A Study of How the Components of Effective Co-Teaching are Implemented in Middle School Content Area Classrooms in One Suburban School District

Kathryn Rose Burley
Hamline University, kgrosse01@hamline.edu

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A STUDY OF HOW THE COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE CO-TEACHING ARE IMPLEMENTED IN MIDDLE SCHOOL CONTENT AREA CLASSROOMS IN ONE SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

By
Kathryn Burley

A Capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in English as a Second Language

Hamline University
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Committee:
Jackie Smith, Primary Advisory
Bonnie Swierzbin, Secondary Advisor
Andrea Wilson Vazquez, Peer Reader
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

It was my second week of teaching. I found myself sitting in a mediation meeting that included my principal, my assistant principal, my new co-teacher, and myself. I was in tears. My co-teacher was in tears. And all I could do is wonder, “How did I get here?”

The previous day, my co-teacher, who had been showing resistance toward me being in her classroom from day one, had finally exploded. The conversation began with her suggesting that I take my ELs (English Learners) into the hallway for the week. I then explained that, no, I would not be bringing them into the hallway, because we were supposed to be implementing co-teaching and inclusion. The conversation ended with her letting me know that our district does not tend to hire back first-year teachers.

As unprofessional as this scenario may sound, it is all too often that ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers find themselves in similar situations as they attempt to navigate new co-teaching situations. In the past, the idea of taking ELs out of the mainstream classroom to teach them language was a common practice. This ESL service model is most commonly known as “pull-out” instruction.

In recent years, most research points out the negative side effects of pull-out instruction, and focuses on using co-teaching instead (Cook & Friend, 1995; Cornell, 1995; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). Co-teaching is defined as having two teachers in the
classroom at the same time and delivering the same curriculum to address the needs of the entire class (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). The school I teach in has been implementing co-teaching in ESL classrooms for four years.

The amount of involvement that the ESL teacher has in a co-taught classroom varies with each situation. On one end of the spectrum, the ESL teacher is treated as a complete equal with the content teacher. The other end of the spectrum, however, leaves the ESL teacher being treated as nothing more than a para-professional. The problem with this is that an ESL teacher is a highly trained language specialist, and having them sit in the corner of a room and help students with homework is often a waste of a resource in that classroom that was intended to benefit the students. In the years since my initial teaching experience, I have been in co-teaching situations at all ends of that spectrum. I co-taught in a social studies classroom where I barely spoke. I was, however, urged to read tests to kids and help them with their homework. A year later, I co-taught in another social studies class. This time I was encouraged to be a part of the class, but the teacher was never available to plan with me. The result was that, while he was teaching, I was always trying to catch up and figure out what was coming next. After the class, I would find myself thinking of many ways we could have modified the instruction to benefit the ELs in the classroom, but by then it was too late. Class was over. I have also co-taught in a reading class where both the reading teacher and I had small heterogeneous groups that consisted of both ESL students and mainstream students. Another experience I had was co-teaching in a language arts class, where the mainstream students did not even
know that I was the ESL teacher. I was treated as an equal, and the students just thought they had two language arts teachers.

The scenarios described above show that while some co-teaching partnerships are quite successful, other partnerships are the exact opposite. This, unfortunately, is the current dilemma of many co-teaching situations. For this reason, I am interested in studying why some partnerships are more successful than others, in hopes of helping schools to pinpoint areas of opportunity in order to create more successful and beneficial situations for students.

This chapter begins with a description of co-teaching. I will then discuss the benefits that co-teaching has for ELs. Additionally, I discuss the challenges that are presented with co-teaching. The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to the role and background of the researcher.

What is Co-teaching?

As defined above, co-teaching is the collaboration between a mainstream teacher and a specialist for the planning and delivery of instructions for all students in a classroom. The purpose is to provide services to a specialized population within the content area classroom. The co-teaching approach began in the field of special education, but has since then been adopted by the ESL field, as well as other areas of education (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010).

The term team teaching is often used interchangeably with the term co-teaching. Other times team teaching refers to two teachers planning together, and consequently
delivering and assessing the content taught in their own classroom (Cook & Friend, 1995). Moreover, it is sometimes used to describe a specific style of co-teaching (DeFrance Schmidt, 2008). Other terms often used are cooperative teaching, inclusion, and push-in. Each of these terms often refers to a slight variation of co-teaching. For this research, I will use the term co-teaching to refer to two teachers planning and delivering a curriculum, as well as assessing students together in a classroom.

Benefits and Challenges of Co-teaching

There are many benefits to using the co-teaching approach for ELs. Students are given an opportunity to learn language while learning the content, rather than learning language in an isolated environment without context (Conderman, Bresnahan & Pederson, 2009). In addition, Cornell (1995) points out that by using co-teaching instead of pull-out, students are missing less class time due to transitions. Research also shows that keeping the students in the classroom improves academic achievement, while also increasing the sense of community (Cook & Friend, 1995). Similar to this, a benefit is the removal of the social stigma that would have otherwise been attached to the students, making them appear less successful or less intelligent than their peers (Cook & Friend, 1995).

There are also challenges that come along with co-teaching. The most commonly discussed challenge is time (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Friend, 2008; Holt, 2004). If the co-teachers do not have a common time during the day to plan together, it is difficult to implement co-teaching with any success. Lack of administrative support, lack of
professional development, parity, and ideas of teacher roles and expectations are other challenges often cited (Creese, 2002; Davison, 2006; DeFrance Schmidt, 2008). These challenges are discussed further in Chapter Two. It is those challenges that I hope to address with this research.

Background of the Researcher

As I discussed earlier, this research is important to me individually, because I co-teach every day. However, it is also important to the ESL profession as a whole, because ESL teachers often find themselves in ineffective partnerships (Friend, 2008). If there is no way to analyze and pinpoint what opportunities these teachers have to improve their situations, I fear that co-teaching will lose the support that is necessary to implement it effectively.

In my current school, that loss of support is already happening to the Special Education Department. The teachers have co-taught in the past, but this year, they are being asked to revert to the pull-out service model. In this model, specialists will take their students out of content area classes multiple times each week to address their needs. Research shows that if this were to happen to our ELs, who are already missing content and academic language, they would only fall farther and farther behind their peers (Cornell, 1995, Young, 2006). Rather than switching models, I’d like to learn more about what is working, so that we can give continued support in those areas.

This is my fifth year teaching ESL at this particular school. I have co-taught in seven different classrooms during that time. I have co-taught language arts, reading, and
social studies classes. Some of them have been more successful than others, but they all have been learning experiences. They have made me realize the potential of a well-implemented co-teaching situation. They have led to a passion to better understand co-teaching, and it is that passion that drives this research.

Role of the Researcher

I have conducted a study of the teachers in co-taught classrooms in the four middle schools located in the suburban district where I teach. I am one of the two ESL teachers at our school, one of seven in the four middle schools. Although I only co-teach with one of the language arts teachers who will be a part of this study, I have collaborated on some level with many of the other teachers in the past.

As the primary researcher, I created and distributed surveys for the participants to fill out. I then followed up the questionnaire with additional interviews to obtain more information from teachers who were willing to volunteer. My role was to collect the information from the participants and analyze those data to see what patterns emerged.

As a member of one of the co-teaching partnerships being studied, I must address a few biases I may have had as a researcher. My partner and I have an extremely successful co-taught environment. We make time to plan each week. We treat each other as equals. The students know they can come to either one of us for help, and there is an enormous amount of trust put in each other every day. With that said, I strove to look at this research with an objective outside lens as best as I am able.
Research Question

In this study I addressed this research question: How are the components of effective co-teaching implemented in middle school content area classrooms in my district? In order to do so, I conducted questionnaires and interviews with the teachers involved in co-teaching classrooms to learn more about how it is being implemented and how effective they feel it is being implemented.

Summary

In this study I examined how the components of effective co-teaching are implemented in middle school content area classrooms in my district. This is important because some teams are more successful than others, and there is little research to show exactly why that is. This study’s purpose is to determine what practices are being used in the implementation of co-teaching in my middle school. I surveyed and interviewed teachers to see what they are doing to implement co-teaching. I then compared what I found to what research says is best practice for a successful co-teaching approach.

It is my hope that this research will provide the administration in my school some guidance when making decisions about co-teaching. It is also my hope that this research is a platform for additional research in the future.

Chapter Overviews

In Chapter One I introduced my research by establishing the purpose, significance and need for the study. The context of the study was briefly introduced, as was the role and background of the researcher. The research question was also presented. In Chapter
Two I provide a review of the literature relevant to co-teaching, and ESL program models, and best practices for co-teaching. Chapter Three includes a description of the research design and methodology that guide this study. Chapter Four presents the results of this study. In Chapter Five I discuss the major findings of my study compared to what I found in my literature review. I will then discuss the limitations of my study, implications for professional practice, recommendations for future research, and a plan for how my study will be communicated.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to explore the components of effective co-teaching and how they are implemented in middle school content area classrooms in my district. In the school district where I teach, ELs primarily receive language services in a co-taught language arts classroom with one ESL teacher and one language arts teacher. I have noticed that some partnerships are more successful than others, and I would like to know more about why that is. Through this study, I surveyed and interviewed the teachers involved in these partnerships to try to understand more about their experience in a co-teaching classroom. The ultimate goal is to present recommendations for how to successfully implement co-teaching by using research-backed components for implementation.

This chapter presents an overview of the history of co-teaching, as well a definition of co-teaching and the different models of co-teaching. It also includes what are considered to be the components of effective co-teaching. Finally, the challenges with co-teaching are discussed and the need for research in the area of co-teaching best practices in the middle school ESL classroom is shown.
History of Co-teaching

In the 1980’s, the special education field began using co-teaching as a method of teaching special education populations (Cook & Friend, 1995). The idea was that by increasing collaboration between a specialist, in this case the special education teacher, and the mainstream teacher, the students with special needs would have increased access to the mainstream curriculum (Holt, 2004). By the end of the decade, co-teaching was generally regarded as the most effective method to meet the needs of the special education population in a general education setting (Cook & Friend, 1995). Furthermore, by including specialized populations into the mainstream classes, more inclusive classrooms were created with the hopes of increasing the academic achievement of all students.

Although co-teaching began as an instructional method in the field of Special Education, it has since then become an integral part of teaching ELs in the mainstream classrooms as well (DeFrance Schmidt, 2008; Holt, 2004). With the changing demographics of the United States school systems, classrooms have become more and more diverse. Using the co-teaching approach allows for more favorable student to teacher ratio and gives students more opportunities to participate in the classroom (Cook & Friend, 1995; Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). An additional benefit was that ELs no longer would need to be pulled out from their mainstream classroom, which often left them feeling isolated (Cornell, 1995; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010).
Interest in co-teaching increased with legislation such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2003 and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004. These required that all students, including those with disabilities, have access to the mainstream curriculum. This put pressure on schools and administrators to find ways to ensure that all students, including ELs and special education students, were supported in mainstream classrooms (Friend et al., 2010; Van den Akker, 2013). According to Conderman (2011), co-teaching is a good approach to help schools comply with this legislation, because it arranges for classroom teachers and specialists to jointly plan and deliver content to ensure that all students are successful. ELs require a different instructional approach than their mainstream peers. One model that examines these differences is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, or SIOP Model. This model lays out eight specific teaching methods that benefit ELs in the classroom. Those approaches presented in the SIOP model are lesson preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice and application, lesson delivery, and review and assessment (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2013). ESL teachers have specialized training in these methods, as well as in language structure and language acquisition that mainstream teachers typically do not have. By partnering with an ESL teacher, mainstream teachers can be more supported to ensure that they are meeting the needs of all students in their classroom (Saenz, 2013).
What is Co-teaching?

There are many different variations of co-teaching, but at the very basics, co-teaching can be defined as the collaboration between a mainstream teacher and a specialist for the joint planning, delivery, and assessment of content instruction for all students in a classroom (Conderman, et al., 2009; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Friend, 2008; Friend et al., 2010). The philosophy behind this approach is that when teachers are working together to provide language-rich experiences in the classroom, both students and teachers alike will grow (Van Loenen & Haley, 1994).

In this approach, both teachers are responsible for the academic achievement of all students in the class. Teachers actively collaborating during the class time is just one aspect of this approach. Teachers must also spend time away from the class to plan, assess, and reflect (Murawski & Swanson, 2001).

Co-teaching is more than a just 'two teachers are better than one' approach. As Davison (2006) explains, the role of the ESL teacher is two-fold. The ESL teacher must aid in making the content accessible but also needs to use that content to find ways to explicitly teach language development (Coltrane, 2002). This relationship of an ESL teacher working together with a content teacher to integrate language instruction into content is described by Davison (2008) and shown in Figure 1. This figure shows how the two teachers have specific input about the curriculum, based on their specialty. The goal is that the ESL teacher focuses on the language goals, and the mainstream teacher will focus on the content-based curriculum and standards, as defined by the district and
state. The two teachers then use both of these goals to analyze the assessment of students’ language and learning needs, as well as the ongoing evaluation of the curriculum. The result of this dual-purpose curriculum is that language is integrated both for content-compatible and content-obligatory language development. In addition to this, the ESL teacher is also responsible for filling in the gaps that the content teacher may have in their understanding of the instructional pedagogy needed for ELs to be successful (Friend, 2008). In return, the content teacher fills in the gaps that the ESL teacher may have in regard to the specific content.

Figure 1. A conceptual framework for integrated language and content instruction. Adapted from: Davison (2008).
As outlined by Hasvold (2013), there are four critical components of co-teaching. The first is that there are two or more licensed teachers. This allows for the teachers to collaborate and complement each other’s strengths and knowledge (Friend, 2008). The second is that both teachers actively participate in all parts of planning, instructing, and assessing. This leads to a shared responsibility for the academic success of all students. The third component is a diverse classroom. This refers to more than just ethnicity, but also basic student needs. And the final component listed by Hasvold (2013) is that co-teaching must take place in a shared physical space. There are many different methods of implementing the co-teaching approach in an ESL classroom, which will be outlined next (Cook & Friend, 1995; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Friend et al., 2010).

Models of Co-teaching

Between the fields of special education and ESL there is a range of exactly how many different types of co-teaching models exist. Friend et al. (2010) described six models of co-teaching. Dove and Honigsfeld (2010) adapted these special education models by adding ESL strategies, resulting in seven models specifically for use in the ESL classroom. The seven models are one lead teacher, one teacher on purpose; team teaching; one teach, one assess; parallel teaching; alternative teaching for pre-teaching; alternative teacher for re-teaching; and station teaching. These two sets of models are combined, adapted, and described further in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-teaching Model</th>
<th>Student Arrangement</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount of co-planning needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One lead teacher, one teacher on purpose</td>
<td>Whole class</td>
<td>One teacher leads instruction and the other provides support to one student or a small group to clarify or reinforce a concept or skill. Both teachers alternate roles.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team teaching</td>
<td>Whole class</td>
<td>Both teachers provide instruction to the class. They hand off instructional lead across and within activities and may intervene during the other’s conversation to explain or elaborate the content to the students.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One teach, one assess</td>
<td>Whole class</td>
<td>One teacher takes the lead, while the other takes a more passive role of observing and assessing the students.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel teaching</td>
<td>Two flexible, heterogeneous groups</td>
<td>Both teachers, each with half of the class, present the same material in order to provide more differentiated instruction and increase student participation.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Alternative teaching: pre-teach

| Two groups | **One teacher** instructs the whole class. The other teacher pre-teaches content or skills to a small group of students who may have limited background knowledge of the target concept or skill. | High |

### Alternative teaching: reteach

| Two groups | **One teacher** instructs the whole class, while the other teacher reteaches concepts or skills to a small group. Teachers may regroup and may alternate roles in teaching large and small groups. | High |

### Station teaching

| Multiple, flexible groups | Teachers set up tasks in different parts of the room and serve as the facilitator at different stations. These stations are relevant to the lesson. Students rotate among the stations. | Medium |

---

Note. Adapted from: Dove & Honigsfeld (2010); Friend, et al. (2010)

As Table 1 shows, there are a variety of models that could be chosen for each lesson based on the overall objectives, students’ needs, and teacher preference. Some take more planning time than others, but that should not keep the teachers from trying to implement a wide variety of the models in order to make the most of co-teaching (Cook & Friend, 1995).
Components of Effective Co-teaching

The components of effective co-teaching tend to be the most discussed portion of all co-teaching research. There is little research about the success, because very little is known about the partnerships themselves. Many researchers have discussed this topic at length trying to find exactly what it is that makes some partnerships more effective than others (Conderman et al., 2009; Cook & Friend, 1995; Davison, 2006; DeFrance Schmidt, 2008; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010; Kohler-Evans, 2006; Murawski & Dieker, 2008; Schumm, Hughes, & Arguelles, 2000; Young, 2006). The following is a discussion of the most frequently referenced components that can be found in a successful co-teaching partnership: voluntary partnerships, clear expectations, flexibility, parity, administrative support, joint planning time, and professional development.

Voluntary Partnerships

A successful co-teaching partnership involves teachers who voluntarily took on the role (DeFrance Schmidt, 2008; Schumm et al., 2000). An attitude of readiness and willingness to take on the often difficult task of co-teaching is instrumental in a productive partnership (Cook & Friend, 1995). Having no choice, and being forced into the partnership can cause teachers to feel resistant (Young, 2006).

Voluntary involvement is also important because an effective co-teaching partnership involves two teachers with similar educational philosophies. Teachers can choose partners who they know have similar feelings about how teaching should happen, creating a situation where they can both ease into the partnership. This provides a good
Clear Expectations

Prior to starting a co-teaching relationship, clear expectations must be laid out (Schumm et al., 2000). Both teachers’ roles and responsibilities need to be defined from the very beginning (Davison, 2008). To do this, it is important for both teachers to understand one another’s primary role in the classroom. The mainstream general education teacher mainly provides the content objectives and the ESL teacher supports the lesson through language objectives (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). This will instill a feeling of accountability on both ends, and it will make sure there is no room for lingering questions about what each teacher should be doing.

Routines and classroom management expectations should also be defined prior to beginning (Schumm et al., 2000). This ensures that there is a cohesive message given to all students about what is expected of them from both teachers.

Flexibility

Effective co-teachers need to be flexible (Cook & Friend, 1995). Some teachers have to teach with multiple teachers, at multiple grade levels, at opposite ends of the building. Being able to jump back and forth from classroom to classroom takes a certain kind of flexibility.

Co-teachers need also be flexible in their classroom (Schumm et al., 2000). With two different adults and personalities in the room, it is not always guaranteed that things
will go as planned. Knowing that that is all right and being able to adjust and move on is something that every good co-teacher should be able to do.

With two different teachers in the room, both are bound to have different ideas or differences of opinions at some point. Having an openness to change is a component of successful co-teaching (DeFrance Schmidt, 2008).

Parity

An effective co-teaching relationship presents both teachers as equals (DeFrance Schmidt, 2008). Teachers who are able to recognize each other’s skills and acknowledge that they can develop new skills together will be more successful. This is because they see it as a benefit and are taking advantage of having two skill sets in the same room.

Parity is also necessary to keep the specialist, in this case the ESL teacher, from feeling marginalized (Creese, 2002). If there is not parity in the classroom, the specialist will feel underappreciated, which will lead to problems in the partnership.

Administrative Support

Administrative support is essential for a successful co-teaching partnership (Schumm et al., 2000). Oftentimes co-teachers need to advocate for certain things to make their class a success, such as smaller class sizes, additional trainings, or extra planning time. Without support from administration, advocating for these things would not be successful.
Joint Planning Time

One of the most frequently referenced components of effective co-teaching is having joint planning time (Arkoudis, 2006; DeFrance Schmidt, 2008; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Schumm et al., 2000). With ESL teachers often having multiple co-teachers, finding enough time to meet and plan with each of them can be a challenge. Schumm (2000) adds that this time should be sacred and should take priority over any other obligations.

In addition, this planning time needs to be productive (Cook & Friend, 1995; Arkoudis, 2006; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). It is very easy for two teachers to get off topic when they sit down to reflect on the past and plan for the future. It is important to set goals for each planning session to make sure that the task is accomplished.

Professional Development

Teachers need ongoing training and professional development to continue planning, improving, and reflecting on their co-teaching relationship (Cook & Friend, 1995, Schumm, et al., 2000). Personal relationships do not develop after just one training, and they definitely do not continue to improve without further trainings. Most trainings involve time for teachers to reflect and talk out differences. They also provide time for big picture planning. Because of these factors, professional development is often cited as a component of effective co-teaching.
Challenges of Co-teaching

Co-teaching can be very beneficial for all parties involved, but successfully implementing this approach is difficult to achieve (Davison, 2008). Many researchers have studied this aspect of co-teaching, providing a wide range of specific reasons that it is neither easy nor unproblematic. In this section, I describe some of the most often referenced challenges.

Teacher Roles and Expectations

Some more primary factors that are often cited are the differing views of roles and expectations between the two teachers (Davison, 2008). This can be related to another common challenge, which is a difference in philosophical beliefs (DeFrance Schmidt, 2008; Young, 2006). If the two co-teachers do not mesh well from the beginning, it is hard to imagine that the partnership will be successful. With the primary teacher used to being in charge of their classroom, specialists often find themselves positioned in a way that doesn’t reflect their expertise. For example, if the specialist is expected only to help with homework completion, or monitor for behaviors, they are not using the specific expertise for which they have been trained (Arkoudis, 2006).

Parity

In addition, parity of the teachers is often cited as a challenge. Roles within the classroom are often seen as unequal, with the ESL teacher seen as more of a paraprofessional or a teacher assistant (Davison, 2008; Young, 2006). This often leads to a feeling of marginalization for the specialist, leaving them feeling insufficient and
unable to meet the needs of their students (Creese, 2002). This can be challenging because the ESL teacher needs to feel empowered to make the decisions needed to benefit the ELs in the co-taught setting.

**Administrative Support**

A lack of administrative support can be challenging when trying to advocate for a co-teaching partnership (Davison, 2008). For example, the specialist should have a say in which teacher they will co-teach with, rather than having a random assignment. Those teachers should also be allowed to volunteer, rather than being told they have to co-teach. Decisions like these need administrative support. In addition, logistical support is needed, with administration scheduling teachers so that there’s time to plan. It is challenging when a teacher feels that they have no power to make the decisions necessary to promote success. Without support from administration, this is exactly how specialists end up feeling.

**Planning Time**

Another challenge that is frequently referenced is a lack of common planning time or mismatched schedules (Young, 2006). Planning ahead is the primary way to ensure that language is intentionally integrated into the curriculum. This takes time. Often, with ESL teachers co-teaching with multiple content teachers, finding overlapping planning time is difficult. Without this planning time, ESL teachers are often left trying to play catch up during class and their expertise is no longer represented in the lesson (Arkoudis, 2000; Creese, 2002).
Professional Development

The final challenge to be discussed is that there may be a lack of necessary training to ensure the partnerships are prepared (DeFrance Schmidt, 2008). It is important that teachers are given an opportunity to learn about co-teaching, learn about their partnership, and learn about how to improve. Without proper and on-going professional development, it is difficult for the co-teaching team to grow together.

The Gap

As this chapter indicates, there is a large amount of research regarding the components of effective co-teaching. Although these components are explored and defined, there is little research to help determine how to follow through with implementation. A current gap exists in the research about how components of effective co-teaching are successfully implemented.

Research Question

This study’s aim is to address this research question: How are the components of effective co-teaching implemented in middle school content area classrooms in my district? In order to do so, I will conduct surveys and interviews with the teachers involved in co-teaching classrooms to learn more about how it is being implemented and how effective they feel it is. Eventually, my goal is to find out where the gaps are that need to be filled in order to create more effective co-taught learning environments.
Summary

In the first part of this chapter, I presented a brief history of co-teaching. I also defined co-teaching and presented the different methods of this approach, as are found in the field of ESL. I finished the chapter with a description of the components of effective co-teaching, as well as the challenges that are involved in successful implementation. In the following chapter, the methods utilized in my case study will be presented along with the data collection procedure and the data analysis techniques that I will use to answer my research question.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore the research question: How are the components of effective co-teaching implemented in middle school content area classrooms in my district? I was interested to know exactly what are the most effective components for implementing co-teaching. I also wanted to know how those components were being used in the implementation of co-taught classrooms in the school district that I work in. In this study, I want to know why some co-teaching partnerships are more effective than others.

For this study, I used a mixed methods approach. I initially used the quantitative method of a survey with a Likert scale that allowed participants to rate themselves and their implementation of best practices for co-teaching. I used an electronic method of distributing this survey to the participants. I also used the qualitative method of interviews. As part of the questionnaire, I asked for volunteers to give additional information via interviews to support or clarify the data collected from the surveys.

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter describes the methods used in this study. First, I present the rationale and description of the research design. Next, I describe the data collection protocols that will be used for the research. Following that, I also describe the setting of
the study and the participants. This chapter concludes with a summary of the methods process and provides a preview of Chapter Four.

Mixed Methods Research Paradigm

I conducted this study using a mixed methods research paradigm, which includes both qualitative and quantitative research. Mixed methods research combines the objective data from quantitative research with the more insightful, descriptive data provided from qualitative research, creating an opportunity to triangulate the data (Dörnyei, 2007). This gives the researcher the opportunity to gain a more well-rounded insight into the phenomena being studied.

Survey

The quantitative aspect of this research was provided through a survey. A survey can be defined as a written questionnaire (McKay, 2006). This was the best choice for my research because, as Dörnyei (2003) points out, surveys provide a very efficient way to gather a lot of information in a short amount of time. Through using this, I was able to reach a large amount of participants in a short amount of time. This did not take a large amount of time for participants to fill out, and the format made it easy for them to submit their answers.

Interviews

The qualitative data for this research was provided through interviews. The purpose of an interview is to find out more about the participants’ backgrounds, behaviors, and opinions or attitudes (McKay, 2006). This was the best choice of
qualitative data for my research because I wanted to know more about why the participants answered their surveys the way they did. I thought it was important to know why they were feeling certain ways so that this research could be used to bring about a positive change. Without the background information, there would be insufficient data to be able to make suggestions for improvements of the program implementation.

Data Collection

Participants

The participants chosen for this study all teach in one of the four middle schools in my district. There are 15 teachers who participated in this study, nine of which are content area teachers, and six are ESL teachers. Although there are a variety of content areas represented, all participants are involved in a co-teaching partnership with one content teacher and one ESL teacher. Ten of the participants are involved in a language arts classroom, five are involved in a math classroom, three in a science classroom, and three in a reading classroom. The reason that this total is more than the original number of 15 teachers is because many of the ESL teachers teach in more than one content area. One participant did indicate that they co-teach in a content area defined as “other,” but they did not specify what that meant.

Location/Setting

This study was conducted in a large suburban school district located near a large Midwestern metropolis. The focus of this study took place in the four middle schools
located in this school district. The enrollment of ELs for this district is 5% of the total population, and represents over 40 languages.

This district has been implementing co-teaching in their middle schools for five years, ever since the 2009-2010 school year. The primary focus has been in the language arts classrooms, but there have also been co-teaching situations in other content areas such as social studies, science, math, and reading. There are, on average, fifty ELs per building, representing about 5% of each school’s population.

**Surveys**

The initial data for this study was gathered using a survey. Because the actual purpose of research is trying to find answers to questions, surveys and questionnaires are some of the most popular research instruments in the social sciences (Dörnyei, 2003). For this research, I have used the term “survey” to describe the written questionnaire that the participants were given. This is because surveys are often thought of as written questionnaires (McKay, 2006).

These surveys were given to a selected group of participants. As noted earlier, the participants in this study were selected based on their placements in a co-teaching classroom. The surveys in this study were sent to all co-teachers who agreed to take part in this research, and were anonymous, with the hopes of obtaining honest responses from the participants. The surveys were sent using Google Forms, as that is the technology platform used in this district, making it easier for the participants to respond.
The components of this survey (see Appendix A) were designed from the research that has already been conducted regarding what are best practices involved in co-teaching. The initial part of the survey is basic demographic information to get a better picture of the teachers who were participating. After that, the survey is broken down into sections to mirror the components of effective co-teaching that were discussed in Chapter Two. I created two or three questions for each of the components, to try to learn more about how each is being used in the implementation in this district. A majority of the questions use a Likert scale. For these, the participant was given a question, and then asked to gauge on a scale of one through five how they felt. A one was a low indication of response, and a five was a high response (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Example of Likert scale used in the survey.](image)
There were also a few open-ended questions throughout the survey, allowing the participants to add any additional thoughts or information that they would like to share. At the end of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to include their name for a follow-up interview.

It should be noted that there are potential problems with using a survey. First, the participants could provide unreliable information. Even though there is a veil of anonymity, if the participants know the researcher, they often times still refrain from being completely honest with their answers (Patton, 1990). In this case, the participants know that I am trying to determine how effectively the co-teaching program is being implemented. They may not be completely honest, because they may feel that by saying it is not being implemented well in their classroom, that they are admitting that they are not doing their job very well. That could be a difficult thing for a participant to admit.

Interviews

After the surveys were received, follow-up interviews were scheduled with three of the participants who offered to take part. An interview can be described as a person-to-person encounter where one person looks to obtain information from another (Merriam, 2009). The purpose of an interview is to find out more about the participants’ backgrounds, behaviors, and opinions or attitudes (McKay, 2006). I chose to interview one participant who seemed happy with the process of implementation, one who seemed okay with the process, and one who was unhappy. This background information will be helpful when using this research to make suggestions for future implementation.
For the purpose of this study, I used a semi-structured interview. In this type of interview there are some structured questions, but the primary part of the interview is guided by a list of questions to be explored, allowing the researcher to respond to the situation at hand and learn more about what the participant is thinking (Merriam, 2009). This is to ensure that the participants feel that they can share their thoughts freely, rather than just answering close-ended questions.

The interviews were conducted in the participants’ classrooms to help them feel more comfortable. The interview questions used (see Appendix B) consisted of open-ended questions that were essentially follow-up questions to the survey that the participant had already responded to. I combined the survey questions and created one follow-up question for each of the components of effective co-teaching. Based on their survey responses, I chose three or four of the components for the participant to focus on in the interview. The final question was open ended and asked what they would suggest for improvements for their district. The purpose of this was to give them the opportunity to share any final thoughts. The interviews were recorded with an audio recording device. This was to ensure accurate recall of specific facts.

The potential problems for interviews are similar to those presented for surveys. Some participants, although volunteering their thoughts, may feel uncomfortable sharing some information. Again, the idea that not being successful possibly being linked to their abilities as a teacher is not something that most people would like to admit.
Procedure

Participants

I chose participants from middle schools in this district who work directly in a co-teaching partnership consisting of one mainstream content area teacher and one ESL specialist. Each participant was approached and asked if they would mind helping with a study that is meant to help improve our programming. Of all co-teachers who were approached, 20 agreed to participate in this research.

Upon agreement to participate, all participants were given a letter of consent (see Appendix C), allowing me to use their responses in this research. This is how the survey group was formed. At the end of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to share their name, indicating that they would be willing to take part in a follow-up interview. This is how the interview group was formed.

Pilot Study

Both the survey and the interview questions were piloted before giving them to the participants. The intended questions were given to other middle school teachers who have experience co-teaching, but do not currently co-teach in an ESL classroom. This was to ensure that those piloting the questions had some background knowledge and were able to give helpful feedback. The purpose of piloting the questions was to obtain feedback about the questions and make sure that they are performing the job they have been designed for (Dörnyei, 2003). After piloting the survey, I removed multiple demographic questions that we determined were not important. After piloting the
interview questions, I added one last question, providing the participant an opportunity to offer recommendations for how the co-teaching program is implemented.

Materials

For the survey, participants were sent an email with a link that led them directly to the Google Form with the survey questions. Although this is through their Google account, the answers were not attached to the users’ names. The final question gave the participant the option to include their name to be contacted for follow-up interview questions.

For the interviews, participants were given a list of the questions so that they had a focal point while we were discussing. This was in effort to put the participants at ease, so they felt more comfortable, which hopefully resulted in them being open and honest in their responses.

Data Analysis

I began by administering the surveys to all participating teachers. Due to the importance of collecting and analyzing data simultaneously, I analyzed each data set as it came in. The significance of collecting and analyzing data simultaneously is that it can help the researcher to notice themes early on, leading to a more clear direction (Merriam, 2009). After that data was collected, I then conducted the interviews.

Surveys

The first thing I did was use Google Forms to code each of the survey results. This is important to keep the information sorted (Dörnyei, 2003). This was a benefit of
using Google Forms, as it collected the data from the surveys for me and organized and sorted into similar themes. I then looked for a frequency of themes, so that I could begin looking for reoccurring themes to present themselves.

Interviews

The first thing that needed to be done after the interviews was to analyze the audio-recordings. McKay (2006) recommends this type of data collection technique for qualitative studies. I chose parts of the recordings that related most closely to the survey questions to analyze. I then organized the data by putting all responses to a corresponding question together. Once they were organized in this manner, I was then able to look for critical themes to emerge. A good qualitative research method is to take these themes and place them into meaningful categories in order to find a way to communicate the information to others (Patton, 1990).

Reliability

The reliability of the surveys was established by giving each of the participants the same questions. Also, the topic was not discussed with any of the participants before they were given the survey. In addition, all responses were given anonymously.

Verification of Data

Internal validity was exhibited by using Methodical Triangulation. The results from both the surveys and the interviews were compared to see if similar themes were being seen across all the participants. This triangulation happens when a mixed methods
approach is used, and increases the validity of the research due to the merging and substantiation of the findings (Dörnyei, 2007).

Ethics

A number of actions have been taken to ensure the highest level of ethics in this research. I have employed the following safeguards in order to protect the needs, values, and desires of the participants, as well as to preserve the ethics of this research.

1) Participants were given all background information and research objectives.
2) Received written permission from all participants.
3) Human subjects proposal was accepted from both Hamline University, as well as the district where I carried out my research.
4) Oral interviews were recorded.
5) Electronic data was stored on a password-protected computer.
6) No names were used in order to protect the participants’ identities.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the methods I used. I used a mixed methods approach to investigate how best practices are used in the implementation of co-teaching in the middle schools in the district in which I work. I first created and conducted surveys to middle school co-teachers in my district. I then followed up those surveys by conducting interviews with volunteers from the collection of participants who took the survey. The next chapter presents the results of this study.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The objective of this study was to analyze how the components of effective co-teaching are implemented in middle school content area classrooms in this district. A mixed methods approach was used to answer the question: How are the components of effective co-teaching implemented in middle school content area classrooms in my district? In this chapter, a description of the participants will be provided. After that, data will be presented by describing participants’ responses to questions about their personal experiences in a co-teaching partnership. Discussion will focus on the themes that emerged regarding how the components of effective co-teaching have been used in the implementation of co-teaching in this district.

Description of Sample

All teachers who are involved in a co-teaching partnership between a mainstream teacher and an ESL teacher in one of the four middle schools in this district were asked if they would be interested in participating in this survey. Twenty teachers agreed and signed a letter of consent. Of those twenty, fifteen teachers followed through and filled out the survey.

Middle School A had four teachers respond, Middle School B and Middle School C both had two teachers respond, and Middle School D had seven teachers respond.
Nine of the total respondents identified themselves content area teachers, and six as the specialist, or the ESL teacher. The content area classrooms being represented are language arts, math, science, social studies, and reading, which can be seen in Figure 3.

![Figure 3. Survey question about demographics of participants.](image)

All of the respondents indicated that they have been teaching for more than five years, with 40 percent teaching for more than ten years. When asked how many years they have been co-teaching, one participant said it was their first year, four indicated it was their second year, one was co-teaching for their third year, three had been co-teaching for four years, and six of the respondents indicated they had been co-teaching for five years or more.

In addition to how many years they have been co-teaching, participants were also asked how many partnerships they are currently involved in. The responses were as follows: 40% have one co-teacher, 33.3% have two co-teachers, 13.2% have three co-teachers, and 13.2% have four co-teachers.
Voluntary Partnership

Participants were also asked about how they ended up in the co-teaching relationship, as well as how they feel about co-teaching in general. In response to how they ended up co-teaching, 93.3% of respondents indicated that they were assigned to work together, leaving only 6.7% who chose to work together (Figure 4).

When asked how likely they would be to continue their co-teaching partnership in the future, participants were given a scale of 1-5 to provide their response, with a one representing “no thanks” and a five representing a “yes, absolutely.” The results can be seen in Figure 4. Of the participants, none chose a one as their response. With a response of two or three, 26.6% of the participants showed slight interest in continuing. These lower responses didn’t always have a negative meaning. With a response of three, one participant stated, “I would really like another chance at working with this specific teacher so we can reflect on our teaching, strategies, and routines,” indicating that they may be unsure about continuing the partnership, but were still hopeful. By choosing a four or five, the remaining 73.4% of respondents indicated they would be fairly interested in continuing their current co-teaching partnership.

![Survey question about voluntary partnerships.](image-url)
Teacher Roles and Clear Expectations

When asked How well do you feel you know the purpose of co-teaching, on a scale of one through five, 93.3% of the participants chose a response of three or higher, indicating that they felt fairly confident in their knowledge of the purpose. This left only 6.7% of the participants feeling that they had little or no knowledge about the purpose of co-teaching. When asked to expand on their response, one participant added, “I get frustrated as to what “co-teaching” really is? Are we equal? What is it? What do the administrators want out of us?”

Even though many of the participants felt confident that they knew the purpose of co-teaching, when asked How well do you know the role each teacher should play in the classroom, the responses were more spread out (Figure 5). A response of one indicated “We both show up and play it by ear,” and a response of five indicated “We have discussed and planned our specific roles for each lesson.” Only one participant responded with a five. The remaining responses were fairly equally spread out, with 20% responding with a one, 20% with a two, 26.7% with a three, and 26.7% with a four.
When asked to expand on these responses, two common themes about the separate teacher roles that exist in the classroom did emerge. One theme is that the role of the content area teacher is to focus on lesson planning and instruction. Many respondents referred to the content area teacher as the “main” teacher, who would lead the lesson to the whole class. A second theme is that the role of the specialist is a support role. The descriptions given for the specialist’s role in the classroom focused on suggesting modifications to lessons in order to ensure the ELs are able to access the content, assisting in daily instruction, and tending to the specific needs of the students before, during, and after instruction.
In addition, the responses referenced the specialist having the “expertise in EL strategies” that is needed to provide language support to the EL students. Also, it was pointed out that the EL teacher is an extra set of eyes to ensure all students are on task, participating, and behaving.

One of the respondents co-teaches with both an ESL teacher and a special education teacher, and she noted differences between the teacher roles of her two co-teachers. The ESL specialist assists in all classroom functions, from planning, to instruction, to classroom management, for the entire class. In contrast, the special education teacher focuses only on the needs of the special education students. The special education teacher is not involved in the planning, modifying, or delivering of the instruction.

**Flexibility**

When asked *How much flexibility exists in your partnership?*, a majority of the participants responded that flexibility did, in fact, exist. These results are shown in Figure 6. Overall, with a response of three or higher on a scale of one to five, 93.3% of participants indicated that they felt at least some flexibility existed. However, the largest response from participants (46.7%) was a three, indicating that there was at least some flexibility present in their partnership, but that there was room for that flexibility to increase.
Participants were asked to expand on their responses by answering *If things don’t go as planned, how do you and your co-teacher respond?* In these responses, teachers overwhelmingly agreed that there is a need to be flexible. One participant noted that being flexible is “the nature of teaching! You have to be flexible and able to problem solve on your feet!” Even participants who did not feel that flexibility was prevalent in their partnership, noted the need to “adjust” and “problem solve.” Another teacher added “We definitely adjust...I’d just prefer if things were structured and planned.”

Another common theme that emerged was the need to take a step back and reflect if things did not go as planned. This would help to adjust in future lessons. One
participant noted “We reflect on what went wrong, and how to prevent it in the future...we come up with a plan on how to fix or change something and decide on the roles and responsibilities we would take.”

Unfortunately, this question did not get at the point that I had originally intended. These responses indicate there may have been confusion with the way I worded this question. Upon reflection, the statements at both ends of the Likert scale could have been viewed as a positive response, depending on the perspective of the participant. This is discussed further in Chapter Five.

**Parity**

The idea of parity in the classroom was looked at two different ways in this survey. The first was how the teachers are viewed, and the second had to do with the responsibilities that each teacher is given in the classroom.

Participants were first asked *How is the specialist viewed by the content area teacher?* The results can be seen in Figure 7. More than half of the responses (66.6%) were a three or higher, indicating that the content area teacher viewed the two teachers as nearly equal, with 13.3% stating that both teachers are viewed as 100% equals in the classroom. The remaining responses were less favorable for parity, with 6.7% indicating that the specialist is viewed by the content area teacher as an aide/helper.
Participants were then asked *How is the specialist viewed by the students?* These responses (Figure 8) showed less parity between the two teachers, as viewed by the students. Although an equal number of respondents reported that students viewed both teachers as 100% equals, more responses overall indicated that the specialist is viewed as more of an aide/helper. During a follow-up interview, one teacher added, “often times, classroom management is difficult, because students might say something like ‘you’re not even a real teacher, I don’t have to listen to you!’”
lesson planning, lesson modifications, lesson delivery, classroom management, grading/assessment, parent contact, and classroom environment. Response choices were content teacher, specialist, or shared responsibility. The results are presented in Figure 9.

Overall, a majority of responses indicated that most responsibilities are either the content area teacher’s responsibility or a shared responsibility. This is seen with the responsibilities of lesson planning, lesson delivery, classroom management, grading/assessment, parent contact, and classroom environment. Within these responses, there were two themes that occurred. In the case of planning, delivery, grading, and classroom environment, there was a higher percentage of participants who thought it was the content teacher’s sole responsibility rather than a shared responsibility. In the case of classroom management and parent contact, there was a higher percentage of participants who thought it was a shared responsibility of both teachers, rather than the content teacher’s sole responsibility.

Lesson modifications were the only responsibility that had any respondents identify that the specialist was the only one who was responsible. Even so, a majority of respondents still thought that this was a shared responsibility for both teachers.
Figure 9. Survey questions about parity.
Administrative Support

Participants were asked how well they feel their administration is aware of the purpose of co-teaching. These results are shown in figure 10. On a scale of one through five, the responses were spread out fairly evenly, with 46.7% giving their administration a score of one or two, indicating that their administration had little or no knowledge of the purpose of co-teaching. An equal amount of 46.7% gave a score of three or four, indicating that they felt their administration had some sort of knowledge of the purpose of co-teaching. A small percentage (6.7%) of participants gave the response of a five, indicating that they thought their administration was absolutely aware of the purpose of co-teaching.

![Figure 10. Survey question about administrative support.](image)

The responses were less spread out when participants were asked how aware they thought their administration was of the components that are necessary for effective co-teaching. As seen in Figure 10, a majority of the participants indicated a negative response, with nearly half (46.7%) saying that they felt their administration was “not at all” aware of the components that are necessary. When asked to expand on their
response, one participant stated, “I feel administration is not on the same page with co-teaching support as the co-teacher is occasionally pulled due to sub shortage. Clear expectations are not established. Teachers do not have a say at all in the co-teaching partnership (whether you want to co-teach or with who) which does not follow the beliefs of co-teaching.” This was a common theme among participants who were asked follow up questions about the administrative support. Another participant added, “It’s difficult to advocate for our needs, when the administration is unaware of why we are asking for those things.”

Planning Time

When asked how often co-planning occurs, there was a distinct split, with 33.3% of participants either planning on the fly, or not co-planning at all, and 53.3% having a set time weekly (Figure 11). There were also two participants who indicated a response of “other,” but did not expand as to what that meant.

A majority of teachers (57.1% or higher) indicated that this planning time was used for long term planning, daily lesson planning, and reflecting. In addition, 40%
indicated they used this time for classroom management decisions, 28.6% of participants used this time for classroom environment decisions, and 28.6% used this time for grading.

Participants were also asked how effective they felt their planning time was. A theme that was noticed is that most respondents who have a set planning time found that it was effective. Of the 28.6% of respondents who noted that their planning time was not effective at all, or only very minimally effective, all had previously responded that they did not have a set time to co-plan. Of the participants who responded that they planned on the fly, only one indicated that it was even slightly effective, with a response of three, on a scale of one through five.

Professional Development

Participants were asked How often do you attend professional development for co-teaching? Overall 80% of respondents indicated that they had attended some sort of professional development opportunity at some point (Figure 12). I will note, however, that 41.6% of those who had attended some professional development had done so with a previous co-teacher, rather than their current co-teacher. That leaves over half (53.3%) of the total respondents indicating that they had not attended a professional development opportunity of any kind with their current co-teacher.

Participants were then asked if they felt that the professional development opportunity for beneficial for their co-teaching partnership. A majority of respondents (71.5%) chose a three or higher on a scale of one through five, which indicated that they
did indeed find these opportunities beneficial. Many of the teachers identified that given planning time during professional development to be the biggest benefit. One teacher added, “The workshops we have attended have provided substantial time to collaborate and plan.” Another teacher indicated that they thought that professional development was beneficial for multiple reasons. “One, it helps the two of you build a relationship. You can identify teaching and collaboration styles and deal with potential conflicts head on. Two, you can develop a plan for co-teaching that works for both of you before you will be doing that work. It makes for a more efficient use of time. It's also a great way to begin the planning process since this time is always limited.” These ideas of time to plan lessons, and time to define roles and personalities, were common amongst most respondents. In addition, providing a time to reflect was also a frequent response.

Figure 12. Survey question about professional development.

Not all participants found professional development opportunities to be beneficial. When asked to expand on their responses, a primary reason was the lack of opportunities to follow-up after the initial training. One respondent said, “I feel like
going to the training helps for about a week and then it all goes back to how it was before. Follow-up meetings would be really beneficial.” Another participant stated that they had heard “they aren't very effective but I would go. It was offered last minute to me and I couldn't get lesson plans set up for all my classes.” Other reasons stated for not finding professional development to be beneficial were being told “none was available,” and just the idea that “our barrier to an effective co-teaching arrangement is lesson planning time which would not be changed by attending the co-teaching workshop.”

Summary

The purpose of this study was to address this research question: How are the components of effective co-teaching implemented in middle school content area classrooms in my district? In this chapter, I presented the results of my data collection on how the components of effective co-teaching are implemented in middle school content area classrooms in one suburban school district. In Chapter Five I will present major findings and their connection to current literature, the limitations of this study, the implications of the research for stakeholders, recommendations for further research, and a proposed plan for implementation.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to address this research question: How are the components of effective co-teaching implemented in middle school content area classrooms in my district? In order to do so, I conducted surveys and interviews with the teachers who are involved in co-teaching partnerships to learn more about how it is being implemented and how effective they feel it is. Eventually, my goal was to identify the areas of opportunity that need to be addressed in order to create more effective co-taught learning environments in this district. In this chapter I will discuss the major findings and present the limitations of the study. I will then discuss the implications for stakeholders, reflect on the work to make recommendations for further research, and outline a plan for implementation.

Major Findings and Connections to Literature

The goal of this study was to determine how the components of effective co-teaching are being used in the implementation of ESL co-teaching in my school district. Through extensive research, those components were narrowed down and defined in Chapter Three as voluntary partnerships, clear expectations, flexibility, parity, administrative support, joint planning time, and professional development (Conderman et al., 2009; Cook & Friend, 1995; Davison, 2006; DeFrance Schmidt, 2008; Honigsfeld &
Dove, 2010; Kohler-Evans, 2006; Murawski & Dieker, 2008; Schumm, Hughes, & Arguelles, 2000; Young, 2006). After examining the data obtained through this research, four of those components stood out as areas of opportunity and growth for this district. 

Parity

It is shown through this research that not all of the teachers involved in co-teaching partnerships in this district feel that both are equals in the classroom. Chapter Two presented parity as a primary component of effective co-teaching. An effective co-teaching relationship presents both teachers as equals (DeFrance Schmidt, 2008). Teachers who are able to recognize each other’s skills and acknowledge that they can develop new skills together will be more successful.

When asked how the specialist was viewed by the content teacher, only 13.3% of respondents indicated that both teachers were viewed as fully equal. Over half of the participants did report a three or higher on the five point scale, indicating that they felt they experienced more parity. However, there is still room for improvement. There were some responses from specialists that indicated they have been asked to do tasks such as make copies or sharpen pencils, but were not involved in classroom decisions such as planning, instruction, or assessment.

Prior to starting a co-teaching relationship, clear expectations must be laid out (Davison, 2006; Schumm et al., 2000). This will instill a mutual feeling of accountability, and it will help lessen lingering questions about what each teacher should be doing.
There were numerous participants in this study who reported that they were unsure about the roles they each had within the partnership. One respondent said, “I get frustrated as to what ‘co-teaching’ really is? Are we equal? What is it? What do the administrators want out of us?” When asked how well they know each teacher’s specific role in the classroom, only 6.7% of respondents indicated that they had previously discussed and planned out each teacher’s role for the lesson. These teachers were not initially given the time to learn about the purpose of co-teaching, or their roles in the classrooms. Without understanding why they were co-teaching, it made it very difficult for them to grow and become effective co-teaching partners.

Parity is also necessary to keep the specialist, in this case the ESL teacher, from having a marginalized role in the classroom (Creese, 2002). Roles within the classroom are often seen as unequal, with the ESL teacher as a paraprofessional or a teacher assistant (Davison, 2008; Young, 2006).

Many of these content teachers have experience co-teaching with special education teachers, whose role is to work with specific students. Without proper training about the different purposes of ESL and special education co-teaching, these content area teachers will most likely have the same expectations from an ESL teacher. This adds to the marginalization of the ESL teacher.

This was very apparent when the participants were asked how the specialist is viewed by the students. A majority of the responses indicated that students view the specialist as an aide or helper, not equal to the content teacher. One teacher reported that
they had difficulties with classroom management, because the students didn’t view them as a “real” teacher.

This district needs to address the lack of parity that often exists in co-teaching partnerships. One recommendation is to offer ongoing professional development opportunities throughout the school year. This gives the co-teachers time to sit down and have meaningful conversations about their co-teaching progress, which models they are using, their lesson planning, and their purposes in the classroom. This will help strengthen their teaching relationship, hopefully improving the parity that exists in their partnership. According to teachers involved in this research, the district has offered a co-teaching workshop in the past, but it is usually only a one-day program. By offering an extended program that is ongoing throughout the year, teachers are able to revisit areas of concern, as well as reflect and celebrate their successes.

Joint Planning Time

The literature review presented joint planning time as one of the most frequently referenced components of effective co-teaching (Arkoudis, 2006; DeFrance Schmidt, 2008; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Schumm et al., 2000). This need for constant collaboration, especially during the first few years that a co-teaching pair work together, is what Murawski (2008) cited as being essential for a co-taught class to best meet the needs of its ELs.

Although this is what the research states as necessary, it is not happening for all co-teachers in this district. According to this study, only 53.3% of the respondents have a
set planning time with their partner. This means that nearly half of the respondents do not have access to a primary component that is necessary to be an effective co-teacher. These teachers reported planning on the fly, or not planning together at all. This shows that this is an area of opportunity for growth for this district.

Participants who did say they had a set planning time were not asked to define when exactly that planning time was or who arranged the planning time. This makes it difficult to know if they were given time, or if they had to find time in their day, giving up personal time or preparation time intended for other classes. Future studies might explore whether or not this planning time was scheduled in for teachers, or if they had to create it for themselves. If this were explored more deeply, the amount of teachers who were given joint planning time might be different than what was found in this study.

One recommendation for this district is to be intentional about ensuring common planning time for teachers involved in co-teaching partnerships. Common planning time could be a period during the day when both teachers are scheduled prep time. However, this might look different at each site, depending on teacher’s individual schedule. For example, if a specialist co-teaches with multiple content area teachers, it may not be possible for them to have a prep period with each of their co-teachers. In these instances, administration could offer alternatives for common planning time. This might be a day each week where the two teachers are relieved of hallway duty before or after school. Another option could be a half day each month for the two teachers to plan together for
an extended period of time. No matter the situation, the administration must be aware of this need and ensure that a plan is in place prior to the start of the school year.

**Professional Development**

Teachers need ongoing training and professional development to continue planning, improving, and reflecting on their co-teaching relationship (Cook & Friend, 1995, Schumm, et al., 2000). This helps ensure that partnerships are prepared (DeFrance Schmidt, 2008). It is important that teachers are given an opportunity to learn about co-teaching, learn about their partnership, and learn about how to improve. Personal relationships do not develop after just one training, and they definitely do not continue to improve without further support. This mirrored what many of the participants said in this research. As one teacher reported, “It helps the two of you build a relationship. You can identify teaching and collaboration styles and deal with potential conflicts head on.” This idea of defining personalities, combined with defining roles, and having time to plan lessons were common amongst most respondents. This makes professional development opportunities even more important, as they provide opportunities to work on the other components of effective co-teaching as well.

Another purpose of professional development is to ensure that all partnerships have a clear understanding of their roles in the classroom. Prior to starting a co-teaching relationship, clear expectations, teacher roles, and responsibilities must be laid out (Davison, 2008; Schumm et al., 2000). This is commonly provided in an introduction to co-teaching professional development course. This type of course continues on with
follow-up sessions, coaching, and reflective opportunities for both teachers. Unfortunately, this research revealed that over half (53.3%) of the total respondents indicated that they had not attended a professional development opportunity of any kind with their current co-teacher.

Not all participants in this study found professional development opportunities to be beneficial, with the primary reason being a lack of follow-up after the initial training. Teachers responded that the professional development opportunities helped right away, but without the follow-up meetings, things often went right back to the way they were.

One recommendation for this district is to provide professional development for all teachers who are involved in a co-teaching partnership. In order to achieve a successful co-teaching relationship, both teachers need time to develop a shared vision of their purpose and what their classroom will look like. A co-teaching workshop would be a starting point for this, allowing time for teachers, as well as administration, to get on the same page in regards to the purpose of co-teaching. Most participants in this study who reported that they had been to a similar workshop in the past said they found it rewarding. During these workshops, a significant amount of time is devoted to discussing the purpose of co-teaching, which is a necessary starting point for a successful partnership. There is also time for co-teachers to get to know each other, discuss their expectations and roles in the classroom, and begin lesson planning for their curriculum.
Administrative Support

Another component for effective co-teaching that was defined in Chapter Two is administrative support. Administrative support is essential for a successful co-teaching partnership (Schumm et al., 2000). A lack of administrative support can be challenging when trying to advocate for a co-teaching partnership (Davison, 2008). Oftentimes co-teachers need to advocate for certain things to make their class a success, such as smaller class sizes, additional trainings, or extra planning time. For example, the assignment of co-teaching partners should be decided based on collaborative discussions with all stakeholders and departments involved. Decisions like these need administrative support. In addition, logistical support is needed, with administration scheduling teachers so that there is time to plan.

This study showed that that 46.7% of participants believe that their administration had little or no knowledge of the purpose of co-teaching. In addition 66.7% said that they felt their administration had little or no knowledge of the specific components that are necessary for effective co-teaching. As stated by one teacher, “It’s difficult to advocate for our needs, when the administration is unaware of why we are asking for those things.” Other responses mirrored the lack of administrative support that is present in these schools. In this district, teachers reported that this lack of support has led to

- Co-teachers are being pulled out of classrooms to cover other classes
- Teachers are being assigned to co-teach, rather than developing a process for identifying and cultivating co-teaching partnerships.
● Teachers are not being given proper training or preparation in regards to the purpose of co-teaching.

● Teachers not being given basic preparation time for lesson planning, or to define co-teaching and expectations for the partnerships.

As a result, I would recommend for the administration in this district to attend an ESL co-teaching workshop in order to better familiarize themselves with the purpose of ESL co-teaching. Administrators must keep themselves informed about the needs that ESL co-teaching creates. Successful ESL co-teaching requires specific structures, training, and resources to be in place. This can only be done with the support and commitment of administrators. There are often workshops designed specifically to help administration better understand the what, how, and why of the ESL co-teaching model.

In addition, administrators need to show support for the teachers and demonstrate follow through for the needs associated with co-teaching. Administration must be willing to support teachers by allowing co-teaching to be voluntary, by creating schedules with common planning time, and by providing ongoing professional development opportunities.

Limitations

One limitation of this research is the sample size of participants. This study looked only at how co-teaching was implemented in grade levels 6-8 in one district. It also did not include every teacher who is involved in a co-teaching partnership in those grade levels in that district. Although there are well over 30 teachers who are involved in
a co-teaching partnership at one of the four middle schools in this district, only 20 teachers volunteered to take part in this research. Even those teachers who did volunteer, not all of them followed through and filled out the survey, resulting in feedback from only 15 teachers.

In addition, the research was done in a district with a low population of ELs. Only 4% of the overall student population is identified as an EL. These co-taught classrooms, as well as the implementation of them, will look different than a district with a higher population of ELs. This makes it difficult to say that this data would match all other schools and districts.

As I reflected on the results of my survey, I noticed that the question *How much flexibility exists in your partnership?* was worded in a way that may have been confusing to the participants. This question has been included in Figure 13 and is repeated from Chapter Four. Based on the comments from teachers, I realized that, depending on the perspective of each participant, the two ends of the Likert scale might not be viewed as opposites, as I intended. This limited my ability to understand how participants viewed the flexibility in their partnership. Upon reflection, this question could have been more clear if the options on the Likert scale were “I like to plan on the fly,” and “I need everything planned ahead of time.”
Lastly, this study looked only at how the participants felt about their co-teaching experiences, not at what is actually happening in the classroom. There was no research done in regards to the overall success of the students, rather how successful the teachers felt the teaching model was being implemented. There were no observations conducted, and all data was self-reported by the participants.

Implications

The implications of this study suggest that although the teachers involved in the co-teaching program are working hard, they are still struggling. Each teacher who participated in this study maintained a positive outlook on the overall idea of co-teaching.
It seemed the respondents were being honest about their frustrations, struggles, and lack of understanding, but they all could see the possibilities. This is positive, as it demonstrates teacher buy-in for the co-teaching program that already exists in this district. This research shows that the teachers believe in the co-teaching program, but are struggling for the support they need to implement it more effectively. If not addressed, this teacher buy-in could begin to fade, and the program would lose its strongest supporters.

Many of the concerns and frustrations that teachers reported ultimately come down to the support and understanding of administration. Teachers cannot create their own schedules, or organize their own professional development opportunities. These are things that need to be provided by administrators. Unfortunately, it seems that the administrators in this district are unaware or uninformed of these needs. When implementing a program in a workplace, it is important to first understand what the program is, and how to implement it. More importantly, however, it is necessary to understand why the program is being implemented. This study suggests that those in charge of the implementation of the co-teaching model are lacking the understanding of why. Some of the teachers reported that they had gone to administration to ask for support, but the need was not taken seriously. This shows that those specific administrators need further information about the what, the how, and the why of this model.
Recommendations for Further Research

Additional research is needed to examine if these components of effective co-teaching can be directly linked to the achievement of ELs. Much of the research out there focuses only on the components and teachers themselves. Only a few of the studies use student data to assess exactly how beneficial the co-taught classroom is for the students. Because of this, the need for further research into the impact of these components being used in the implementation of co-teaching is evident.

Another topic for further exploration is how the components of effective co-teaching are used at different levels across the same district. This study focused completely on the middle school level. It would be interesting to know how the responses would compare to a similar survey done at the elementary level, and the high school level in this district.

The topic of effective professional development for co-teaching could also be explored further. Based on the feedback provided from participants in this study, not all professional development opportunities provide the same level of support. It would be interesting to explore the different types of professional development that are available, and what makes some more effective than others.

Plan for Implementation

As a result of this study, I plan to be proactive in advocating for and supporting co-teaching within my school and my district. Now that I have studied the research, I have the knowledge and a better understanding on how to make co-teaching work
effectively. I plan to share my findings with the district coordinator in charge of the ESL programming and the EL leadership committee, of which I am a part of. At that time, we will discuss how we can use this research as we move forward as a district. I will also share this information with the four administrators who granted me permission to conduct this research within their middle schools, the teachers who voluntarily took part in the research, and any other ESL or mainstream teacher who is interested in co-teaching.

I believe that all students can benefit from the co-teaching model, as long as it is intentionally implemented. The problem, as research has shown, is that if certain components are not addressed in the implementation, the desired outcome may not be achieved. The main components that were found to be missing from this district’s implementation process were parity, administration support, and professional development. It is these three things that I will bring to the attention of the stakeholders with whom I share this research.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze how the components of effective co-teaching are implemented in middle school content area classrooms in my district. I sought to explore why some co-teaching partnerships are more effective than others, as well as how our district could improve our co-teaching practices. The major findings of the study showed that this particular district has room for growth in the areas of teacher parity, joint planning time, professional development, and administrative support. The teachers involved in co-teaching partnerships are working hard to be successful, yet they
are still struggling. It is my hope that this research can give the administration in this
district a foundation to begin strengthening the co-teaching program that is currently in
place.
APPENDIX A

CO-TEACHING SURVEY
Two Teachers in One Classroom: The Implementation of Co-Teaching

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the co-teaching partnership in your classroom. This information is valuable to ensure that our district implementation of co-teaching is beneficial to our students and our teachers.

1. Which school do you teach at?
   This survey is anonymous, however, we would like to know how each school compares across the district.
   Mark only one oval.
   - Cottage Grove Middle School
   - Lake Middle School
   - Olman Middle School
   - Woodbury Middle School

2. Which content area(s) do you currently co-teach?
   Check all that apply.
   - Language Arts
   - Math
   - Science
   - Social Studies
   - Reading
   - Other: ______________________________________________________________________

3. In the classroom, your role is the:
   Mark only one oval.
   - Content teacher
   - Specialist/EL teacher

4. How many years experience do you have as a teacher?
   Mark only one oval.
   - 1-3 years
   - 3-5 years
   - 5-10 years
   - 10+ years
5. How many years experience do you have as a co-teacher?  
*Mark only one oval.*
- First year :)  
- 2 years  
- 3 years  
- 4 years  
- 5+ years

6. How many co-teaching partnerships do you currently have?  
*Mark only one oval.*
- 1  
- 2  
- 3  
- 4  
- 5 or more

**Two Teachers in One Classroom: How did we end up here?**
If you have multiple co-teachers, choose one to focus on for this survey.

7. How did you and your co-teacher become a partnership?  
*Mark only one oval.*
- We chose to work with each other.  
- We were assigned to work with each other.  
- Other: ____________________________

8. If you had a choice, how likely would you be to continue this partnership in the future?  
*Mark only one oval.*

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</table>
| No thanks, co-teaching is not for me | | | | | Yes, absolutely!

9. How well do you feel you know the purpose of co-teaching?  
*Mark only one oval.*

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</table>
| I'm not really sure? | | | | | I'm an expert!
10. How well do you know the role that each of you should play in the classroom?
   *Mark only one oval.*

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<tbody>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   We both show up and play it by ear. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   We have discussed and planned our specific roles for each lesson.

11. In your co-teaching partnership, what is the content area teacher's role in the classroom?

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

12. In your co-teaching partnership, what is the specialist's role in the classroom?

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

13. Explain what you think are the benefits of co-teaching in your classroom.

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

Two Teachers in One Classroom: How do we work together?

14. How much flexibility exists in your partnership?
   *Mark only one oval.*

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</table>

   I'd prefer if everything is structured and planned. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   Sometimes things don't go as planned and we adjust as needed.
15. If things don’t go as planned, how do you and your co-teacher respond?

16. How is the specialist viewed by the content teacher?
   In this case, the specialist is the EL teacher.
   *Mark only one oval.*

   1 2 3 4 5

   The specialist is an aide/helper. The teachers are 100% equals in all we do.

17. How is the specialist viewed by the students?
   In this case, the specialist is the EL teacher.
   *Mark only one oval.*

   1 2 3 4 5

   The specialist is an aide/helper. The teachers are 100% equals in all we do.

18. Who is responsible for the following within your classroom?
    *Mark only one oval per row.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Teacher</th>
<th>Specialist</th>
<th>Shared Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Modifications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Delivery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading/Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Environment (arrangement, decor, visual aids, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Two Teachers in One Classroom: Administrative Support**

19. I feel my administration is fully aware of how our co-teaching partnership is working out.
    *Mark only one oval.*

   1 2 3 4 5

   Not at all Absolutely!
20. **I feel my administration is fully aware of the components that are necessary for a successful co-teaching partnership.**

List 6 components:
Mark only one oval.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

21. **I feel my administration is fully aware of the purpose of a co-teaching partnership.**
Mark only one oval.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
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</table>

22. **I feel comfortable asking my administration for additional support for my co-teaching partnership.**
Support = additional planning time, supplies, professional development, etc.
Mark only one oval.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Two Teachers in One Classroom: How do we get it all done?**

23. **How often are you and your co-teacher able to co-plan your lessons?**
Mark only one oval.

- We do not co-plan.
- We plan on the fly.
- We have a set time each trimester/semester/quarter.
- We have a set time monthly.
- We have a set time weekly.
- We have a set time daily.
- Other: ____________________________________________________________

24. **Our planning time is effective.**
Mark only one oval.

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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
25. Our planning time includes the following:

Check all that apply:

☐ Long Term Planning
☐ Daily Lesson Planning
☐ Classroom Management Decisions
☐ Classroom Environment Decisions
☐ Grading
☐ Reflecting
☐ Other: ........................................................................................................

26. How often do you attend professional development for co-teaching?

Mark only one oval.

☐ I have never attended a co-teaching workshop.
☐ I have attended a workshop with a previous co-teacher, but not with my current co-teacher.
☐ My current co-teacher and I have attended a workshop together.
☐ My current co-teacher and I have attended multiple workshops together.
☐ Other: ........................................................................................................

27. I feel like attending co-teaching workshops has been beneficial for our co-teaching partnership.

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Absolutely!

28. Please explain your response to the previous question.

What was beneficial and/or not beneficial from the workshops?

........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................

29. If you are willing to be contacted for a short interview, please include your name below.

Thank you again for your time and participation!

........................................................................................................
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
# Interview Questions

**Date:**

**Participant Name:**

**Interviewer Name:**

**Introduction:** Good afternoon, thank you for agreeing to participate in my study, as well as taking the time to allow me to interview you. After reviewing your responses in the survey, I have a few follow up questions that I’d like to ask. Mainly, I’m looking for more information, such as specific examples or stories that you feel would be good examples for why you answered as you did.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voluntary Partnership</th>
<th>Based on your survey responses, I’d like to ask you more about how you ended up in your co-teaching partnership. Could you give me any more details?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Roles and Clear Expectations</td>
<td>Based on your survey responses, I’d like to ask you more about how you feel about your roles as co-teachers. Could you tell me more about how you determined what your roles would be, or what expectations you set for each other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Based on your survey responses, I’d like to ask you more about how you and your partner handle it when things don’t go as planned. Could you give me any examples?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Based on your survey responses, I’d like to ask you more about you and your partner being equals in the classroom. Could you tell me why you responded the way you did? Any examples?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>Based on your survey responses, I’d like to ask you more about your administration. Could you expand on your answers about how your administration is involved in co-teaching in your school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Time</td>
<td>Based on your survey responses, I’d like to ask you more about your planning time with your partner. Could you tell me a little bit more about what your planning time is like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Based on your survey responses, I’d like to ask you more about your experiences with co-teaching based professional development. Could you tell me more about any trainings or workshops that you have been to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>What suggestions do you have for how these experiences could be improved/recreated in the future?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

LETTER OF CONSENT
March 3, 2015

Dear Colleague:

I am currently studying at Hamline University to complete my master’s degree, which requires me to do research in our district. I plan to study which components of effective co-teaching are being used across our district. The purpose of this study is to determine how our district implements co-teaching, as a service model for English Learners, in middle school content area classrooms.

After receiving your agreement to participate, I will send you a brief online survey about your experiences in a co-taught classroom. If you agree to it, I may also follow up with an interview, but I will not use any names in my research. No one will know that you are part of the research.

The research will be published in a book, as well as online at Hamline’s Bush Library Digital Commons, which is a searchable electronic repository. If you do not want to be in the research, that is okay. If you wish to leave the research at a later time, that is also okay. You just need to let me know.

Our district, [redacted], has given permission for this research. I also need your permission and agreement to participate. If you have questions, please contact me at 651-768-6752. You may also contact my Hamline advisor, Jackie Smith at jackiesmith913@gmail.com.

Thank you,

Kathryn Burley
Teacher of English Learners

If you are willing to participate in the research, please sign both letters. Return one to me, through district mail, by March 20, 2015, and keep the second form for your own records.

Signature ___________________________ Date ________________
REFERENCES


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