participate and operate in a collaborative classroom are included in candidates' instruction and that candidates are given the opportunity to use the skills in practice (Weiss et al., 2017). Arndt and Liles's (2010) study revealed that even though the students in the teacher education program expressed concerns with coteaching, they were very open to the coteaching model as a way to teach students in an inclusive setting, including two teachers working in different areas to serve all students. Arndt and Liles (2010) suggested teacher candidates must be competent in the subject area and receive instruction on collaborations with teachers and differentiation of content for students with disabilities. Teachers who were willing to open their classrooms to allow student teachers from teaching programs to

teach with them found it to be important to the success of the student teachers in the teaching program (Tschida et al., 2015).

Challenges of the Cotaught Classroom

There are many challenges present in the coteaching classroom. Many of the challenges can have a negative effect on how students progress through the school environment. Professional development and university teacher candidate training can decrease the limitations of the cotaught classroom environment.

The General Education Teachers' Understanding of the IEP

Teachers who receive training on how to implement IEPs properly are more comfortable implementing them in the classroom (İlik & Sarı, 2017). When general education teachers are not in the coteaching model of inclusion, they are responsible for knowing how to implement the IEP for students with disabilities because they do not have access to a special education teacher for the duration of the course. General education teachers often do not have a clear understanding of the IEP and how to implement the IEP effectively for the student with a disability when it comes to modification and accommodations (Kurth & Keegan, 2014). In the coteaching model of inclusion, the special education teacher is solely responsible for ensuring the IEPs are correctly implemented, especially in the area of accommodations and modifications (Brendle et al., 2017; Turan & Bayar, 2017). General education teachers have stated IEPs had minimal information on how to implement services for the student or directives on how to provide individualized instructions for the students to gain access to the general curriculum (Bray & Russell, 2018). Bray and Russell (2018) stated that IEPs are not written in a way that the general education teacher of students with disabilities can comprehend and successfully implement. The IEPs in that study gave limited information on how to individualize instruction for students with

disabilities. The IEPs only provided information on strategies to use in the classroom and accommodations. Since some teachers have more experience with coteaching than others, teachers may want to view other coteaching teams working together. The special education teacher would benefit from having the general education teacher provide input on the IEPs of students who have been in their classroom (İlik & Sarı, 2017). The general education teacher will be able to give input for the IEP team to consider, especially in the areas of their current academic levels and classroom performance. Teachers are often not offered the opportunity to view an IEP before it is presented to the IEP team to be finalized during the meeting (Nilsen, 2017). In the inclusion classroom, both teachers must focus on not only working with the IEP goals of the students with disabilities but on guiding students and providing the most effective way for the students with disabilities to get through the content presented in the course (Friend, 2016). Diker and Murawski (2003) suggested general educators in the coteaching model need time to share the content of the classroom, and the special education teacher needs to express the framework of the student's IEP and how to meet their specialized needs. Teachers within schools have to become very creative in the ways they can communicate with each other within the school. Special education teachers are not always in a coteaching model where they can gain information from the students firsthand in the classroom. General education teachers who teach students with disabilities must be able to implement the IEP within the classroom, as they do not have the assistance of the special education teacher in the classroom for their class (Debbag, 2017). Students with disabilities present a challenge in the classroom and may cause their nondisabled peers to not be as successful in the classroom due to behaviors and the lack of attention from the general education teacher. Students are placed within the general education environment based on the LRE determined by the IEP team. The LRE statements may be

confusing to general education teachers because they do not have a clear understanding of implementation or goals that are not measurable or specific to the student (Kurth et al., 2019). Teachers have the challenge of balancing the curriculum and the support needed for students with disabilities so these students can be successful in the classroom (Zagona et al., 2017).

Special Education Teachers' Workload

There is minimal research on special educators' view of their current teaching experience in the classroom (Andrews & Brown, 2015). One finding in the research pertains to the workload special education teachers have to manage while in the field. Special education teachers are responsible for handling the paperwork for students with disabilities and may feel they have too much paperwork, and some believe they are unable to handle continual changes in paperwork requirements (Andrews & Brown, 2015). The stresses of dealing with the workload and teaching in the classroom can lead to special education teachers being burned out and not wanting to continue in the profession, especially beginning teachers. The workload of special education teachers may contribute to teachers being emotionally drained and compelled to consider another line of employment (Bettini et al., 2017). Teachers in the Lavian (2015) study expressed that having multiple roles and performing multiple tasks are some of the characteristics of coteaching; these factors are related to teacher burnout. Teacher burnout can also harm the outcomes of students' IEP goals as well as the teacher's engagement with the students in the classroom (Wong et al., 2017). Some special education teachers who enter the field from other fields have a higher risk of leaving the profession due to the specialized skills that need to be obtained to be successful (Capri & Guler, 2018). Capri and Guler (2018) reported that as the age of the teacher and years in the profession increase, teachers feel more competent to complete

their tasks, as they have gained the ability to have realistic expectations as well as experience, which makes them feel successful.

Special education teachers who have experience understand how to handle the multiple stressors present during the day at school. Special education teachers feel the most successful when they can maintain the behaviors of the students with disabilities, and the environment is influenced for success (Andrews & Brown, 2015). Special education teachers must be able to handle all aspects of the profession and adjust to any environment, whether it is in the classroom teaching or performing duties related to the student with an IEP. Lavian (2015) stated special education teachers are participants in numerous roles within the school day. Special education teachers see themselves as being able to meet all the needs of all students as well as the requirements of their role, even spending time before and after school to complete a task (Lavian, 2015). The special education teacher participates in the coteaching model with the general education teacher, but the role of the special education teacher is very complex. The complexity theory, as explained by Lavian (2015), is the ability of a teacher to adapt to the environment and change based on the environment. Special education teachers do more than teach courses with general education teachers. They can administer tests to measure a student's ability and use that information to create paperwork that is stored in a student's file, while the general education teacher does not have the background knowledge to comprehend assessments data used to evaluate special education students and create IEP paperwork (Miller & Oh, 2013).

Coteaching Environment

Even though coteaching is praised as an effective method of teaching students with disabilities, it has several drawbacks. Teachers in a study by Melekoglu (2014) felt students with disabilities should be taught in a separate classroom from their nondisabled peers for them to

have their needs met, even though inclusion was the current practice within their school. One of the concerns regarding the inclusion classroom is classroom management and the behaviors associated with some students with disabilities (DeMartino & Specht, 2018). Dealing with the behaviors of students in the coteaching classroom takes instructional time away from students in the classroom.

Teachers in the coteaching classroom have a fear of misbehavior from students, which can cause them not to be able to teach content to the students in the classroom, and the learning objectives will not be met (Ali et al., 2014). Chitiyo (2017) stated that some teachers do not support the idea of coteaching for inclusion. Some of the respondents from that study reported the resources required to make inclusion successful were not available for the teachers in the building. Even though collaboration was seen as one of the biggest factors in making coteaching successful, teachers found it difficult because general education classroom viewed their classrooms as their own and did not allow the special education teacher to be a part of the life of the classroom. One concern from Zagona and colleagues (2017) was the readiness of teachers to include students with disabilities in the general classroom and the focus on low achievement in an inclusive setting. Students with disabilities are expected to make adequate progress according to high-stakes testing at the end of each year. Over the years, there has been a growing pressure for students to show proficiency in high-stakes testing and for schools to produce students with disabilities ready for post-secondary placement (Brendle et al., 2017; Nichols et al., 2010). Fruth and Woods (2015) determined there was no significant difference in achievement between nondisabled students who were not in an inclusive setting and nondisabled students who were in an inclusive setting.

Teachers' personal life and families can also affect how they view the inclusion model (Priyadarshini & Thangarajathi, 2016). In the coteaching classroom environment, the special education teacher is expected to bring with them their expertise, as well as knowledge, to assist the general education teacher in teaching students with disabilities in the classroom. In a study conducted by Mezquita-Hoyos et al. (2018), special education teachers reported having a greater positive attitude than general education teachers in the inclusion classroom. Teachers will continue to have different views of the inclusion classroom, and it will be a useful practice to explore options to identify the training needs of the teachers in the classroom to successfully implement the coteaching model of inclusion (Ewing et al., 2018).

Benefits of Coteaching

Coteaching pairs should see other as partners in order to exchange ideas about instructional strategies for the coteaching classroom (Simmons & Magiera, 2007). Teachers' efficacy can also affect how they view the coteaching model of inclusion. Ozokcu (2017) researched the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and the efficacy of inclusion. There was a positive relationship between them, and female teachers and novice teachers were found to score more highly than males regarding efficacy and inclusion. The teaching experience of the teachers is dependent on how long they have been teaching in the coteaching model with an individual teacher as well as the number of coteaching partners they have throughout the day (Panscofar & Petroff, 2016). Even with the weakness in the area of the general curriculum, the special education teacher does have a high level of knowledge in the area of behaviors, how students learn, and evaluation methods to measure growth (Ozcan & Uzunboylu, 2015). Being able to collaborate effectively is important for teachers who work together for students with disabilities (Royster et al., 2014). Gavish and Shimoni (2013) stated the importance of the entire

school staff supporting the vision for an inclusive school, as it is the foundation of the implementation of inclusion. Inclusion, as a main focus for all involved, allows teachers to work together without a sense of isolation.

Whether or not they are in a coteaching model of inclusion with general education, special education teachers must be able to obtain information on students. The attitudes of the faculty and staff can affect how teachers collaborate for inclusion in the school (Pearson et al., 2015; Vroey et al., 2016). Teachers must also feel as if they have support when they are completing inclusion duties within the school environment. There is a correlation between the perceptions of the school climate and teachers' ability to conduct inclusion with the student in the school (Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016). Hosford and O'Sullivan (2016) explained that teachers who perceived a climate of support through the administration and available resources felt more equipped to handle disruptions from students and successfully conduct inclusion in the classroom. Different attitudes can affect how teachers feel toward their responsibilities in the coteaching classroom and could hinder the approach of coteaching students with and without disabilities in the inclusion classroom (Stefanidis & Strogilos, 2015).

Communication with the coteacher is imperative to the success of the classroom because the coteachers have to understand what each other is feeling, thinking about, and offering to the coteaching classroom experience (Conderman et al., 2009). This communication will promote practices in the classroom that make both coteachers successful with their students. Furthermore, understanding a coteacher's teaching style minimizes the number of conflicts in the classroom (Conderman et al., 2009). According to Cook and Friend (1995), the teacher's instructional beliefs guide their practice in the classroom. Teachers need to have a conversation about their instructional beliefs before teaching in a coteaching setting to limit conflicts (Cook & Friend,

1995). A study conducted by Brinkmann and Twiford (2012) revealed that special education teachers and general education teachers have different views on the division of classroom duties in the coteaching classroom. For example, many questions must be asked about the responsibility of each teacher, how grades will be given, how classroom rules will be enforced, and where is each teacher's space within the classroom (Nichols et al., 2010).

One of the most important aspects of the coteaching classroom is the positive learning environment it provides for the teachers and the students in the classroom. One of the benefits of the cotaught classroom is the opportunity to blend students from different backgrounds as well as the experiences of the c-teachers to enhance the learning environment (Harter & Jacobi, 2018). Harter and Jacobi (2018) stated the benefits of the cotaught classroom are the communication and perspectives of the instructors in the room and the opportunities to use different teaching methods among the students in the room. Hurd and Weilbacher (2017) noted teachers in their study reported better preparation of the curriculum when the time for planning was increased for the coteachers to work together. Teachers were also able to self-reflect on the lessons being presented to the students in the room (Hurd & Weilbacher, 2017). The cotaught classroom also provides the ability to communicate better with students in the classroom. Strogilos and King-Sears (2019) reported teachers stated a good relationship between the coteachers can provide a friendly environment for the students. A positive relationship between the coteachers and the students is a benefit of having students learn in the classroom (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). Coteachers must also consider the feelings of the nondisabled students who will be participating in the inclusion classroom. Over half of the students without disabilities in the research completed by King-Sears et al. (2020) commended the special educator for being able to break down the content in different ways. Students with disabilities and students without disabilities

reported they learned better from the special educator or when the special educator was teamed with the general educator (King-Sears et al., 2020).

The School Administration's Role in the Coteaching Model

Administrators of the school are not only responsible for assuring special education teachers are effective with students with disabilities in the inclusion model. Administrators also need to know how to successfully implement the inclusion model within their schools (Lyons, 2016) and how to work with stakeholders within the inclusion model and equip them with the tools needed to teach students in the classroom. In order for coteaching to be successful, not only teachers but also the administration of the school must be educated about coteaching in order to provide better resources for the coteachers in the school building (Stobaugh & Gichuru, 2016). Simmons and Magiera (2007) stated the administration of the school should solicit volunteers from teachers who desire to work collaboratively in the coteaching model of inclusion and provide training for the teachers. The administration has an essential role in ensuring that coteaching continues within the school building. Nierengarten (2013) also states that the administration needs to be trained on inclusion and ask teachers if they would volunteer for a coteaching experience. The administration should also continue to observe coteaching teams and provide them with continuous professional development throughout the year (Nierengarten, 2013). When administrators visit teachers who are coteaching, they should look for indicators both teachers in the room work well together and provide a supportive instructional environment for all students in the room (Friend, 2016). The administration at the district and local levels have an understanding of the inclusion classroom, but they may not understand how to coordinate the proper number of students with disabilities to be placed in a room (Panscofar & Petroff, 2016).

The number of students with disabilities in the general classroom can affect the quality of education the students receive in the class.

There has been minimal research on the effectiveness of the administration and their role in the coteaching team (Sinclair et al., 2019). In one study, teachers felt powerless against the administration when it came to a decision made directly affecting the coteaching classrooms (Sinclair et al., 2019). It is suggested administrators develop guidelines for how and when students are to receive assistance outside of the inclusion class and who will be responsible for giving these services. Administrators should also create training on the school's vision of coteaching (Sinclair et al., 2019). Administrators can support professional partners who coteach by modeling desirable traits that promote an environment of collaboration (Cook & Friend, 1995). Administrators can help coteaching partners plan, and scheduled programming provides incentives and resources for teachers to design instruction and reflect on the way they are giving services and assists teachers in protecting their limited time (Cook & Friend, 1995). General education and special education teachers are observed with the same evaluation instrument, which is created based on general education classrooms (Rodl et al., 2018). This is a challenge for special education teachers because they are unable to receive feedback related to the specialized task they must perform for students with disabilities throughout the day. One of the issues for administrators is they are not trained in special education methods to accurately evaluate special education teachers (Lawson & Cruz, 2018; Rodl et al., 2018). Lawson and Cruz (2018) suggested that administrators who evaluate teachers should have training in special education instructional practices to evaluate special education teachers and give them proper feedback. The general education teacher, along with the special education teacher, is responsible for making accommodations and modifications for all students in the classroom. Just like the

general education teacher, the special education teacher is also evaluated based on the effectiveness of their teaching in the classroom.

Glowacki and Hackmann (2016) stated principals are trained on instructional strategies for regular education teachers but not for special education teachers. The principal who does not have a background in special education must become educated in special education practices and current strategies. Providing training for administrators will allow them to better understand how the coteaching model is working within their school environment (Faraclas, 2018). Furthermore, administrators may not have had the advantage of coteaching training, which makes them less likely to know what support is needed for teachers in coteaching pairs (Faraclas, 2018). Special education teachers will benefit from having an evaluator who has a better understanding of special education processes (Glowacki & Hackmann, 2016).

Parental Views of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings

Even though general education teachers, special education teachers, and school administrators are integral parts of the effort to mainstream students with disabilities into general education classrooms through the method of inclusion, parents are also important stakeholders. Parents of students with disabilities also want to have the assurance their children are receiving the services, accommodations, and modifications to participate successfully in the regular education classroom along with their nondisabled peers. Parents want to be a part of their children's education and have the desire to work with teachers and school personnel to ensure the opportunities will be given to them to be successful (Chmiliar, 2009). To ensure parents understand how their students with disabilities participate in the general education environment, parents must understand how the student will be served when participating in the IEP meeting. Zagona et al.'s (2019) study reported parents had mixed feelings when they were participating in

IEP meetings and trying to reach agreements on IEP goals and services. The parents in the study also reported not being able to make a final decision on the IEP and described the experience as challenging (Zagona et al., 2019). Collaboration between parents and special education teachers allows parents to have a better understanding of the special education process. Special education teachers and parents both understand there are challenges; collaboration between them is the way best way to get better outcomes from students with disabilities (Mereoiu et al., 2016). According to Mereoiu et al. (2016), parents had strong concerns when it came to understanding the IEP process, and special education teachers shared the same concern with parents. Parents have concerns about the inclusive classroom and how their students with disabilities will be able to learn in inclusive environments, but they have seen improvements in their students' academic abilities when they participate in the inclusive classroom. Parents in the Al-Dabahneh (2016) study reported the importance of making sure students were provided with different teaching strategies, access to technology, and a supportive classroom environment to support cognitive and social skills. Parents in the Gokbulut et al. (2020) study reported concerns with the coteaching practices in the inclusion classroom, but they were very impressed with the materials used in the classroom and the students' increasing reading comprehension skills. Even though some parents have had positive experiences having their students in inclusive classrooms, there are parents who have had negative ones as well. Chmiliar (2009) stated parents had negative experiences in earlier grades because of the difficulties of getting support for their students and not wanting them to fail due to not having the extra support needed in the classroom.

Other factors can also affect the way parents view the inclusion classroom for students with disabilities. Parents who have children attending regular and inclusive classrooms were satisfied with the effectiveness of teaching methods used in the inclusion classroom, but children

who were attending inclusive classrooms had more opportunities to experience those levels of inclusive practices (Paseka & Schwab, 2020). Income affected the views of the inclusion classroom, as students with disabilities with affluent parents were less likely to have a positive view of the inclusion classroom (Paseka & Schwab, 2020; Sosu & Rydzewska, 2017). Less-educated parents of students with learning disabilities had a more positive attitude toward the inclusion classroom than parents with high educational levels (Paseka & Schwab, 2020). According to Sosu and Rydezewska (2017), there is a significant relationship between parent age and attitude toward inclusion classrooms, as older parents with younger children are more likely to have a positive outlook on the inclusive experience.

Summary

Inclusion is the current method of how students with disabilities are given access to the general curriculum. The movement for the inclusion of students with disabilities was intended to provide an education for all students with no concern for "gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, intellectual capacity, and health status" (Gavish & Shimoni, 2013, p. 115). Another reason for inclusion is to give students with disabilities equal access to the general curriculum as their nondisabled peers in the school environment (Allday et al., 2013). Parents are also a part of the inclusion classroom as they have to decide with the school if the inclusion classroom will meet the needs of their children with disabilities. Parents are pleased when their children with disabilities are exposed to multiple learning strategies and are given access to technology for them to make progress with their nondisabled peers (Gokbulut et al., 2020; Paseka & Schwab, 2020). Even though some parents are very pleased with the success of the inclusion model, other parents have experienced the difficulties of working with the school team to make sure their students with disabilities are receiving the services needed to be successful in the inclusion

setting (Chmiliar, 2009; Zagona et al., 2019). According to Mereiou et al. (2016), parents will always be a central part of advocating for students with disabilities.

Research has been completed in the area of coteaching students with disabilities in the general education classroom (DeMartino & Specht, 2018; Gilmour, 2018; Keely, 2015; Nilsen, 2017). Within the special education classroom, there are several different models of teaching with the coteaching classroom to address all the needs of the students. Furthermore, research has shown the importance of teachers collaborating in planning and delivering instruction (Malki & Einat, 2017; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). As more and more students enter the classroom with different disabilities, special education teachers and general education teachers will need to be able to accommodate all of these students in the classroom. What is known is how students with disabilities are currently being served through the inclusion classroom. Collaboration is also known as one of the ways general education teachers and special education teachers work with each other for students with disabilities. One of the gaps in the research concerns how special education teachers work with general education teachers in the high school environment when they are not participating in the coteaching model of inclusion. Even though the coteaching model of inclusion is supposed to be a collaborative model, in theory, the practice of collaborating rarely occurs (Nichols et al., 2010). The structure for coteaching can be very challenging at the secondary level, as teachers must work with a large caseload of exceptional children students and coordinate all of the personnel for collaboration as required for the student (Diker & Murawski, 2003).

This research focused on special education teachers who collaborate with general education teachers who work with students with disabilities who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion. The special education teacher is still responsible for ensuring that students' IEPs are

followed correctly. They must also know for every student that all accommodations and modifications are in place and being implemented successfully. Administrators who have students with disabilities in the school are to ensure that these students have access to the general education curriculum. There is minimal research addressing the importance of special education teachers collaborating and planning with general education teachers who are not placed in the inclusion model of coteaching. Professional development should provide teachers with tools and strategies on how to work with other professionals in a collaborative setting (Weiss et al., 2017). Research also has determined teachers are having difficulties implementing the IEPs within the classroom due to minimal knowledge and professional development (Bray & Russell, 2018; Chan & Yuen, 2015; Kurth & Keegan, 2014).

The general education teacher must be comfortable fully implementing IEPs of students with disabilities without the assistance of the special education teacher in the classroom. The general education teacher is not only responsible for implementing the IEP but also for keeping track of data to report to the special education teacher for documentation to be completed. Collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers is necessary for the success of students with disabilities. Teachers' personalities and preparation for the coteaching classroom will continue to be emerging issues with the coteaching model of inclusion (Oh et al., 2017). In order for coteaching to become successful, universities and colleges must address the importance of coplanning as part of the coteaching classroom (Stobaugh & Gichuru, 2016). Teacher preparation institutions need to make major changes to their programs in order to address the needs of collaboration and inclusion in public schools by examining the courses in order to have students ready for their teaching experience (Murley et al., 2014). Training from colleges' and universities' teaching programs will prepare future special education teachers to

work alongside the general education teacher for students with disabilities. The practice is also imperative as the increasing population of students with disabilities is entering general education classrooms.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of special education teachers working with general education teachers who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion for students with disabilities. This section provides information on the research design that was used. This section also focuses on the research questions that guided this study, the site of the study, the participants, and the procedures used to collect and analyze data. The researcher's role, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations are also addressed in this chapter.

Design

A qualitative design was chosen for this research because the study sought the experiences of special education teachers collaborating with general education teachers who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion. The research design was qualitative because the researcher used words and text to explain a problem within the participants' natural environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). For the researcher to conduct the research effectively on the special education teachers' experience, the research was conducted within the teachers' schools. The design was appropriate for the study because of the researcher's desire to discover the phenomenon of the personal experience of special education teachers' experiences working with general education teachers. Phenomenology was appropriate for this study because the researcher desires to discover the meaning of the experience of the participants of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The transcendental phenomenological design was chosen for this study as the researcher must set aside prejudgments before conducting the research into the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Creswell and Poth

(2018) stated transcendental phenomenology relies on structures in order to gain an understanding of the experience of the participants.

Research Questions

The research questions focused on the experiences of special education teachers working with general education teachers who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion. The research questions included a central question and three sub-questions. Various sources of data were analyzed for the questions to be addressed.

Central Question

What are the experiences of special education teachers who collaborate with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model of inclusion in North Carolina high schools?

Research Sub-Questions

Sub-Question 1: What aspects of collaboration make a special education teacher feel united with a general education teacher who is teaching students with disabilities not in a coteaching model of inclusion?

Sub-Question 2: What aspects of collaboration allow the special education teacher and the general education teacher not in the coteaching model of inclusion to best meet the needs of students with disabilities in the classroom?

Sub-Question 3: What factors prevent special education teachers and general education teachers who are not in coteaching classrooms from successfully collaborating on behalf of students with disabilities?

Setting

The setting of the study took place within North Carolina High Schools. The researcher recruited participants by using social media outlets. The setting was selected for the research because high schools in North Carolina have special education teachers within the population who have experience with the phenomenon of working with general education teachers who are not in the coteaching model. The participants selected in the study have similar educational experiences where the practice of inclusion is implemented throughout the school for students with disabilities. High Schools in North Carolina operate their schedule on a traditional schedule (7 courses all year) or Block Schedule (4 classes per semester).

Participants

The type of sample for the participants was criterion-based and purposeful (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Criterion-based sampling occurs when the researcher selects participants based on specific criteria to assure the quality of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Criterion-based sampling is used because special education teachers selected for this study must have had at least 3 years of experience working with students with disabilities in the general education curriculum at the high school level. In the state of North Carolina, teachers with less than 3 years of experience are given a "provisional license" until after 3 years of successful teaching are completed, and all requirements are met to obtain a North Carolina Teaching License (North Carolina Board of Education, 2020). If a teacher who is seeking licensure in North Carolina already has previous teaching experience, they are eligible to receive a full teaching license. Purposeful sampling was required because the participants should be well-informed stakeholders in the field of interest of the researcher (Suri, 2011). The special education teachers selected for the study would be able to give the best information about the phenomenon being studied by the

researcher. The researcher created a pool of special education teachers who volunteered to be a part of the study. Polkinghorne (1989) suggested 5–25 subjects are acceptable for a qualitative study. Dukes (1984) suggested having no more than 10 participants in a phenomenological study. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested having enough participants to meet data saturation. Data saturation is the point where no new information is being discovered (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research used the suggestion of Dukes (1984) to have no more than 10 participants as part of the study.

Procedures

Before the research began, the researcher of the study secured approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Liberty University (see Appendix A). After the approval for the IRB of Liberty University, the researcher placed the recruitment flyer and post on social media outlets to gather participants for the study. Interested participants contacted the researcher by phone or email to participate in the study. Once the subject agreed to participate in the study, the participant sent an email containing the written consent form (see Appendix B). The participants engaged in audio-recorded, one on one interviews due to following safety protocols due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The meetings took place on a video-audio conferencing platform during a time agreed upon between the researcher and the participant. After the interview, the participant wrote a written response to a question provided by the researcher. After the interview was completed, the researcher informed the participant to complete the written response, which was sent to their email. The participant responded to the written response and returned it to the researcher through email. The participants were then asked to participate in a focus group in which the researcher conducted further questioning. The focus group meeting took place virtually through audio conference due to face-to-face meeting restrictions from schools. The

focus group occurred at an agreed-upon time among the participants and the researchers. Data were recorded and collected through recorded audio for focus groups and interviews. Participants' confidentiality was protected using numbers instead of their names. Written responses from the participants were used to collect data, which was completed in electronic form by using email.

The Researcher's Role

The researcher's role was to be the human instrument or the insider to the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher conducted interviews and focus groups with the participants of the study. The researcher analyzed the written responses from the participants. Bracketing was imperative for the researcher to set aside any past experiences that may hinder the data collection and analysis process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Bracketing requires the researcher to enter the research process with minimal distractions, disregarding views from personal experience with the research. Since I am currently a special education teacher working with students with disabilities within the general education setting on the high school level, I have ideas on how to work with general education teachers within the high school environment. I have collaborated well with several general education teachers who were not working in a coteaching model. I have worked with teachers in situations in which collaboration was challenging due to the lack of knowledge of students with disabilities and other personal reasons. The research took place in the county where I am currently employed as a special education teacher. Due to the researcher's bias, I did not include the current high school of my employment in the study.

Data Collection

Data for the research was collected through interviews, writing prompts, and focus groups. Data triangulation is the use of different data collection methods to ensure the data collected is accurate for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The reason for using multiple sources of data collection was to establish data triangulation among the sources of data being used in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that the researcher use multiple interviews from the participants who have experienced the phenomenon in the study. Using the Moustakas (1994) approach for analyzing data provided a structured approach for those who are beginning to conduct research. Interviews and focus groups were recorded for data analysis for themes in the data. Participants sent their responses to the writing prompt to the researcher through email.

To have a better understanding of the phenomenon presented in this study, the researcher conducted interviews and focus groups with the participants. The researcher used writing prompts, so that the participants wrote their experiences of working with general education teachers at the high school level. Moustakas (1994) suggested that the researcher bracket out their personal experiences before collecting the personal views of others. The purpose of bracketing was for the researcher to state personal experiences with the phenomenon and place them out of the research for the researcher to focus on the experiences of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) stated the process of bracketing may be complicated for some researchers, and researchers need to decide when and how they will implement their personal ideas within the research. The researcher used bracketing before collecting data with the participants to hear and understand the views of the participants of the

study. This allowed the researcher to listen to the experiences of the participants who have

experienced the phenomenon.

Interviews

The first method of data collection was individual interviews. In a phenomenological

study, the researcher may conduct several in-depth interviews with the participants (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). Interviews can be used with other data collection methods, but they can also be used

as the primary source of data (Hatch, 2002). Hatch (2002) encouraged the use of interviewing

because it allows the researcher to discover how the subjects feel and how they are thinking and

probe for more information. The interviews were held virtually in a one-on-one format with

teachers who had been identified as participants in the study. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic,

schools have restrictions on guests visiting campuses. The interviews took place after the school

day so teachers would not have any conflicts with other teaching responsibilities. The interview

questions created asked special education teachers about their experiences working with general

education teachers. The researcher asked the following questions, which can also be found in

Appendix C:

1. How many years have you been teaching in the area of special education?

2. What was your motivation for becoming a special education teacher?

3. What makes you feel valuable as a special education when working with general

   education teachers?

4. What causes special education teachers to feel disconnected from general education

   teachers when working with students with disabilities who are not in a coteaching

   model?

5. How do general education teachers who have students with disabilities in their classrooms take advantage of using the special education teacher for the improvement of their students' learning?

6. Tell about a time where you felt appreciated and valued as a special educator when working with a general education teacher not in the coteaching model of inclusion.

7. What are some other factors that play a role in making collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers valuable?

8. What are your concerns about correcting a general education teacher who is not serving a student with disabilities properly?

9. Tell me about a time you had concerns about a student with disability who was not in a cotaught classroom. What was the outcome with the general education teacher?

10. As a special education teacher, how do you know your concerns valued by the general education teachers? How are special education teachers viewed who express concerns?

11. What aspects of being a special education are difficult? How do you cope with difficult situations as a special education teacher?

12. What are some challenges special education teachers must overcome when collaborating with general education teachers?

13. What are some of the demands of collaborating with general education teachers? How are these demands met, and how do they affect your performance as a special education teacher?

14. What are some outside factors which can prevent a special education teacher from effectively collaborating with general education teachers who are not in the coteaching model?

15. Are there any outside factors that have affected you from effectively collaborating with general education teachers who are not in the coteaching model?

The questions were developed to obtain an understanding of the phenomenon of special education working with general education teachers who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion. Questions 1–3 were designed to collect background information on the special education teacher and to serve as an icebreaker. Questions 4–8 focused on the level of unity between the special education teacher and the general education teacher (Al-Natour et al., 2015; Andrews & Brown, 2015; Kahn, 1990; Ozokcu, 2017). Special education teachers should feel comfortable in the school with other teachers as it is their responsibility to work with general education teachers. Questions 9–11 focused on Special Education Teachers being able to collaborate with General Education Teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Kahn, 1990). Questions 12–15 focused on factors preventing special education teachers and general education teachers from collaborating with each other for students with disabilities (Kahn, 1990). The interviews were recorded, and the researcher obtained permission to record the interviews. The interviews and the written responses were transcribed by the researcher. The data collected were stored on a computer with a secure password.

Written Responses to Prompt

The written responses were analyzed using Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenology. The written samples were analyzed for common themes between the responses of the participants. The teachers were given the writing prompt after the interviews were

completed. The special education teachers were given the following prompt, which can be found in Appendix D: "Special education teachers' work is very complex, meaning the special education teacher perform many duties and responsibilities within the school environment. Write about a day in the life of a special education teacher collaborating with regular education teachers." The special education teachers typed their answers and submitted the responses through email.

Focus Groups

The focus group was another method of interviewing the participants since the participants were to be interviewed multiple times (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus groups were conducted and recorded in a virtual environment. The focus group's purpose was to present the group of participants with the preliminary findings of the research and get clarification from the group on some of the findings from the interviews and written responses. The focus group was used as part of the triangulation process to validate the study and to ensure the accuracy of the results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus group was scheduled according to the availability of the participants. The participants in the focus group were asked the following questions, which can also be found in Appendix E:

1. What are some concerns for students with disabilities who are not in a cotaught classroom with a special education teacher?

2. How do you effectively plan with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model for students with disabilities?

3. How do you establish a good working relationship with general education teachers not in a coteaching model of inclusion for students with disabilities?

4. How does the school support collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers?

5. How would you describe the current relationship between special education teachers and general education teachers not in a coteaching model working with students with disabilities?

6. What type of assistance do general education teachers not in a coteaching model request from special education teachers?

7. If you were to create professional development for special education teachers and general education teachers, not in a coteaching model, what topics should be addressed and why?

8. What are some of the successes you have seen a special education teacher working with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model of inclusion with students with disabilities in their classroom?

Questions 1-3 focused on the relationship between special education teachers and general education teachers working with students with disabilities who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion (Cook & Friend, 1995; Glazier et al., 2017). Questions 4–6 focused on collaboration and professional development for Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers teaching students with disabilities (Conderman & Liberty, 2018; Howard & Potts, 2009). Questions 7–8 were designed to discover some of the successes of special education teachers working with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model of inclusion for planning and working together (Olson et al., 2016).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed based on transcendental phenomenology according to Moustakas (1994). The phenomenon of the study has been identified as special education teachers' experiences working with general education teachers. The researcher needed to analyze the experiences to collect and analyze data with no bias. Moustakas (1994) stated there are several steps in analyzing the data when conducting transcendental phenomenology.

Epoché

According to Moustakas (1994), "epoché" is defined as a person having judgmental information about what is perceived in nature and having it removed. This is the first step because it allows the researcher to set aside their personal views and prejudices to look at the phenomenon from a fresh view (Moustakas, 1994). Within the epoché, bracketing was completed to study the phenomenon. The researcher completed the reflexive bracketing process by writing a journal (see Appendix F), according to Ahern (1999). Reflexive bracketing allowed the researcher to focus more on understanding the participants' experience with the phenomenon (Ahern, 1999).

Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction

The next step in the process of analyzing the information is the transcendental-phenomenological reduction of the data, which allows the researcher to analyze the phenomenon through text (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental-phenomenological reduction occurs through the epoché process and allows the researcher to look at the phenomenon in a new way past their previous experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Horizontalization occurred during the evaluation of the data collected by the researcher. According to Moustakas (1994), horizontalization is the process of considering the quality of the text to have a better understanding of the experience and to give

each phenomenon experienced the same value. The data were analyzed further to make sure any

repetitive information was removed during the horizontalization process, only leaving the textual

representations of the phenomenon and placing the information into themes (Moustakas, 1994).

Creswell and Poth (2018) described themes as categories gathered to create an idea. According

to Moustakas (1994), two types of information describe the experiences of the participants:

textual and structural. The textual descriptions of the participants are used to explain what was

experienced, and structural descriptions are created to describe how the participants experienced

the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

The interviews and the focus group went through a peer review and pilot by volunteers at

a school who were not to be included in the study. The data gathered from interviews, written

responses, and focus groups were transcribed using the Otter Transcribing Service. Once the data

were transcribed, the researcher coded the information and found themes using the Nvivo

Program. During the coding process, the Line-by-Line coding process was used as suggested by

Gibbs (2007). The researcher gave each sentence of the transcription a code that was used to

develop themes. The purpose of line-by-line coding was to prevent the researcher from

interjecting their personal views into the data.

Imaginative Variation

After transcendental-phenomenological reduction, the next step in the data analysis was

imaginative variation. According to Moustakas (1994), the purpose of imaginative variation is to

arrive at the structural descriptions of the experience and the factors that created what is being

experienced. The overall goal of imaginative variation is for the researcher to structure the

themes from the descriptions of text that have been gained through the transcendental-

phenomenological reduction process (Moustakas, 1994). Imaginative variation steps included

varying the possible meaning of text, recognizing the themes of the phenomenon, considering the feelings of others in reference to the phenomenon, and locating themes and descriptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Synthesis of Meanings and Essences

Synthesis is the final step in the process of the research in which all of the textual and structural descriptions are unified to capture the experience of the phenomenon studied in the research (Moustakas, 1994). Synthesis was completed after coding, and the themes had been developed from the data. The synthesis of the data then provided the essence, which is representative of a time and place as well as the vantage point of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

In this research, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were established in order to validate the findings of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained validation is a foundational point in qualitative research because of the researcher's time in the study, the detailed descriptions of the research, and the relationships built with the participants of the study. Member checking and reflexivity were used to determine trustworthiness (Schwandt, 2007).

Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checks are the most important way to establish the credibility of the study. Member checking establishes credibility through the members who participated in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). One of the ways this was completed was by using the focus groups to provide insight on the accuracy of the experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation was another method the researcher used to establish

credibility in the research by using various sources of information to validate the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher used the interviews, focus groups, and the written responses as the sources of information for triangulation in the study.

Dependability and Confirmability

To establish the dependability of the research, a list of procedures was created, and only trained personnel were able to access the research materials (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The member checks, conducted by the participants of the study, allowed the results to be confirmed or corroborated (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reflexivity was used for the study, as the researcher wrote down all personal biases and experiences with the phenomenon of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher documented reflexivity in the form of a journal.

Transferability

Transferability is essential as part of the qualitative research process. Transferability was done through detailed, thick descriptions that allow the readers to decide the transferability of the information (Erlandson et al., 1993). Transferability enabled participants to report if the findings of the researcher were accurate (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Before any data were collected, the researcher obtained permission from the Liberty University IRB to conduct the study. The information collected was locked in a file cabinet with only the researcher having access to this information until it is transferred into a password-protected computer. For the protection of the participants, they were given pseudonyms. Participants in the study provided consent for participating in the study with information about the study and the ability to withdraw from the study at any time.

Summary

The chapter described the methodology used in this study. The chapter explained the type of qualitative design used for the research and explained the reasoning for using the design. An explanation of the setting, participants, and procedures used in the research was provided within the chapter. The data collection process and the trustworthiness of the study were also explained. Finally, ethical considerations, or the methods used to protect the participants of the study, were discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of special education teachers working with general education teachers who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion for students with disabilities in North Carolina High Schools. The purpose of Chapter Four is to present an analysis of the data shared by the participants of the study. The chapter includes the experiences or phenomenon experienced by the participants in the study (Moustakas, 1994).

Participants

This study included 10 special education teachers who teach on the high school level in North Carolina High Schools with at least 3 years of experience working with students with disabilities on the general education curriculum. The participants in the study provided insight into their experiences through a one-on-one interview, completing a writing prompt, and participating in a focus group. All the sections of the research were completed to develop triangulation. During the interview and focus group sections, the participants of the study gave their answers to questions presented by the researcher through video conferencing. For the writing prompt portion of the study, the participants wrote a response to the writing prompt, which did not have a required limit to respond to the prompt. The information gathered from the participants was then analyzed to get an understanding of the experiences from the codes, which were used to create the themes (see Appendix F). The participants' names were changed to protect their identity.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Race	Age	Number of Years in Special Education	Current Special Education – General Curriculum License in North Carolina
Louise	Female	African American	49	22	Yes
Angela	Female	Caucasian	38	6	Yes
Melanie	Female	Caucasian	43	9	Yes
Lisa	Female	Caucasian	37	15	Yes
Cathy	Female	Caucasian	27	5	Yes
Brenda	Female	African American	60	15	Yes
Robert	Male	African American	34	8	Yes
Claudine	Female	Caucasian	59	16	Yes
Leon	Male	African American	53	22	Yes
Khalil	Male	African American	56	3	Yes

Louise

Louise has been working in the field of special education for over 22 years. Before working as a special education teacher, she was working with juvenile delinquents in a halfway house before graduating college. A friend asked her about working with students who were part of a Behavior Emotional Disability (BED) Classroom at a local school. She stated that with her experience working with juvenile delinquents, she felt the position offered to her best fit the skills she had gained.

Angela

Angela has over six years of working with students with disabilities on the high school level. She has not only served students with disabilities on the general education curriculum, but she has also worked with students in the self-contained classroom. Her mother worked 20 years

in special education, and it was her mother that gave Angela the motivation to enter the field of special education. Angela was inspired by her mother and even spent time in her classroom which motivated her decision to become a special education teacher.

Melanie

With family as her main motivation for entering the field of education, she wanted a career that would work easily with her children's schedule while they were at school. She was motivated to become a special education teacher because she stated she has a heart and passion to help others who are usually overlooked. She had a younger brother who had difficulties in school and was not as academically gifted as her older brother. Melanie has worked in special education for nine years.

Lisa

With over 15 years of special education experience working with students with disabilities on the general curriculum and self-contained classroom, Lisa has a high interest in how students learn and being willing to adapt to their specialized needs for them to learn the content and be successful. She also enjoys special education because it is not the "same thing every day." She enjoys the variety of available methods available for students to learn to the content. Her goal for her students is to graduate from high school and become successful citizens with their communities.

Cathy

Cathy stated she has a learning disability and she enjoyed working with her special education teachers which assisted her through the general curriculum. She noticed the improvement in her skills through the assistance of her special education teachers. Her mother and father were both speech pathologists in their local school systems. Cathy has been working

in the field of special education for six years. She is motivated by her experience to assist other students with disabilities and entered the field of special education.

Brenda

Brenda has been working in the field of special education for over 15 years. She enjoys the challenge of teaching those students who are different from the normal population. She wanted to have a challenge with her career and felt the calling of becoming a special education teacher to help those students with learning disabilities.

Robert

Robert stated that all his life experiences and passion for serving others led him to the field of special education. He always had careers where he interacted with people from all backgrounds. Before becoming a special education teacher, he served for several years as a teacher assistant in a self-contained classroom. He felt becoming a special education teacher was natural for him as a career choice. He has been working in the field of special education for over eight years.

Claudine

Claudine has always had a passion for serving those with special needs, with her experience as a volunteer through high school and college. She felt more passionate about special education when her son was diagnosed with autism. She stated she became immersed in her career choice and was very happy to be serving in special education for over 16 years, working with middle and high school students.

Leon

Leon has worked for 22 years in the field of special education, starting as a one-on-one assistant for a student at a local school. Leon stated that he fell into the field of special education

when he accepted the position as a one-on-one assistant. From there, he became a Special

Education Teacher after working in several other positions in the field of special education. Leon

has experience working on the middle and high school level for students with disabilities in the

general curriculum.

Khalil

Even though Khalil has worked in education for 26 years, he has worked in special

education for over three of those years. He has worked previously as a History Teacher and

Physical Education Teacher. Khalil stated he wanted a position change within the school and was

motivated to become a special education teacher. He enjoys working with students with

disabilities and progressing them to the goal of graduation.

Results

To obtain the themes from the study, the Moustakas (1994) Transcendental

Phenomenology was used to complete the task of analyzing the data of the experiences of special

education teachers in the study. The process of analyzing the data, according to Moustakas

(1994), was to remove all thoughts about the phenomenon to view it from the participants'

experience called Epoché. During the Transcendental-Phenomenological Phase,

Horizontalization allowed repeated information to be removed and put the information into

themes or categories. Structural Descriptions were developed through Imaginative Variation to

define the text which led into the final process of Synthesis. Synthesis unified all the experiences

through the textual descriptions provided. After the data was analyzed, three themes were

suggested from the results: Challenges with Collaboration, Regular Education Teachers' Lack of

Understanding the IEP, and Challenges of Special Education Teachers to Meet all

Responsibilities.

Theme 1: Challenges with Collaboration

Special Education Teachers want to be able to collaborate with General Education Teachers, especially those in non-cotaught classrooms, to share their knowledge of the student's disability in the classroom and how it may affect them academically and socially. Furthermore, Special Education Teachers want to be considered part of a team where they work with the General Education Teacher. Angela explained the importance of the collaboration between Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers not in a coteaching model of inclusion:

> They [General Education Teachers] have an expertise in the general curriculum and my expertise is on how to differentiate the instruction. I can learn from them [General Education Teachers] about their subject and they can also learn from me, the special education area differentiation because we are a team. (Angela, Individual Interview, July 19, 2022)

Claudine shared an experience where she was able to work with science teachers, and not only benefited the students with disabilities but all students in the room:

> I had some great science teachers and social studies teachers. I was able to assist with some strategies and visual supports and other multiple ways to reach students. The teachers were reluctant to try the strategies because they thought the students with disabilities would not learn the content. They were surprised that it not only helped the students with disabilities, but it helped all of the students in the classroom. (Claudine, Focus Group, March 21, 2023)

Special Education Teachers also want to work with the General Education Teacher to ensure they are correctly implementing the IEP as written, as well as ensuring the accommodations and modifications are correctly being delivered to the students with disabilities. Melanie feels that there is a disconnection between the Special Education Teacher and General Education Teacher in non-cotaught classrooms because the Special Education Teacher is not in the classroom assisting the General Education Teacher with making sure the accommodations and modifications are being implemented correctly. Angela shared her experience of having to work with a history teacher who did not provide accommodations to students with an IEP:

> The special education teacher called the history teacher to ask if student received accommodations. It is not normal for this student to score this low on a test if they have their accommodation. The special education also knows the student knew the information because the special education teacher and student reviewed for the test a few days ago. The history teacher said he could not remember if the student was given accommodations. The special education tells the history teacher the student needs to take the test again with accommodations. The history teacher agrees to give the student another test. This is documented in the special education teacher log. (Angela, Writing Sample, July 19, 2022)

Claudine explains the difficulty of Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers in non-coteaching models of inclusion being able to collaborate as a "marriage":

> And the fact that they [General Education Teachers] do not get the chance to know you as well can make it more difficult for them to see you as someone that has some value and input unless someone else has told them that or they been around for a long time. So, it can be even harder with like the science and social studies teachers because they do not

really have that relationship with you. And so, they may be wonderful people who really care about students with disabilities, but they do not get to think about telling you simply because you are not there. So, you are not going to have that marriage, but you might be able to be good coworkers and just be able to share ideas and have respectful information. (Claudine, Individual Interview, March 6, 2023)

Beyond making sure accommodations and modifications are provided to students with disabilities in non-cotaught classrooms, Special Education Teachers also need data from the General Education Teachers to complete paperwork and other tasks related to special education documents (Vroey et al., 2016). Angela explains the importance of General Education Teachers from non-cotaught classrooms to provide data for students with disabilities:

Why the demand for data, especially grades, at the end of the quarter? The data is used to create Present Level of Performances for students with IEPs. We need exact and current data to create these IEPs. (Angela, Individual Interview, July 19, 2022)

This information is imperative for Special Education Teachers; according to Lisa, Special Education Teachers are responsible for documenting "down to the minute detail of each situation of each student, based on the protocol for data collection" (Individual Interview, July 25). Cathy further explained the importance of General Education Teachers understanding how the data they provide works to create the IEP document:

I would help them to understand what the IEP is, other than, you know, coming to the meeting, and sitting there and seeing what we've done, but understand how all the pieces and parts fit together, how it tells us the story of the student based on the data that we're given because everything is data-driven. (Cathy, Individual Interview, November 1, 2022)

For Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms to have successful collaboration, communication must be open and free for the exchange of ideas and concerns for the students with disabilities. Special Education Teachers who have good relationships with their General Education Teachers will make it easier for communication and collaboration to take place. Some General Education Teachers either had not collaborated with special education teachers or had been required to collaborate with one for several years. Lisa shared the importance of communication through her statement:

> The teachers need to have an open line of communication. The General Education Teacher must feel comfortable to be able to come up to me. In my expertise, open communication works, and it is not about ego. I do not want to be overlooked. (Lisa, Individual Interview, July 25, 2022)

Khalil explained that whether general education teachers in non-cotaught classrooms communicate with him electronically or face to face, he can complete his tasks when it relates to students with disabilities:

> I have teachers who send me their lesson and say, "Hey, this is what I want to do, but students are struggling, and how can I modify this? What do I need to do?" Sometimes to get tasks completed, it is through email, meeting with them [General Education Teachers] face to face, or meeting with them [General Education Teachers] before or after school. You must make the effort to get it done. (Khalil, Focus Group, March 21, 2023)

> Special Education Teachers do not communicate with general education teachers unless it is a behavioral concern that a student with a disability is not passing a course required for graduation. Lisa (Individual Interview, July 25, 2022) also shared, "General Education Teachers who are in non-cotaught do not take advantage of us unless they have a question on an

accommodation." Overall, Special Education Teachers want to know they are fully involved with their students. Cathy (Individual Interview, November 1, 2022) stated, "Special Education Teachers communicate more with English and mathematics teachers because of the services offered for specially designed instruction in those areas." Melanie shared her reasoning about the importance of Special Education Teachers' collaboration with General Education in non-cotaught classrooms:

> I think for us [Special Education Teachers] we have some leverage or advantage over some General Education Teachers because we do have to know so much about our students that will build rapport with those students and their parents. I can let the parent know that we are working together on this. (Melanie, Individual Interview, July 20, 2022)

> Planning time is an effective component of collaboration for Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers not in cotaught classrooms. The Special Education Teacher must not only ensure IEPs are being implemented correctly, but they must also meet with other teachers, have meetings, collect data, and perform other duties which may be required of them from the local level. Melanie stated that she feels she is being "pulled in a million different directions" (Individual Interview, July 20, 2022) to really be able to collaborate with her General Education Teachers. Louise gives an example of how she uses her planning period:

> Now it's planning, and I'm making copies of the IEPs for the teachers on the student schedule, and I'm printing the ones that were in my first two blocks if they were not on my caseload. I have a few minutes left, so I start a spreadsheet with the students I serve accommodations to mail to the regular education teachers. (Louise, Writing Sample, July 18, 2022)

Leon also explains how he spends planning time during the day to complete his tasks around the school:

> As a Special Education Teacher, I attend several meetings during the week. I also have professional learning communities on Tuesday and Thursday of each week, lesson planning, collaborating with math teachers and progress monitoring for IEP Goals, and manage a caseload. (Leon, Writing Sample, March 23, 2023)

The Special Education Teacher must figure out how to use their time wisely to meet the demands of the profession daily. Because of the time that is limited to Special Education Teachers, some of them work beyond the school day to meet their responsibilities. Cathy stated that she must take work home with her, which takes away from her personal time at home. She further explains that her planning period might be taken away from attending other meetings or Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Angela gave her view of Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers on planning:

> Most of the time, Special Education Teachers may have a meeting or something else. The General Education Teacher may not have anything scheduled, and it is easier for them leave after the school day. They have time to complete their responsibilities without having to worry about the extra paperwork. (Angela, Individual Interview, July 19, 2022)

Because of the limited time made available, when Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers can collaborate with each other, Special Education Teachers want to have beneficial meetings that will assist them with their work. Louise gives her statement on the importance of using time wisely when collaborating:

> I do not have time for a griping session. So, every time they [General Education Teachers] start griping, I am sitting there thinking to myself, there are so many things I

can be doing for these 30 minutes. I may tell the math person to send me a text to talk about this, and I come across the hall. (Louise, Individual Interview, July 18, 2022)

Cathy also shared the same view of Louise with her statement:

Collaboration can be difficult. In my experience, regular education teachers prioritize speaking about behaviors or concerns over collaborating on the curriculum. This can make it an uphill battle to find collaboration on the curriculum being taught. (Cathy, Individual Interview, November 1, 2022)

Melanie shared her view on collaborating with teachers throughout the day:

The theme of the story here is there is just not enough time in the day. Most correspondence between EC and gen ed teachers is done in passing or through email, even though they have been told multiple times not to put student names in email. I love my job, but when I have too many days like that one above, I get majorly burnt out and just want to put my head in the sand. (Melanie, Writing Sample, July 20, 2022)

Angela also discussed about her experience with collaboration and planning:

For me, obviously and honestly, that's probably one of the hardest parts is that we don't have a whole lot of planning time between for other content specific areas. Obviously, we do kind of touch base with the other teachers who teach like English and math, because that's kind of what we offer in the smaller EC classes. (Angela, Focus Group, November 21, 2022)

The administration of the school also motivates the collaboration between Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms for students with disabilities. Special Education Teachers view Administration as an integral part of making

of implementing collaborative practices. Louise made this statement about the importance of

administration:

> Administration will make it more valuable, pushing the importance of it [collaboration]
>
> and teaming up. Our Special Education Teachers who are with General Education
>
> Teachers are more willing to receive help from the Special Education Teacher because
>
> the General Education is knowledgeable about the curriculum. (Louise, Individual
>
> Interview, July 18, 2022)

Brenda also shared similar views as Louise on the importance of the administration playing a

role in implementing collaborative practices:

> The idea of your leadership becoming part of this scenario where there is an initial
>
> meeting of all people involves and saying they support collaboration, and it is expected.
>
> The expectation is that collaboration is going to happen. (Brenda, Focus Group, March
>
> 20, 2023)

> Special Education Teachers can become frustrated with some administrators who have

minimal knowledge of Special Education practices. Cathy stated that sometimes when she comes

with concerns about not being able to collaborate with teachers or even concerns with her

students with disabilities, she feels as if she is "nagging or bothering her administrator when she

is just trying to get support to do my job" (Individual Interview, November 1, 2022). Lisa shared

the same feelings as Cathy, and she stated that "sometimes you have to [have] an old-school

conversation with your administration and General Education Teachers to let them know I am

frustrated" (Lisa, Individual Interview, July 25, 2022). Louise stated that she might have to

include administration when she is unable to get General Education Teachers to communicate

with her. Special Education Teachers feel it is difficult to get support for collaboration due to the

administration not having the Special Education background to assist them. Cathy stated the following about her views:

> I think it is difficult for the Special Education Teacher to get support from administration because a lot of administrators do not have the experience of working with students with disabilities. So, they [administration] do not know how to best support us, or they see us as people to make sure they do not get into a lawsuit. They do not want to hear from us because of all the legal stuff, and it can get scary. I think that having support would make our jobs easier, but not having it hinders our ability to complete our jobs. (Cathy, Individual Interview, November 1, 2022)

Theme 2: General Education Teachers' Lack of Understanding of the IEP

General Education Teachers who have a cotaught classroom with a Special Education Teacher have someone with them to assist them with understanding the IEP and how it applies to their students with disabilities in the classroom. General Education Teachers do not receive the same training in colleges and universities as Special Education Teachers, which causes them not to totally understand the importance of implementing a student's IEP. Cathy (Individual Interview, November 1, 2022) explained that it is a "lack of training made available" for General Education Teachers to understand all the aspects of the IEP and how important it is to implement the program properly. Angela explains the experience of General Education Teachers and their training through teaching programs:

> Sometimes our Special Education students might get overlooked, not intentionally, but the fact that some general education teachers do not always get the education they need through their teaching program because they focus more on general education. (Angela, Individual Interview, July 19, 2022)

Robert expresses his view on how the lack of knowledge from both the Special Education

Teacher and General Education should build a stronger relationship between them:

> I think it is important for Special Education Teachers to be aware of the content. But, I
>
> am not aware [of] how much the general education teacher has to understand the special
>
> education side. I think that alone would build stronger relationships. (Robert, Individual
>
> Interview, March 3, 2023)

Cathy further explains that Special Education Teachers "went to school" to learn about

learning disabilities and that "General Education Teachers needs assistance from Special

Education Teacher when it comes to understanding the IEP" (Individual Interview, November 1,

2022). One of the major concerns of Special Education Teachers is that the IEP is a legal

document stating how the school will support a student due to their disability which hinders them

from accessing the general curriculum like their nondisabled peers. Louise (Individual Interview,

July 18, 2022) reminds her colleagues in her school that the IEP is a "legal[ly] binding

document, and you can find yourself in court behind it" for them to understand the importance of

following the IEP. Khalil shared his view on the importance of the law and the IEP to the

teachers who have students with disabilities:

> I have no concerns with letting them [General Education Teachers] know that it [IEP] is
>
> [the] law and that students in the room must be receiving their accommodations and
>
> modifications. Sometimes you must remind them [General Education Teachers] this is
>
> [the] law and that it is supposed to happen. (Khalil, Personal Interview, March 17, 2023)

When General Education Teachers are not in a cotaught classroom, they are totally

responsible for implementing the IEP and understanding their students' current grade levels in

their academic areas. One of the major concerns expressed by all Special Education Teachers

was the implementation of accommodation and modifications for the student to have access to the class like their nondisabled peers. Melanie feels that special education teachers are willing to help general education teachers who do not understand how to implement accommodations and modifications correctly. Khalil shared his experience of general education teachers asking him for assistance with accommodation and modifications:

> A lot of them [General Education Teachers] ask for help with accommodations and understanding the accommodations. They [General Education Teachers] may see a student who has 50% more time, or they are having difficulties with turning in assignments. You want to help and make it basic. (Khalil, Focus Group, March 20, 2023)

Some General Education Teachers implement the accommodation and modifications as given in the IEP with no problems. Louise expressed assisting a teacher with rearranging a test for a student to meet the accommodations as addressed in the IEP, which made the test shorter and more obtainable for the student. The general education teacher expressed how easy it was to implement the accommodation for the student. Brenda stated the following about reminding the general education teachers about the importance of following the IEP:

> The concern is that if we are not following the IEP, we are breaking the law. Making sure that we are having that conversation with general education teachers to help them out. So, I usually review the IEP with them. (Brenda, Individual Interview, February 28, 2023)

There are times in Special Education when Special Education Teachers must approach General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms who are not following the IEP for students with disabilities. Angela explained her experience with a General Education Teacher with accommodations and modifications with the following statement:

I have a copy of the accommodation page for the student and go directly to the teacher

and tell them this is what the student is supposed to have, and you are not following the

IEP. It is an issue if you are not following the IEP the way it is written. (Angela,

Individual Interview, July 19, 2022)

There can be concerns when the Special Education Teacher must inform a general education

teacher that they are not implementing the IEP correctly. Melanie stated that sometimes the

"General Education Teacher relies on the little knowledge that they have about the IEP and the

accommodations." Melanie also stated she is very thankful for teachers who are "diligent in

knowing the accommodations of her students and makes a way to ensure they are provided to

them" (Individual Interview, July 20, 2022). Angela shared her experience when a student in a

non-cotaught classroom did not give a student with a disability their accommodations as outlined

in the IEP because the teacher could not remember if they received accommodations. She had to

inform the general education teacher that they had to retest due to not following the IEP. Cathy

also shared a similar situation as she advised a General Education Teacher on providing

supplemental aids for a student in writing and then, after a week, stopped providing the aid,

which caused her to have a meeting and put it as an accommodation for the teacher to follow the

accommodation. Angela spoke on how some general education teachers had contacted her for

assistance with students with disabilities in their classroom:

In my experience, I've had some general education teachers just reach out to me just

because they knew I was a special education teacher and I had done inclusion classes.

General Education Teacher know it is not a cotaught class, but they have a student who

may or may not be on my caseload and they are looking for accommodations. They also

want information on the accommodation and how it looks like when implemented in their

classroom. (Angela, Focus Group, November 11, 2022)

The General Education Teacher is a very important part of the IEP process, especially for

those students with disabilities in non-cotaught classrooms. The Special Education Teacher

depends heavily on the information provided by them to complete tasks related to the special

education processes. Louise prefers to meet with her General Education Teachers in non-

cotaught classrooms to gather the data needed for the student. She stated, "I invite them a time to

meet with me to provide the information because I do not want to put you on the spot during an

IEP Meeting" (Louise, Individual Interview, July 18, 2022). Cathy expresses her views on the

importance of General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms attending IEP Meetings:

> The IEP Team Meeting is a team decision to determine what is best for the student.
>
> Whether they teach the student or teach the content, they can learn a lot from
>
> participating in IEP meetings which they can take back to their classrooms. (Cathy,
>
> Individual Interview, November 1, 2022)

Melanie speaks on the importance of general education teachers understanding the importance of

understanding the IEP and the process of creating IEPs:

> I would help them to understand what the IEP is, other than, you know, coming to the
>
> meeting and sitting there and seeing what we have done, but understand how all the
>
> pieces and parts fit together. How it tells us the story of the student based on the data that
>
> we are given because everything is data driven. It is not just because we feel this way
>
> about this thing, or we think this is what is best for the student. It is a team decision, and
>
> how they [General Education Teachers] play a part in whether they teach the student or

teach the same content areas, they can still learn from those IEP meetings and take that back to their classroom. (Melanie, Focus Group, November 21, 2022)

Theme 3: Challenges with Special Education Teachers Meeting All Responsibilities

The responsibilities of a Special Education Teacher are multifaceted as they must complete multiple tasks throughout their responsibilities. Not only are special education teacher teachers responsible for working with all General Education Teachers (cotaught and non-cotaught) in the school for students on their caseload, but they must also conduct IEP Meetings, complete paperwork for those meetings, and perform extra responsibilities above their duties to meet the needs of all students on their caseload. Brenda gives an example of all the responsibilities she must perform as part employment:

> During my planning period, I review lesson plans from general education teachers also check for the material needed from the teacher's guide. I check in on them [General Education Teachers] to make sure lesson plans have not changed. For my students with the accommodation for check-in/checkout plan, I go to their classes and get updates on their progress. I call parents, schedule IEP Meetings, draft IEPs, get progress monitoring information from general education teachers, facilitate IEP meetings, and then pull students to perform progress monitoring. (Brenda, Writing Sample, March 11, 2023)

Claudine also explains how busy her schedule can be trying to meet all her responsibilities of being a special education teacher:

> The day starts with going to my room to turn on my laptop, spend a few moments checking emails, then I go on car rider duty. After car rider duty, I go back to my room for fifteen minutes to answer emails and get my laptop and vocabulary flashcards ready for English class. (Claudine, Writing Sample, March 16, 2023)

Leon explained there are other factors within the school day that cause special education teachers to struggle with meeting all their responsibilities:

> Meetings. Scheduling and timing. Covering Classes when there are no substitutes. These are what I call barriers. If someone is going to be we are covering a class, it may cause us to have to postpone an IEP Meeting. This occurs because we do not have enough staff. And sometimes, we are looked upon as behavior specialists, and that is not our job. (Leon, Personal Interview, March 16, 2023)

> The role of the Special Education Teacher can also be an emotional one as they are

working loosely with their students and all the teachers involved. Being a special education teacher means always being prepared and ready for what might approach you during the day. Angela shared a statement on the feeling of being a special education teacher:

> A special education teacher always must be two steps ahead of everyone else because when there is an issue with a student on their caseload, the special education teacher is one of the first ones called, so it is always important to work ahead. (Angela, Writing Sample, July 19, 2022)

Special Education Teachers do have concerns for their students in non-cotaught classrooms. Melanie explains that Special Education Teachers become a mentor or even parent figures because of the relationship they have with the student and the parents. The Special Education Teacher explained the importance of organization and time management when it comes to performing their duties and meeting with non-cotaught teachers. Louise explained the complexity of being a Special Education Teacher:

> Another aspect that is difficult is the paperwork and trying to juggle everything while trying to be an effective teacher with all the extra stuff added to it. Although we want to

be treated as equals to General Education Teachers, some of the things make it hard when you have afternoon duties and IEP Meetings. This means trying to be in two places at one time. Then when you have meetings, it may be difficult to find a regular education teacher who teaches the student due to scheduling on the high school level because of the set-up of planning periods. (Louise, Individual Interview, July 18, 2022)

Melanie shared similar feelings about the responsibilities of being a Special Education:

Being a Special Education Teacher sometimes means wearing multiple hats. We are expected to be teachers first and foremost, but also counselors, behavior specialists, disciplinarians, and experts in our fields. At all times, we are magicians. (Melanie, Individual Interview, July 20, 2022)

Lisa explains her role as a Special Education Teacher as ever changing with her explanation:

Other matters that may change the role of the special education teacher may be discipline issues, crisis in the home, lack of social-emotional skills, coping strategies, or even time management deficits. There are many others to name, but on the typical day, the special education teacher is making their best efforts in reaching out to all students served in a day, which can result in the special education teacher playing the detective for an array of issues for multiple students. (Lisa, Writing Sample, July 25, 2022)

Louise feels that Special Education teachers are often "thrown under the bus" (Individual Interview, July 20, 2022) for not knowing and understanding curriculum from other content areas. Melanie shared the same feelings as Louise when it came to Special Education Teachers and General Education Content:

Special Education Teachers might not teach a subject or be an expert at it. We kind of must be able to learn all subjects and some of the obstacles of working alongside General

Education Teachers is that they must understand we are still equal. (Louise, Individual

Interview, July 20, 2022)

Cathy shared her experience of trying to understand the general education of teachers. She stated

she must figure out what the teachers will be teaching in the classroom. Sometimes, she does not

know what their students will be learning in class until the day of class. Cathy further explained

that learning the content from the General Education Teachers can be difficult; the conversation

often prioritized speaking on behaviors and concerns versus collaborating on the curriculum. Not

knowing the curriculum from General Education Teachers can be frustrating to Special

Education Teachers, especially General Education Teachers who are asking the Special

Education Teacher to assist them with assignments and projects from other courses outside of

English and mathematics. Melanie shared an experience where a General Education Teacher set

a student with a disability to work with her on a project for a history course. She explained it was

difficult to work with the student because she did not know the content, and when she was able

to reach the student's teacher, they only had 30 minutes left to complete tasks for the project,

which was a disservice to the student.

Outlier Data and Findings

The data for the research from the individual interviews, writing samples, and focus

groups were aligned with the themes that were discovered in the study. Some data were not

aligned with the themes presented in the study. One outlier for the study was the behavioral

concerns of some students with disabilities in the non-cotaught classrooms. Teachers in the study

mentioned the General Education Teacher only communicates with them about the behaviors of

the students, which led participants into conversations about student behaviors and how it affects

them in non-cotaught classrooms. Special Education Teachers noted behavioral concerns from

students with disabilities and the limited availability of support for those students. Another outlier was on the topic of the Covid-19 Pandemic and how it has changed the way teachers communicate and work with each other. The Covid-19 Pandemic not only contributed to how teachers and other stakeholders work together but to the behavioral concerns and needs of students to be successful in the classroom. Data sources revealed a concern for the current state of the experiences of general education teachers and special education teachers entering the field of education. The participants noted that new people entering the field of education from various backgrounds other than education could strain collaborative efforts for students with disabilities in the classroom.

<div align="center">**Research Question Responses**</div>

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of special education teachers who collaborate with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model of inclusion in North Carolina high schools? Overall, Special Education Teachers want to be able to successfully collaborate with all General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms just like they collaborate with their cotaught General Education Teachers. Special Education Teachers find collaborating with non-cotaught General Education Teachers difficult due to the other responsibilities required of Special Education Teachers to complete their tasks throughout the day. Lisa explained this with her statement:

> We [Special Education Teachers] try to be as much as we can. But it is the having meetings and other responsibilities that pulls us [Special Education Teachers] away from what we really would like to do with our special education students (Lisa, Individual Interview, July 25, 2022).

Special Education Teachers desire to have a collaborative environment in which they can complete all the tasks required to serve students with disabilities. Communication is also an important part of the experience of Special Education Teacher's experience working with General Education Teacher who are not in cotaught classroom. Feedback from General Education Teachers from non-cotaught teacher on is imperative on completing tasks required for students with disabilities. Lisa explains again the importance of feedback in this statement:

> I have had some positive and negative feedback when working with General Education Teachers who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion. Maybe something is not working for the student, or they are not responding. It is good to have feedback. (Lisa, Individual Interview, July 25, 2022)

Cathy also expresses the importance of the teachers being able to collaborate to served students with disabilities:

> I think it's important to make sure that you're always available or present for those students and teachers to build that relationship and making sure that they know see you and don't just see an email, but kind of go and meet them. And, you know, just show that you are a person and you're available. (Cathy, Focus Group, November 21, 2022)

Leon also shared his view on successful collaboration with his experiences from working with the math department:

> In my experience, I can work with my coteachers and non-coteachers because we work together when we plan. When we meet as a team, I help create anchor charts for students with disabilities, and all the math teachers use them in the classroom. I get compliments from the math teachers because it really helps them grasp the concepts and standards. (Leon, Personal Interview, March 16, 2023)

Communication among all teachers who work with students with disabilities is crucial for the success of the students in the room. Special Education Teacher communication with non-cotaught General Education Teachers is mostly done through email because it is the most convenient way of communicating with each other throughout the school day due to scheduling and other conflicts. This way is the best option when trying to get information from non-cotaught General Education Teachers to complete IEP tasks if they are unable to communicate face-to-face. Even with using technology and not being able to meet face to face, Special Education Teachers can get frustrated with the minimal information provided by non-cotaught General Education Teachers. Louise explains the frustration of trying to communicate with general education teachers:

> General Education Teachers do respond to my emails, but they are not giving me information I need to complete my tasks. I create a sheet for General Education Teachers to answer my questions directly and even then, I even get one-word answers. I'm like you are a professional and you only giving me one-word answers to describe a student's weakness? (Louise, Individual Interview, July 18, 2022)

Robert shared his view of the importance of communication to serve as a purpose for relationship building for teachers:

> Communicate what you see what you see how you feel. Building that relationship is so important with that general education teacher. So, all in all, I know personalities are different and that is another challenge we face sometimes. You are working with multiple teachers, multiple personalities, and multiple moods. (Robert, Individual Interview, March 3, 2023)

Claudine shared the importance of General Education Teachers communicating with Special Education Teachers to benefit the students in the classroom:

> I have seen some General Education Teachers become truly interested in reaching out to their coteaching partners and non-coteaching partners to get more help with a student who has significant disabilities. The communication helps the student with the disability be included in the class. (Claudine, Focus Group, March 21, 2023)

Sub-Question 1

What aspects of collaboration make a Special Education Teacher feel united with a General Education Teacher who is teaching students with disabilities not in a coteaching model of inclusion? One of the aspects of Special Education Teachers feeling united is the ability to successfully collaborate with General Education Teachers and administration to complete their tasks when it is related to students with disabilities. Lisa shared her experience about an experience that made her feel united with General Education Teachers:

> I had a teacher who I did not work with in the inclusion model, but she went to her department peers, and they were talking about how I helped with a situation as well as my IEP Meetings. Knowing people [were] talking about me and actively putting my name out there made me feel encouraged. (Lisa, Individual Interview, July 25, 2022)

Special Education Teachers also want their expertise to be viewed as important when collaborating with general education teachers. Louise shared an experience where she felt united when working with general education teachers:

> I felt good when a teacher asked me what strategies a teacher could use. A teacher was struggling to come up with some new strategies for students. So, they reached out to me to see if I had any ideas. (Louise, Individual Interview, July 18, 2022)

Lisa shared another view on the importance of being able to collaborate successfully with non-inclusion General Education Teachers:

> It allows kids to have the opportunity to have more support in the classroom, and it allows other supports in behavior and organization beside only the academic piece so varying types of students can be successful in the classroom. Because there is not just only on perspective in the room, you are getting two teachers' perspectives. (Lisa, Individual Interview, July 25, 2022)

Claudine views being part of the team as very important when working with special education teachers, especially for unity:

> Consider the Special Education Teacher as a professional. Consider them as part of the team. Inviting them to and expecting them to be part of the team for those students with disabilities. Include them in the progress of the student, especially in courses where there is no coteaching present, so they can help students in all classes, not just cotaught courses. (Claudine, Individual Interview, March 6, 2023)

Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers must have an understanding of each other's roles in the non-inclusion classroom setting. Also, this will consist of having enough time within the school day to plan and learn the curriculum of the General Education Teacher's content to modify content and ensure the IEP is properly implemented in the non-inclusion classroom. Special Education Teachers desire to be accepted as equal partners alongside their general education teacher counterparts. Louise said, "Most of the time, general education teachers treat the special education teachers as glorified assistants" (Individual Interview, July 20, 2022). Melanie also describes her experience as being treated as an assistant to General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms. One of the advantages Special

Education Teachers have over General Education Teachers is that they have known the student longer and have seen their progression through school with different teachers. Angela makes the following statement about the advantage of General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms collaborating with Special Education Teachers:

> It makes us [Special Education Teachers] more valuable because we have worked with student for more than one semester. I have a lot more insight on the type of students they are in the classroom. If the General Education Teacher willing to listen and collaborate with me, we can get the most out of the student no matter what classroom they are in. (Angela, Individual Interview, July 19, 2022)

> Special Education Teachers appreciate when non-cotaught General Education Teachers use them and apply the advice given from their classroom and lesson plan with them. This ensures students with disabilities will have access to the curriculum that will be presented in the classroom. Lisa gives an explanation of feeling valued by a non-inclusion General Education Teacher:

> I love the opportunity to participate and be treated as an equal to them [General Education Teachers] and be allowed to be of assistance to plan and modify the assignments for the students. (Lisa, Individual Interview, July 25, 2022)

Louise explains how she plans to meet with her teachers to assist with lesson planning with her teachers for students with disabilities after finishing her responsibilities:

> Now it's time for the last block, and I head there to repeat from the first two blocks. After dismissal, the inclusion teacher and I meet briefly to review what we plan to do the next few days, who's going to do what, and when we plan to meet again. (Louise, Writing Sample, July 18, 2022)

Sub-Question 2

What aspects of collaboration allow the special education teacher and the general education teacher not in the coteaching model of inclusion to best meet the needs of students with disabilities in the classroom? Special Education Teachers want to be to understand the curriculum being presented in non-inclusion classrooms with the assistance of the General Education Teacher. This will assist them in helping students with disabilities in non-cotaught classrooms be successful and complete the coursework required for their courses. Special Education Teachers want General Education Teachers to understand the IEP and what it means for students with disabilities who are in their classrooms. Special Education Teachers must be able to collaborate with General Education Teachers to learn the content being presented to students. Special Education Teachers know the curriculum will allow them to offer assistance to non-cotaught General Education Teachers on how to differentiate the instruction as well as how to handle students with specific disabilities in the classroom. Lisa shared another aspect of how non-cotaught teachers can assist Special Education Teachers in understanding the curriculum:

> If I am not strong in math, then Special Education Teachers being offered to attend math training, whether I am coteaching or not coteaching with the teachers, will be important because, at the end of the day, I will be doing what is best for my students. General Education Teachers can help us [Special Education Teachers] with the curriculum, which will make collaboration for both of us much easier. (Lisa, Individual Interview, July 25, 2022)

Melanie shared her view on the importance of Special Education Teachers being able to understand the general curriculum:

As for Special Education Teachers, remember when I walk into the English class, I'm not going to know everything. I cannot expect the General Education Teacher to understand where I am coming from. It can be very frustrating. (Melanie, Individual Interview, July 20, 2022)

Special Education Teachers also want General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms to understand the importance of following the IEP and making sure it is implemented in the classroom. Cathy gave her view on why non-cotaught general education teachers do not understand the importance of the IEP for students with disabilities in their classrooms:

Aspects would include lack of training and knowledge from General Education Teachers because some of them are not in a coteaching model. They are not asked to attend Exceptional Children's trainings. (Cathy, Individual Interview, November 1, 2022)

Robert shared that he is concerned for general education teachers because they may not know how to implement the IEP because he is not in the classroom with the General Education Teacher:

My biggest concern is that they [General Education Teachers] are not serving students with disabilities if they are not in a collaborative setting giving them [Students with Disabilities] what they require. (Robert, Focus Group, March 21, 2023)

It would be very beneficial for general education teachers to attend trainings for special education teachers. This will allow the general education teacher to learn the current trends in special education and allow them to work alongside special education teachers knowing how to support students with disabilities. The Special Education Teacher also understands that many General Education Teachers have not had the same training or experience. Due to not having training or experience may have a negative effect on how General Education Teachers in non-

cotaught classes might have teaching students with disabilities effectively. Cathy shared her views:

> I am not saying the General Education Teacher does not understand them [Students with Disabilities], but somebody that obviously has [gone] to school for learning disabilities and having experience with it would be able to help the student having a step up in the classroom. I want the General Education to understand this. (Cathy, Individual Interview, November 1, 2022)

Special Education Teachers have a concern for non-cotaught General Education Teachers because of their lack of knowledge of the IEP and providing accommodations and modifications to students with disabilities in the classroom. Lisa explained the consequences of a General Education Teacher not following the IEP:

> I inform the General Education Teacher that the IEP is law, and ask them, "How can I help you?" Eventually, they [General Education Teachers] will come around, and some will not because they prefer to use the same lesson plans they [General Education Teachers] have been using for years. Some of them have gotten by with it for years with some students with disabilities, but it will not work with others. (Lisa, Individual Interview, July 25, 2022)

To help general education teachers comprehend the significance of implementing accommodations and modifications, it is essential to ensure that training is conducted regularly throughout the year. This training should detail each modification and accommodation and provide guidance on how they should be effectively incorporated into the classroom. The special education teacher can also provide assistance to general education teachers in ensuring accommodations and modifications are properly implemented. Special education teachers also

desire general education teachers to assist them in data collection and to provide data to create documents for IEP Meetings. Angela shared her view on the importance of general education teachers providing information to special education teachers for students with disabilities:

> Well, I would like to add feedback and data. I mean, you could say will they turn in assignments? Okay, on quizzes, and then just give some grades. Well, that's something that we can look up in Power School. I mean, be a little bit more specific to help write the present-level performance. (Angela, Focus Group, November 21, 2022)

Sub-Question 3

What factors prevent special education teachers and general education teachers with students with disabilities from successfully collaborating who are not in coteaching classrooms? Several factors can hinder Special Education Teachers from effectively collaborating with General Education Teachers who are not part of a coteaching model of inclusion. The first aspect of successful collaboration is that the administration of the school must be able to motivate teachers to collaborate with each other for students with disabilities. Louise explained the importance of administration with her comment:

> Administration must take this into consideration. Sometimes it's not able to do, but taking considerations personalities, and people that will click together and not clash. Utilizing some of the general education teachers that can help grow some of our special education teachers. You should be able to grow any student; however, some of them have this mental block that if they don't have higher-level kids, they can't grow because they don't. They're [administration] not willing to adjust to their teaching staff. (Louise, Individual Interview, July 18, 2022)

The administration also needs to recognize General Education Teachers who have a strength in being able to collaborate with special education teachers and try to maintain those working relationships as much as possible. Special Education Teachers depend on administration to find resolutions to concerns to best assist with students with disabilities in the non-cotaught classrooms. Angela shared an experience in which one of her students was advocating for themselves because they were being denied accommodations in a classroom. She went to her administrator, and they were able to remedy the situation very quickly.

On the high school level, having the same planning periods is also a factor that limits the ability for successful collaboration. Not only does time play a factor, but also the location of the teachers throughout the building, which a Special Education Teacher may not even access due to their schedule. When it comes to time, it is valuable to Special Education Teachers when collaborating with non-cotaught General Education Teachers. Angela shared her experience with planning time:

> The biggest struggle is having a co-planning period with non-cotaught teachers, and it has always been a struggle at my school because we do have shared planning periods.
> (Angela, Individual Interview, July 19, 2022)

Robert shared similar views of planning with non-cotaught teachers as Angela:

> Often, most special education teachers are working with multiple general education teachers, which makes it seems impossible to meet with them all and be on the same page due to the limited time I must spend with each teacher during the day. (Robert, Individual Interview, March 7, 2023)

Brenda had her views on meeting with teachers and planning time to meet with teachers:

> I need to meet with general education teachers either before school or after school.
>
> Meeting in the hallway for a few moments is not an option. (Brenda, Individual
>
> Interview, February 28, 2003)

Cathy shared the same experience with planning as one of the most difficult aspects of collaborating with non-cotaught General Education Teachers due to not having time to plan with them in other content areas outside of mathematics and English. Cathy also shared her experience about needing additional planning time:

> I think some of the demands are additional planning time because you need to know the
>
> content across the board, and you are required to have this knowledge of the standards
>
> that they [General Education Teachers] are teaching to help Exceptional Children
>
> students. (Cathy, Individual Interview, November 1, 2022)

General Education Teachers also share the same feelings when it comes to planning time, just like their Special Education Teacher Counterparts. Lisa shared her view on the importance of time between both teachers:

> I think there should not be a comparison of time because everybody's time is valuable.
>
> There have been some instances where I had General Education Teachers who were able
>
> to meet on my time. You are preaching to the choir in education when it concerns
>
> planning time. (Lisa, Individual Interview, July 25, 2022)

Summary

This chapter described the results of Special Education Teacher experiences working with General Education Teachers who are not in the cotaught model of inclusion. The analysis of the data uncovered three themes. The first theme of challenges with collaboration focused on the

different aspects of the school environment that hinders successful collaboration. The theme of general education teachers' lack of understanding of the IEP focused on General Education Teachers having the knowledge of the importance of the IEP for students with disabilities and taking part in providing data for Special Education Teachers to complete tasks related to Exceptional Children's paperwork. Challenges with special education teachers' meeting all responsibilities was the final theme, as Special Education Teachers have limited time during the school day but must complete various tasks to perform their duties. The three themes from this analysis were used as a guide to answering the Central Research Question and the Sub-Questions. The results of the analysis revealed there are barriers that hinder successful collaboration between Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers not in the coteaching model of inclusion on the high school level in North Carolina High Schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of Special Education Teachers working with General Education Teachers who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion in North Carolina High Schools. This chapter reviews the themes of the study found in Chapter Four. This section also discusses the interpretation of the findings of the study and the implications for policy and practice, theoretical and methodical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

This section discusses the theory that guided the study and an empirical overview of how the study aligns with previous research from the literature review. Interpretations of Finding, Implications for Research and Policy, Theoretical and Empirical Implications, Limitations and Delimitations, and Recommendations for Future Research are discussed in this section.

Theoretical Discussion

The Social Exchange Theory by Kahn (1990) supports what Special Education Teachers need to perform and feel effective when working overall in the high school environment, especially collaborating with General Education Teachers and administration. Without a collaborative environment, it can negatively affect the outcomes of students with disabilities. The study also supports previous research supporting the importance of collaboration among General Education and Special Education Teachers.

The study supports the Social Exchange Theory by Kahn (1990) in relation to job performance, which is explained in three parts: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Meaningfulness is seeing the investment you made in your task. Special Education Teachers in

the study understood the importance of collaborating with General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms for students with disabilities to achieve success in completing their tasks. Not only do Special Education Teachers have to collaborate with General Education Teachers, but they must also work alongside administrators of the school. In the area of Safety, people have the desire to show fear without losing status or employment. Special Education Teachers are the experts in delivering special education services and understanding the IEP and must confront General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms who are not implementing the IEP correctly. The Special Education Teacher, at times, seeks assistance from the administration when resolving concerns with implementing the IEP or getting information to complete tasks. Finally, Availability is having the personal resources (physical, emotional, psychological) to complete the task in a certain time. Due to the complexity of being a Special Education Teacher, they must make decisions to best serve the students who are on their caseload in the non-cotaught classroom.

Empirical Discussion

This study confirms previous research conducted in collaboration and inclusion. Furthermore, it extends the study of special education teachers working with general education teachers in non-cotaught classrooms when studies have focused on the coteaching model where the general education teacher and special education teachers teach together in the classroom. One of the concerns for teachers in this study is the challenge of making sure teachers have enough time for planning and for special education teachers to learn the curriculum (Petersen, 2016). Due to scheduling conflicts within the school day, teachers may not have the opportunity to collaborate with each other due to having to attend meetings related to their content area, which is the experience of the participants in the study (Draper, 2019). General Education Teachers do

not have the knowledge to implement the IEP correctly in the class without the assistance of

Special Education Teachers with them in the room (Bray & Russell, 2018; Kurth & Keegan,

2014). Unlike General Education Teachers who are in a cotaught classroom with a Special

Education Teacher, General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms have difficulties

implementing accommodations and modifications, as stated in the IEP (Kurth & Keegan, 2014).

The teachers in the study had concerns with general education teachers in non-cotaught

classrooms implementing the IEPs of students with disabilities in the class (Bray & Russell,

2018). The participants stated the importance of the school administration in its role in

supporting collaborations between special education teachers and general education teachers.

The participants stated administration needs training in special education to understand how to

support special education teachers (Lawson & Cruz, 2018; Nierengarten, 2013). Special

Education Teachers have other responsibilities outside of the classroom that also hinders them

from successfully collaborating with general education teachers. The participants in the study

had many responsibilities to handle within the school outside of collaborating with general

education teachers (Lavian, 2015).

Summary of Systematics Findings

The findings of the study addressed the question: "What are the experiences of special

education teachers who collaborate with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching

model of inclusion in North Carolina high schools?" Special education teachers find

collaborating with general education teachers in non-cotaught classrooms difficult due to tasks

required to be completed by special education teachers as well as scheduling conflicts for

planning time. Special education teachers also want to want to ensure good communication with

general education teachers. For Sub-Question 1, Special Education Teachers desire to be treated

as equals compared to their general education counterparts and to know the guidance, they are giving to general education teachers is being implemented in their classrooms. For Sub-Question 2, teachers want to understand the curriculum being presented in the classroom of general education teachers and ensure the IEP is being correctly implemented for students with disabilities in the classroom. Finally, for Sub-Questions 3, the school administration must be supportive of the collaboration between general and special education teachers and provide planning time for teachers to collaborate. The research also uncovered three themes along with the central questions: Challenges with collaboration, general education teachers' lack of understanding of the IEP, and challenges with special education teachers meeting all responsibilities.

Challenges with Collaboration

According to the data collected from the study, collaboration is a very important part of a Special Education Teacher's experiences when working with General Education Teachers who are not in cotaught classrooms. There are several factors that play into Special Education Teachers feeling that they are in a collaborative environment. Special Education teachers want to be treated as equals to their General Education Teachers counterparts in this collaborative environment required to complete tasks required of them. Special Education Teachers are not in the classroom, with some General Education classrooms containing students with disabilities. Special Education Teachers want to successfully collaborate with General Education Teachers no in cotaught models to ensure the IEP is being followed correctly as well as ensuring the accommodation and modifications on the IEP are being implemented. Not only does the Special Education Teacher need to ensure the IEP is being followed, but the General Education Teacher in the non-cotaught classroom will be the point of contact for the Special Education Teacher to

collect data for documents required for Special Education to be completed. Planning Time is also a consideration when collaborating with other General Education Teachers in the building. Special Education Teachers have so many responsibilities to complete tasks along with being responsible for teaching their own classes. Some Special Educations Teachers may work beyond the work hours of the school day to complete tasks.

Special Education Teachers also depend on the administration of the school to offer assistance when collaborating with General Education Teachers in the school environment. Some administrators do not have special education backgrounds, which Special Education Teachers find frustrating to them. Special Education Teachers may feel they are bothering their administrators with concerns when it comes to their students. The Special Education Teachers may have to involve an administrator when they are not getting communication from the General Education Teacher of students with disabilities or when the IEP is not being implemented correctly. Special Education Teachers also view the administration as being able to identify which General Education Teachers have strength in collaboration with Special Education Teachers for students with disabilities.

General Education Teachers' Lack of Understanding of the IEP

General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms do not have the advantage as inclusion teachers who have the Special Education Teacher with them in the classroom teaching students with disabilities. General Education Teachers do not have the training to understand special education and may not understand the importance of implementing the IEP and other aspects of students with disabilities when it comes to completing paperwork and other tasks. Special Education Teachers emphasize the importance of the IEP and that it is a legally binding document outlining how students with disabilities will be served within the general curriculum

classroom. Due to not having the assistance of a Special Education Teacher in the classroom, the General Education Teacher in a non-cotaught classroom is fully responsible for successfully implementing the IEP. When Special Education Teachers are aware of General Education Teachers not implementing the IEP or delivering accommodations and accommodations correctly, Special Education Teachers must inform and correct those General Education Teachers. Finally, the General Education Teacher must also understand they must also participate in the Special Education process for any student they are responsible for teaching. Special Education Teachers understand the importance of General Education Teachers of non-cotaught classrooms attending IEP meetings to assist in the creation of the IEP.

Challenges of Special Education Teachers to Meet All Responsibilities

The Special Education Teacher wears many hats within the school environment. Outside of collaborating with teachers and other stakeholders within the school environment, they must also complete paperwork for meetings, schedule meetings, work with parents of students on their caseload, as well as attending PLC meetings for their content area and trainings related to special education. On top of all the responsibilities for students with disabilities, they must also understand the content of General Education Teachers to assist students with disabilities who are in their classrooms, especially those students with disabilities who are not in cotaught classrooms. Special Education Teachers must work with General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms to understand the curriculum, and this can become a concern when they are not aware of what is being presented in their courses. Special Education Teachers have limited time available for collaboration due to their responsibilities related to their specialized tasks; when they do have time to meet with non-cotaught General Education Teachers, they prefer to speak about curriculum and how to assist students with disabilities in their classroom by

providing General Education Teachers with strategies that can be implemented in their classrooms. When Special Education Teachers are asked to assist students with disabilities, they like for the General Education Teacher to give them information on assignments and other tasks to maximize the time with their students and to complete the yearly IEP and other special education documents related to the progress and growth of the student.

Implications

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study may be implemented for Special Education Teachers and for General Education Teachers who are not in the cotaught model of inclusion. The findings may be implemented for the General Education Teachers who are not in cotaught classrooms to understand the importance of collaborating with Special Education Teachers as they are able to provide vital information to the General Education Teacher on strategies to implement for the teaching of students with disabilities. For the General Education Teacher, it may be beneficial for them to establish a collaboration schedule even with all the scheduling conflicts that may occur between teachers during the school day. General Education Teachers and Special Education Teachers should make requests to have common planning times to work with each other, which will allow both teachers to work together. General Education Teachers should also be strongly encouraged to attend any special education training related to teaching students with disabilities, while special education teachers attend content-specific trainings. Teachers can also meet before or after school if special education teachers and general education teachers can agree on a time that is agreeable between both parties. The administration should also be involved in meetings with the teachers working with students with disabilities to offer assistance and guidance on content, procedures, and data collection.

For Special Education Teachers, communication is imperative for knowing what is happening with students with disabilities in non-cotaught classrooms. Communication through email and other electronic methods could be a method of obtaining information needed as well as knowing the content being presented in the course if they are not able to meet with them during the school day. For data collection for the purpose of creating IEPs, electronic databases can be implemented to record and store data for students with disabilities. This will allow both teachers to have access to the data anytime without having to meet face-to-face to collect the information. Special Education Teachers should also implement the practice of meeting with General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms and give them an overview of the IEPs and how to implement them effectively, as well as the information they will be collecting to complete paperwork and other tasks. General Education Teachers can review every IEP of students coming into their classroom and ask for clarification on accommodations and modifications to be implemented with the assistance of the special education teacher. The General Education Teacher can also keep the Special Education Teacher updated on assignments needed to be completed by students as well as an overview of instruction on how assignments are to be completed if they are requesting assistance with the student.

Implications for Policy

The findings of the study may be of importance to those in higher level school authority and school-based administrators when it comes to ensuring Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms are collaborating for students with disabilities in their classrooms. School-based administrators may implement these findings into specialized trainings for collaborative practices within the school environment. General Education Teachers need trainings focused on Special Education Law, especially when it relates

to the IEP and their classroom, just like Special Education Teachers need more training in the general education curriculum. General Education Teachers should have the option of attending Special Education trainings, and Special Education Teachers should have the option of attending General Education Curriculum trainings, especially those outside of mathematics and English. Administrators should also have training in special education law when it relates to the IEP and how it should be implemented in the general education classroom. This will also assist the administrator in working with Special Education Teachers to know what information is needed to complete Special Education Paperwork, as well as assisting in building relationships between General Educations Teachers and Special Education Teachers. Administrators should try to implement the practice of trying to keep General Education Teachers and Special Education Teachers who work well together to continue working together as they have built a relationship that is beneficial for collaboration, especially in non-cotaught classrooms.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

Theoretical Implications

Since inclusion has been implemented as a method of teaching students with disabilities, cotaught classrooms have been the preferred method of serving students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers. Through the method of inclusion, students with disabilities can have specially designed instruction from a special education teacher while being taught content from the general education teacher. Collaboration is a very important aspect of making sure both teachers in the classroom are getting the support and information from each other needed to make sure students in their class are successful. Kahn (1990) expresses the importance of people within their employment being able to feel safe expressing opinions and thoughts without fear. Special Education Teachers must collaborate with everyone in the building, including the

administration, which can also require them to use their emotional and psychological resources (Kahn, 1990). Some of the special education teachers in the study had good experiences, while other special education teachers did not share good experiences, which affected how communication between teachers was handled. The practices currently in place for inclusion are only reflected in classrooms where both teachers are coteaching in the classroom. The practices are in need of an adjustment for teachers to have the availability to collaborate with each other teachers who are not in the coteaching model of inclusion during the school day, which can also have an effect on safety and availability, according to Kahn (1990). The teachers in the study had a concern with the limited availability to collaborate with general education teachers from non-cotaught classrooms due to the scheduling of the school day, different planning periods, and other responsibilities outside of the classroom, which can affect the meaningfulness of their role (Kahn, 1990). Special education teachers not only want to collaborate with general education teachers, but they also desire to collaborate with the administration as well. Policy expects the administration to attend IEP meetings; therefore, the administration should also have knowledge of the IEP process and how IEPs are created. Overall, special education teachers want to have a good relationship with everyone with whom they work to feel successful and complete tasks (Kahn, 1990).

General education teachers also need to know and understand the importance of the IEP when it is related to students in the classroom. The participants in the study state general education teachers have minimal knowledge of how the IEP is to be implemented correctly in the classroom, which may influence when they need to correct a general education teacher; this can be intimidating, depending upon the teacher (Kahn, 1990). The participants in the study had a clear understanding of the repercussions of not implementing the IEP and the negative effects it

can have on students with disabilities. Even though there is policy in place for general education teachers to have special education training, the trainings are not as in-depth as a teacher who has a degree in special education. Not only should trainings be completed, but also follow-ups from the training should be completed to ensure the correct implementation of IEPs by general education teachers. The trainings by all teachers will make the collaboration for students with disabilities easier for special education teachers (Kahn, 1990).

Special Education Teachers have practices in place requiring them to have timelines to complete paperwork for special education outside of the expected responsibilities of teaching and duties assigned by the administration, which can be explained as availability or having the resources physically, emotionally, and psychologically to complete tasks (Kahn, 1990).

Empirical Implications

The study has empirical implications because of the importance of General Education Teachers and Special Education Teachers being able to collaborate to improve the outcomes of students with disabilities who are on the general education curriculum. Students with disabilities are not always placed in classrooms where a Special Education Teacher will be teaching alongside their General Education Teacher. Special education teachers want to feel that they are part of the team and are looked upon as an equal and want to have a relationship with non-cotaught students where they can work together (Glazier et al., 2017). For students with disabilities to succeed, both teachers will need to work with each other collegially. Many times, the special education teachers felt that they were not considered an integral part when working with general education teachers who were not in the cotaught model of inclusion. Planning time to meet for special education teachers to meet with general education teachers is a high concern for the teachers within the study because of the different schedules among teachers in the school

building (Nilsen, 2017; Olsen et al., 2016, Turan & Bayar, 2017). Special Education Teachers also want the administration to play a role in assisting them with making sure communication is taking place between all teachers involved with students with disabilities and in assisting them with meetings and collecting data (Lyons, 2016). Special Education Teachers also understand that General Education Teachers will lack understanding of the IEP and knowledge to properly implement the IEP (Kurth & Keegan, 2014). The General Education Teacher in the non-cotaught classroom has a very important part in the role of the IEP process (Ilik & Sari, 2017). Special Education Teachers have so many other responsibilities related to students with disabilities outside of having to teach their own courses and fulfilling responsibilities required by the administration (Lavian, 2015). The Special Education Teacher wants to assist the General Education Teacher with understanding the IEP for the benefit of students with disabilities in the room (Pratt et al., 2017). It is imperative for Special Education Teachers who do not know the curriculum being presented in courses they do not coteach to meet with those general education teachers.

The results of the study were related to previous research. What was discovered in this study is that general education teachers who are teaching students with disabilities in non-cotaught classrooms need the same support as General Education Teachers who are teaching in a cotaught classroom with a special education teacher. The administration of the school plays a role in making sure the collaboration takes place, as well as assisting the special education teacher with their role in completing special education tasks. One point of concern for Special Education Teachers in completing tasks related to students with disabilities was the need for designated planning time to collaborate with General Education Teachers and to attend general education meetings. This includes tasks such as fulfilling classroom responsibilities and

completing paperwork related to special education. Special education teachers do not have sufficient time to complete tasks and attend meetings for collaboration with teachers. Protections should be put in place to give special education teachers more time to complete paperwork and other tasks related to the responsibility of serving students with disabilities. The same practice should also be in place for special education teachers needing to learn the general education curriculum, like general education teachers need to learn about special education. This will allow the special education teacher to know the content being presented in classrooms with no inclusion to give students more assistance with the content presented in those courses.

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Limitations and Delimitations

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Limitations

This study had limitations that were out of the control of the researcher. The first limitation was this study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, which occurred during the Spring of the 2019–2020 school year. During this time, the Governor of North Carolina closed all schools during this time to limit the spread and exposure of Covid-19. The school systems were limiting communication from outside agencies and organizations and putting a freeze on reviewing applications for research. The school systems originally selected did not allow outside guests to be on their campuses which limited the ability to conduct any interviews face-to-face. Due to the low response from Special Education Teachers in the selected school systems to participate in the study, the researcher had to change the way participants were recruited for the study. The researcher opted to use social media to obtain the participants for the study. Because of the protocols of Covid-19 and the safety of the participants who are teaching in local school systems, all the interviews were conducted through phone interviews. The answers that were given to the researcher might have been affected because of the policies

implemented by school officials for general education teachers and special education teachers to follow to deliver instruction to students during the school closures. The number of participants in the study was 10 special education teachers, which is a small sample taken from one state. All the participants were mostly female and with three males represented in the sample. The results of the study may vary if there were more participants and if more male special education teachers were part of the sample. Finally, researcher bias was also a limitation in the study due to the researcher sharing the experiences of the participants currently serving in the role of a special education teacher. To limit researcher bias, I kept a reflexive journal, according to Moustakas (1994), to write out all biases and experiences I had with the topic. With my current role of being a special education teacher at the high school level, I could relate to the experiences of trying to collaborate with teachers, finding time to complete tasks related to special education, and being responsible for teaching my own classes. My biases were like the subjects in the study, and even with journaling, it did not take away my views of the shared experience I had with the participants.

Delimitations

There were some delimitations in this study as participants had to be special education teachers with at least three years of experience teaching students with disabilities on the general curriculum in North Carolina High Schools. The purpose of delimitation was to get the experience of special education teachers in North Carolina and their experience of working with general education not in the coteaching model of inclusion.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this research was to address the experiences of Special Education Teachers working with General Education Teachers not in the coteaching model of inclusion in

North Carolina High Schools. The study aimed to discover the challenges and relationship between Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers who have students with disabilities in their classes in a non-cotaught classroom. The study took place only in North Carolina High Schools, and the study could be replicated to view this type of collaboration within the middle school and elementary school setting. Since elementary and middle schools have different schedules, a qualitative study could be conducted on the experiences of Special Education Teachers collaborating with General Education Teachers not in a coteaching model of inclusion. Studies could also consider the years of experience of the Special Education Teachers, General Education Teachers, and School-Based Administrators as a factor when considering the views of collaboration with non-cotaught General Education Teachers. Even though the study was conducted in North Carolina, the study could be conducted in different states and countries with similar styles of serving students with disabilities. Completing this study in different parts of the United States and abroad will reveal how Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers collaborate successfully within the school day in non-cotaught classrooms. The participants in the study were mostly female, which represents a large population in the field of special education. A quantitative study can be completed to compare if there is a difference of views between male and female Special Education Teachers working with General Education Teachers not teaching in cotaught classrooms.

Future recommendations for research should compare the effects of professional development and training of General Education Teachers in Special Education for students with disabilities, especially in other subject areas outside of English and mathematics. Additional research should be conducted to evaluate student performance with Special Education Teachers who are highly qualified to teach a subject, especially in English and mathematics. Special

Education Teachers are responsible for understanding the general education curriculum for their students and teaching students with disabilities in a separate setting away from non-disabled peers. With the understanding of General Education Teachers receiving minimal training in Special Education when attending colleges and universities, studies need to focus on the outcomes of General Education Teachers. North Carolina high schools operate on a semester schedule (four courses each semester) or a traditional (seven courses all school year) schedule. Further studies are needed to compare the similarities and differences between Special Education and General Education Teachers in collaborating successfully during the school day.

Conclusion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of special education teachers with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model of inclusion in North Carolina high schools. In this study, three themes were discovered as part of the experiences of the Special Education Teacher: Collaboration, General Education Teachers Understanding The IEP, and Special Education Teacher Responsibilities. The research expanded on these experiences with the to improve the theory and practices of Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers working collaboratively for students with disabilities who are in non-cotaught classrooms. According to the analysis of the data from one-on-one interviews, Writing Prompt Sample, and Focus Group, Special Education Teachers desired to be treated as equals to their General Education Teacher Counterparts. Special Education Teachers want to work with General Education Teachers in non-cotaught classrooms to make sure the IEP is implemented correctly and to learn the content of the classroom to give their students the support. Barriers such as planning time and responsibilities hinder successful collaboration between Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers not in

cotaught classrooms. Administration of the school also play an important part in making collaborative practices are taken place between all teachers in the school building and for assisting Special Education Teachers with completing their tasks.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval

November 23, 2021

███████████████████

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-928 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS NOT IN A CO-TEACHING MODEL OF INCLUSION IN NORTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOLS

███████████████████

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at ████████.

Sincerely,

████████████████

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B

Consent

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study on Special Education Teachers' Experiences with General Education Teachers Not in a Co-Teaching Model of Inclusion in North Carolina High Schools
Principal Investigator: ████████████, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, certified as a special education teacher who teaches students with disabilities on the general curriculum, and has done so for at least three years in the state of North Carolina on the high school level. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand special education teachers' experiences working with general education teachers who are not in the co-teaching model of inclusion. The research will seek to understand the challenges of collaboration between special education teachers and regular education teachers.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. One-on-One Interview - The interview will ask you 14 questions about collaboration between special education teachers and regular education teachers at the high school level. The interview will be between 30–45 minutes. The interview will be conducted over the phone and audio-recorded. Participants can review to see a transcript of their interview upon request.
2. Writing Prompt - You will be asked to write a response to a question presented by the researcher. The time required for this task is between 10–15 minutes. Your response will need to be emailed back to the researcher.
3. Focus Group - You will be asked to participate in a focus group with the researcher. The purpose of the focus group is to give your input on the preliminary findings of the research presented by the researcher. The focus group will be conducted over the phone and will be audio-recorded.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society will include more knowledge about how special education teachers and general education teachers can better collaborate for students with disabilities who are on the general curriculum on the high school level. A participant may be able to give insights on

collaboration with special education teachers when students with disabilities are not in a co-taught inclusion model.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are the normal risks you would experience in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- All information provided by the participants will remain confidential through the use of codes. The interviews will be conducted in a private area where no one can hear the audio.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. The written responses, which will be conducted via email, will also be kept in a password-protected file only accessible to the researcher. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- The interview and focus group will be recorded and then transcribed. All of the recordings and the transcription will be password-protected and accessible by the researcher only.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in the focus group. Even though the researcher will stress the importance of keeping the focus group confidential, people who participate in the focus group may discuss the information from the group with others.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. You will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card by email after you have completed the study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is ███████████. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at ███████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, ███████████, at ███████████.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, ███, or email at ████████████.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

APPENDIX C

Questions for Special Education Teacher Interviews

1. How many years have you been teaching in the area of special education?

2. What was your motivation for becoming a special education teacher?

3. What makes you feel valuable as a special education teacher when working with general education teachers not in co-teaching model of inclusion?

4. What causes special education teachers to feel disconnected from general education teachers when working with students with disabilities who are not in a co-teaching model?

5. How do general education teachers who have students with disabilities in their classrooms take advantage of using the special education teacher for the improvement of their students' learning?

6. Tell about a time when you felt appreciated and valued as a special education teacher when working with a general education teacher, not in the co-teaching model of inclusion.

7. What are some other factors that play a role in making collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers valuable?

8. What are your concerns about correcting a general education teacher who is not serving a student with disabilities properly?

9. Tell me about a time you had concerns about a student with a disability who was not in a co-taught classroom. What was the outcome with the general education teacher?

10. As a special education teacher, how do you know your concerns are valued by the general education teachers? How are special education teachers viewed who express concerns?

11. What aspects of being a special education teacher are difficult? How do you cope with difficult situations as a special education teacher?

12. What are some challenges special education teachers must overcome when collaborating with general education teachers?

13. What are some of the demands of collaborating with general education teachers? How are these demands met, and how do they affect your performance as a special education teacher?

14. What are some outside factors which can prevent a special education teacher from effectively collaborating with general education teachers who are not in the co-teaching model?

15. Are there any outside factors that have affected you from effectively collaborating with general education teachers who are not in the co-teaching model?

APPENDIX D

Writing Prompt for the Teacher Response

Directions – You will read the prompt provided below. Once you have finished typing your response, you will submit your response via email.

Prompt – Special education teachers' work is very complex, meaning the special education teacher performs many duties and takes on many responsibilities within the school environment. Write about a day in the life of a special education teacher who is collaborating with regular education teachers.

APPENDIX E

Questions for Special Education Teacher Focus Group

1. What are some concerns for students with disabilities who are not in a cotaught classroom with a special education teacher?

2. How do you effectively plan with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model for students with disabilities?

3. How do you establish a good working relationship with general education teachers not in a coteaching model of inclusion for students with disabilities?

4. How does the school support collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers?

5. How would you describe the current relationship between special education teachers and general education teachers not in a coteaching model working with students with disabilities?

6. What type of assistance do general education teachers not in a coteaching model request from special education teachers?

7. If you were to create professional development for special education teachers and general education teachers, not in a coteaching model, what topics should be addressed and why?

8. What are some of the successes you have seen as a special education teacher working with general education teachers who are not in a coteaching model of inclusion with students with disabilities in their classroom?

APPENDIX F

Recruitment Letter

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is A Phenomenological Study on Special Education Teachers' Experiences with General Education Teachers Not in a Co-teaching Model of Inclusion in North Carolina High Schools. The purpose of my research is to discover the experiences of collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers who are not in a co-teaching model of inclusion for students with disabilities. I am inviting eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older with certification as a special education teacher teaching students with disabilities on the general curriculum for at least three years in the state of North Carolina at the high school level. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in the following activities for the study:

1. One-on-One Interview - The interview will ask participants 14 questions about collaboration between special education teachers and regular education teachers at the high school level. The interview will be between 30–45 minutes. The interview will be conducted over the phone and audio recorded. Participants can request to review their interview.
2. Writing Prompt - Participants will be asked to respond to a question. The time for this task is between 10–15 minutes. The responses will need to be emailed back.
3. Phone Conference Focus Group - Participants will be asked to participate in a focus group. The purpose of the focus group is to give your input on the preliminary findings of the research. The time for the Phone Conference Focus Group will be 60-90 minutes. The focus group will be audio recorded.

The total time of participation will be up to 150 minutes. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential. All participants who complete all three activities will receive a Starbucks gift card valued at $10.

To participate, confirm you meet the eligibility criteria mentioned earlier.

A consent document will be emailed to you if you meet the study criteria. The consent document contains additional information about the study. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and email it to ████████████ before the scheduled time for the interview.

Thank you for considering my request for your participation in my study. If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by phone at ██████████ or email ████████████. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

████████████████
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

APPENDIX G

Frequency Chart of Codes Used to Create Themes

Codes	Frequency
Collaboration	129
Special Education Teacher Responsibilities	94
Teacher Relationship	73
Regular Education Teachers Understanding the IEP	61
Planning Time	51
Special Education Teachers Know General Curriculum	39
Administrative Support	17
Different Schedules Among Teachers	10

APPENDIX H

Sample of Researcher's Reflexive Journal

Reflexive Journal

June 20, 2022

I began my career in teaching in 2005 as a special education teacher doing inclusion for English and mathematics classes. I remember when I started my career because it was very difficult to have teachers share their classrooms with me since I was young in my educational career. It was very difficult for teacher to collaborate with me or even take time to go over curriculum. I also struggled with general education teachers who were not in a coteaching model of inclusion. Teachers in my school had students with disabilities did not reach out to me until they had problems with the students with disabilities in their classes. The general education teachers in my class did not want to follow the IEPs of the students because they did not have the time to implement them, or it was too much for them to handle. The general education teachers not doing inclusion at my school would get upset with general education teachers who were in the inclusion model because it seemed they had extra help in the classroom. To be honest, my experience was not good most of the time working with general education teacher who were not in the coteaching model of inclusion for students with disabilities. As a matter of fact, it was always "a battle of the minds" because those teachers felt I had to place to tell them how to "run their classrooms." Some of the teachers did not listen to my suggestions because the years they had been teaching gave them the right to do what they have been doing even though it was wrong and not in the best interest of the students.

After several years in special education and becoming more comfortable with my craft of special education, teacher became more trusting of me, especially teachers not in the coteaching model. The teachers became more willing to me making suggestions as well assisting them with how to implement a student's IEP correctly within the classroom. I wonder if special education teachers have had the same issues I had working with general education teachers. I would like to find out if their experiences are like mine. I am also interested in knowing what are some other factors that can have a negative effect on collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers not in the coteaching model.

July 1, 2022

I am very surprised to know teachers have had the same experiences as I have working with general education teachers not in the coteaching model. Special Education Teachers brought up a new area of concern that I never thought about – the administration of the school. I never realized this as a concern until I reflected on my own experiences. I found out many of the administrators I have worked were on one end of the spectrum. I have worked with the administrator that trusted my judgment and supported me when addressing concerns with general education teachers. I have also worked with administrators that had no idea about my job and had difficulty with giving guidance and instruction. When I was working with teachers in the general education area, I needed the assistance of the administrator of the building to assist me with a situation. It seems the special education teachers wished the administrators knew more

about special education and had more training in the area so they can truly assist them in the school. I felt like the administrators did not truly know my job and how the importance of ensuring students' IEPs are being followed and general education teachers having the understanding of the special education teacher's role in the life of a student with a disability.