Co-Teaching Strategies for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners in Middle School English Language Arts

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CO-TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE LEARNERS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

By

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Arts in Education

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Thank you to my family. My wife, Nicole Berg, for your continuous encouragement, academic writing guidance, wordsmithing, care and support. My mother, Lorna Berg, for a lifetime of teaching mentorship and inspiration, and my father, Gunnar Berg for always believing in me. Thank you to my co-workers for pushing me to be the best teacher I can be. Thank you to my sixth grade CREW, graduating class of 2026, for teaching me the gifts of patience, persistence, and inspiring me to be the best teacher I can be. You are the reason why we are here. Special thanks to my ELL co-teacher, Alexandra DeMarre, who has made this co-teaching exploration possible. I couldn’t co-teach without you.
“The more we get together
Together, together
The more we get together
The happier we'll be.”

-Raffi Cavoukian

Education is the foundation of all personal and social improvement and to make it available to others is one of the greatest gifts. To do so is truly to honour children.

-The Dali Lama, *Child Honoring- How to Turn this World Around*, 2005.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction .................................................................6

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ...............................................15
   Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Literacy Instruction...............16
   Collaborative Teaching.................................................................18
   Middle School Literacy Instruction...............................................25
   ELL Literacy Instruction ...............................................................28
   ELL Co-teaching ...........................................................................34
   Summary ....................................................................................41

CHAPTER THREE: Project Description .............................................44
   Project Overview ..........................................................................45
   Curriculum Approach .................................................................48
   Supporting Research .................................................................50
   Context of Project .........................................................................51
   Timeline .....................................................................................52
   Summary .....................................................................................53

CHAPTER FOUR: Conclusion .............................................................54

REFERENCE .................................................................................69

APPENDIX ...................................................................................75
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background

“How do I teach literacy skills in a middle school ELA classroom? How do I make the ELA and literacy skills accessible to all of my middle school students regardless of their language ability?” These were the two questions that plagued me for the entirety of last year, when I first began teaching Sixth Grade Humanities. I felt very alone and under prepared to teach my students, who were “under performing” by many standards, and many were English Language Learners (ELL). Last year, I could not find the answers to these questions with the resources that I had available. In many ways I felt like I had failed my students. So this year, I decided to stop trying to do it all by myself and began co-teaching. Co-teaching, or teaching with another teacher, often with a different area of expertise, is my answer to my questions from last year.

This year, I am beginning the journey of co-teaching English Language Arts (ELA) with the English Language Development (ELD) teacher. Our hope is to make learning accessible to all students. As we began our co-teaching exploration, we are realizing the co-teaching comes with its own challenges. Every day, we find ourselves with more questions than answers. The most pressing question, and the question I will be exploring in this capstone project is, What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?
Overview

In the introduction, I described my basic rationale for choosing this topic. Throughout the remainder of chapter one, I explain my rationale in depth and further explain the context in which I will be exploring this topic. First, I explain why I believe ELD/ELA co-teaching is so important to explore in depth, especially in regards to the nationwide opportunity gap and my local school. Next, I elaborate on my interest in finding the most effective ELD/ELA co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school ELA model and describe what I hope to learn from this project. Then, I provide a glimpse into my personal background and uncover why I am inspired to study this topic. Finally, I provide a summary of this chapter and describe the other chapters in this project.

My Concerns

National. Due to an increase of immigration and globalization, classrooms are becoming more diverse (Heineke,& McTighe, 2018). Often teachers are not equipped to meet the needs of all students in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms (Heineke,& McTighe, 2018). Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students are often excluded from rigorous instruction because instruction has historically taken a one size fits all approach (Heineke,& McTighe, 2018). According to the NEA (2015), nationwide, the literacy achievement of English Language Learners (ELLs) is lagging behind non-ELLS. Therefore, teachers must find creative and innovative ways to improve instruction for CLD students, in order to create equitable access to education. One way to increase equity for CLD students, maybe for content teachers to
collaboratively teach with ELL teachers in order to provide rigorous instruction that is
differentiated to meet the needs of CLD students.

**Local.** I teach at a K-8 Hmong Culture public magnet school that is located in a
midwest urban area with a high concentration of racialized poverty that serves primarily
CLD students. It is considered “low performing” and racially isolated. In 2019, only
20% of students met MCA reading standards. In my school, 45.1% of students identify
as Asian/Pacific Islander, 47.9% identify as Black; 2.1% of students identify as
American Indian, 3.0% identify as Hispanic; and 1.9% identify as White. In my
classroom, 100% of students are people of color or indigenous. In the school, 87.5 % of
students qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch, and it is considered a high-poverty school.
In my classroom, I know that some of my students are homeless/highly mobile and many
experience food insecurities. In the school, 47.9% of students are identified as English
Learners. Among ELL students, the majority are refugees or are children of refugees. In
other words, students in my classroom are richly culturally and linguistically diverse.

By almost every standard, my students, who all possess strong and varied cultural
funds of knowledge have found themselves in an education system that was not created
for their success (Heineke, & McTighe, 2018). For example, in my English Language Arts
class, they are expected to succeed in learning literacy standards with the same tools, i.e.
novels, as students in predominantly white, high performing schools within the district.
This is simply giving them access to an education that is equal. It is not equitable, and it
does not provide necessary opportunities to succeed. This is why as I asked myself with
increasing frustration, “How do I teach literacy skills in a middle school ELA classroom?
How do I make literacy skills accessible to all of my students regardless of their language ability?” I was also exploring the question, “How do I give my students access to an equitable literacy education that ensures their success within a system that was not created for them?” Given the limited tools I had to access as a single classroom teacher, I was not able to provide them with equitable access to literacy instruction.

Professional. It is my belief that with co-teaching ELL/ELD, I can give my students access to literacy content regardless of their language level, thereby providing access to a more equitable form of education. As I began to co-teach, I realized that simply having two teachers in a classroom was not enough. In order for strong instruction to occur, my co-teacher and I must master the dance of co-teaching (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2016). Since the tools for literacy instruction we are given are often inaccessible to ELL students, we must make the middle school ELA curriculum more accessible to all learners. This is why I believe my research question, “What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in a middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?” is so important.

Expected Outcome

During my research, I hope to learn best practices in teaching literacy skills to middle school students. I also hope to find culturally and linguistically responsive strategies for co-teaching and co-planning that will elevate my ability to co-teach. I would like to explore the intersection of best practices for middle school literacy and ELA/ELD co-teaching, in order to create a middle school literacy curriculum guide that focuses on integrated ELA/ELD co-teaching practices. I will use UbD to create a novel
study that is scaffolded for ELL learners and provides opportunities for co-teaching. It is
my deepest hope that this research will give me more tools for equitable literacy
instruction and provide an example of how schools can meet the diverse cultural and
linguistic needs of all students through curriculum design.

My Co-Teaching Experience

Throughout my work experience and education experience, I have the opportunity
to experience a wide variety of educational systems. Within these systems, I have had an
opportunity to co-teach in multiple settings. The following experiences have shaped my
understanding of language acquisition and my understanding of co-teaching.

Co-teaching in Thailand. After I received my undergraduate degree, I moved to
Thailand to teach English because I was curious to see how another education system
functioned. To prepare, I took a month-long Teaching English and a Foreign Language
(TEFL) course in Thailand. I learned much of the actions of teaching, but none of the
theory. I taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a variety of settings in and
around Bangkok with a language company. I was trained in the Total Physical Response
(TPR) method of secondary language acquisition. TPR utilizes games and physical
movement for language acquisition. This was the first time I had the experience of
co-teaching. I taught with a bilingual Thai co-teacher. We co-planned our lessons in taxis
as we drove around Bangkok. While we were teaching, the Thai teacher and I would
deliver lessons in English and the Thai teacher would teach aspects of the lesson in Thai.
In this position, I learned how to collaborate with another educator, the importance of
building a good relationship with my co-teacher, a basic understanding of secondary
language acquisition, and as an added benefit to speak Thai. I continued to teach EFL in this fashion for 3 years in a variety of contexts in and around Bangkok. It was after my third year of teaching, I decided to move back to the United States and pursue my Masters in Elementary Education in order to understand the theory behind what I was doing.

**Co-teaching as a paraeducator.** When I moved back to the United States, I soon got a job as a paraeducator and began studying education. Working at a school and studying education was extremely valuable because it meant that I could apply what I was learning immediately. The school I worked at was for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders. In this position, I worked closely with the classroom teacher and worked with students one on one, or in co-teaching terms, one teach-one assist. In this position, my key takeaways were how to assist while someone else teaches and how to differentiate instruction under the guidance of an expert. Within this co-teaching structure, emphasis was placed on co-planning between the licensed teacher and paraeducator. Therefore in this position, I was always prepared for instruction because the licensed teacher told me what instruction I would be supporting.

**Co-teaching as a student teacher.** When I began student teaching, there was a strong initiative at my university and my district to use specific co-teaching strategies. My co-teacher and I received a one day training on co-teaching. I was quite excited because my teaching experience up until that point had consisted of a variety of co-teaching methods. I was able to finally put a name to these practices and hone my skills further. During my student-teaching experience, my collaborating teacher and I
implemented many different types of co-teaching strategies. These included station teaching, parallel teaching, team-teaching, one-teach one assist, and one-teach one observe, further explanation of co-teaching models will be in chapter two. The experience shaped my teaching experience and gave me insight into how to lead a classroom with another teacher.

**Attempting to co-teach as a beginning teacher.** As I stepped into the position of a classroom teacher I was thrilled to have the opportunity to co-teach with an ELL teacher but quickly realized that it would not be possible because of lack of co-planning time and inefficient co-planning strategies. I also realized that co-teaching was even more complex as a classroom teacher due to all the many requirements such as grading, lesson planning, student assessments, meetings, and a variety of other school duties. I realized that without systemic focus and support, effective co-teaching was not possible. I had given up on the possibility of co-teaching until this year when my principal shifted the structure of our schedule in order to allow for more co-teaching time. Therefore, this year, due to school system changes, I finally have the opportunity to do quality co-teaching and co-planning.

**Current co-teaching experience.** Currently, I am co-teaching with an ELL and special education teacher for 60 minutes each day. We call ourselves the co-teaching trifecta. On the first day of school we introduced ourselves and our roles. We explained that as the general education teacher, I am content expert, the ELL teacher is the language expert, and the special education teacher is the expert in making sure that all students get what they need to be successful. We did this to make sure that all students understood
that we are all their teachers, we just have different roles. At the present time, we 
primarily use team-teaching strategies. We also co-plan once a week, so we can 
differentiate what we will be teaching. Even though it is the beginning of the year, we 
have developed a mutually respectful and positive working relationship. That allows us to 
work together more efficiently.

One way the ELL teacher and I are building our skills as co-teachers is through a 
co-teaching cohort. The cohort meets to learn how to effectively co-teach English 
Language Development and English Language Arts. In this cohort, we are given time to 
reflect and work with our co-teachers in order to develop co-teaching skills together. This 
has been an invaluable opportunity to begin to learn the steps of the co-teaching. We have 
used some of the instructional and co-planning techniques we have learned and applied it 
to our class. However, it is obvious that we have a lot more to learn about co-teaching 
together.

Moving Towards a Deeper Understanding of Co-Teaching

In summary, before I began co-teaching ELA I did not feel like I was equitably 
meeting my students’ literacy needs. It is my belief that the ELA co-teaching model may 
provide my student’s with access to an equitable literacy education. When considering 
the lack of access to equitable education for racially, linguistically, and economically 
marginalized students, developing effective instructional practices, that strive for equity 
and reflect students’ needs are of utmost importance. My past teaching and schooling 
experience has given me ample experiences that I will be able to apply to future 
co-teaching.
It is my hope that during this project, where I will be exploring the question of *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in a middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?* I will gain a deeper understanding of how to use co-teaching to better reach my students. In chapter two, I review the literature on the most effective ELD/ELA co-teaching strategies and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching strategies in middle school. I will bridge literature on best practices for middle school ELA and ELL co-teaching strategies. In chapter three, I will describe my project, which will consist of a novel curriculum guide highlighting ELA/ELD co-teaching strategies. In chapter four I will reflect on my project and outline which co-teaching strategies I believe could most effective for my students. It is through this reflection and research I will determine, *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in a middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?*
CHAPTER TWO
Review of Literature

Introduction

The guiding question behind this project is *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in a middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?* This chapter looks at the literature surrounding major themes found in this project. The goal is to consider various strategies for culturally responsive literacy skill instruction, co-teaching, ELL literacy instruction, middle school literacy instruction, and ELL co-teaching.

In order to understand the purpose of this project—determining effective ELL co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy in a middle school ELA class that is culturally and linguistically diverse—it is important to first understand how literacy skills are developed, and how to teach literacy in a way that is adapted to the cultural and linguistic needs of the students being taught. Thus, the first section presents a prominent theory of literacy development and an overview of culturally and linguistically responsive literacy instruction.

It is equally important to understand co-teaching and how it has been implemented. Thus, the next section gives the definition of co-teaching, the conception of co-teaching, what teachers need to effectively co-teach, a summary of the main foundations and models of co-teaching and co-planning, and research on co-teaching. Next, literacy strategies for ELL students are noted. Finally, the ELL co-instructional cycle is presented, allowing teachers to get an overview of the most effective co-teaching
strategies for teaching literacy skills in a middle school English Language Arts classroom that is culturally and linguistically diverse.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Literacy Instruction

This section reviews literature on culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and literacy skills in order to determine the most effective culturally and linguistically responsive co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in a middle school integrated ELA/ELD class. This section provides a description of the theoretical foundation on literacy and pedagogy used in this capstone. First, it will provide a summary of the theories of cognitive-constructivist view of reading. This theory will be extended by incorporating the recently developed pedagogical theory of Culturally and Linguistically Responsive (CLR) Teaching and Learning (Hollie, 2012). The above theories will merge in order to fully construct the pedagogical lens of literacy that will be used throughout this capstone.

How literacy skills are developed. Literacy skills are the ability to read and write. In the case of this project, we will primarily be focused on the reading aspect of literacy. According to Pearson (2011), over the past forty years, the cognitive constructivist view of reading has become widely accepted. The most salient feature of this view is that reading is an active process which combines background knowledge and subjective understanding in order to create meaning from a text (Pearson, 2011). In Sociocultural Theory, Vygotsky extended the cognitive constructivist view of reading and claimed that learning is a social act (1978). Pearson (2011) went on to explain one tenet of Vygotsky’s theory succinctly:
... the social and cultural backgrounds of students have a huge and undeniable effect on their learning. Unless we as teachers take students’ social background and modes of learning and thinking into account, little learning is likely to occur. (p. 11)

Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory can have a dramatic impact on instruction and planning. It emphasized that learning cannot occur unless teacher’s consider the home culture of students. This theory is supported by Hollie (2012), who posited that in order to reach students academically, we must meet them where they are culturally and linguistically.

**Culturally and linguistically responsive instruction.** Ladson-Billings (1994) developed the theory of culturally responsive teaching, which emphasizes bringing student’s cultural references into learning. She defined culturally responsive teaching as “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural and historical referents to convey knowledge, impart skills, and to change attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 13). Hollie (2012) continued Ladson-Billings research and also included language into his conception. He added that Culturally and Linguistically Responsive instruction (CLR) is the legitimization of home culture and language and the delegitimization of structural racism (Hollie, 2012). Hollie (2012) went on to develop multiple CLR strategies to benefit underserved students--these strategies will be explored in the project section of this capstone.

From this section, we can reach a number of conclusions related to theory that can be applied when determining the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching
literacy skills in a middle school integrated English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse. The first conclusion is that in order to effectively teach literacy skills to CLD students, literacy learning must be viewed as an active process that incorporates learners' background knowledge. This approach makes learners active participants in literacy instruction and demands that student’s existing funds of knowledge are incorporated into instruction. Secondly, in order to teach CLD students aspects of home culture and language must be intentionally honored within the instruction. This also requires that teachers not only know their students and their cultures deeply, but that they also have enough cultural literacy that they can authentically bring students lives into planning and instruction. Thirdly, from this section, we can conclude that instruction must be intentionally anti-racist and provide students with opportunities to question racist systems.

In order for effective co-teaching to occur, the above views of literacy learning cannot just be held by one co-teacher. We can conclude that all teachers in the room must hold a similar philosophy, to ensure that views on learning, race, culture, and identity are not undermined. In subsequent sections the importance of co-teacher dynamics will be discussed, as well as the foundational concepts of co-teaching.

Collaborative Teaching

Co-teaching, short for collaborative teaching, is when two or more licensed professionals are working in the same teaching environment, on the same goal (Cook & Friend, 1993). In depth understanding of co-teaching is necessary for teachers as they begin the process of teaching with another professional. It provides a foundation for how
instruction will be implemented. The goal of this capstone is to explore the question of what are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse. Just as it is necessary for beginning co-teachers to gain a foundational understanding of co-teaching, it is also necessary to explore the foundations of co-teaching in order to answer the above question.

This section orients the reader to co-teaching’s conception. Next, it explores the advent of co-teaching as an inclusion tool to reach students with disabilities within the mainstream classroom (Kohler-Evans, 2006). The third section surveys research on strategies of co-teaching. The last section provides an overview of the challenges and benefits of co-teaching.

Collaborative teaching is not a new concept. In the mid-1960’s, Trump (1966) began espousing the educational approach of team-teaching in response to the cultural revolution of the 1960’s. Following his approach, other educational leaders of this time period began re-conceptualizing instruction in the United States and Canada (Bunyang, 1965; Trump, 1966). Why, then, is it only within recent years that ELL co-teaching began to gain national attention (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2016)? One reason may be that not until the 1980’s did paraprofessionals, as opposed to licensed professionals, began serving learners with disabilities in the general education setting rather than the special education setting, i.e. the inclusion model (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010; Pappamihiel, 2012). Co-teaching between the general education teacher and special education teacher gained popularity in the 1980’s and 1990’s (Friend, Cook,
It has only been within the last fifteen years that co-teaching in ELL has become popular, as schools seek ways to become more linguistically and culturally responsive to reach ELL students (Pappamihiel, 2012). Theory and models for ELL co-teaching are based on special education models, as co-teaching in special education has a longer history and more rigorous research and study (Cook & Friend, 1995; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018; Pappamiheil, 2012.)

Effectively co-teaching. Many of the foundational tenets of co-teaching in special education comes from the work of Cook and Friend (1993). These tenets of effective co-teaching stem from the relationship between co-teachers. They posit that teacher collaborations must be voluntary, based on trust, parity, and share a common goal, decision making, and resources (Cook & Friend, 1993). Parity, which means that both teachers are equally valued, is one of the most important foundations of successful co-teaching (Cook & Friend, 1993; Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, & Patterson, 2016). In order to have parity in a classroom, students view both co-teachers as teachers and both teachers have choice in the classroom. Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, and Patterson (2016) believed that parity is particularly important because it ensures that both the special education teacher and general education teachers are taking an active role in instruction.

Mastropieri et al. (2005) observed that another important factor for effective co-teaching teams was having exceptionally respectful and positive working relationships. In order to maintain relationships, it is helpful if the co-teacher philosophies of education are complementary so competing philosophies do not impede instruction (Mastropieri et al., 2005). In other words, teachers should have a relationship
that allows for open conversations on classroom management and how they believe children learn before they begin co-teaching.

Another conversation necessary for effective co-teaching teams is an examination of roles and responsibilities (Cook & Friend, 1993). This guarantees that each co-teaching member is utilizing their expertise and each co-teaching member is aware of who is responsible for what (Cook & Friend, 1993). In schools, this means that co-teachers must have explicit conversations before co-teaching begins to decide how best to utilize each teacher’s skills in lesson planning, instruction, and assessment.

**Co-teaching models.** Cook and Friend (1993) developed models for co-teaching instruction which have become part of the apriori framework for most of the future co-teaching discussions surveyed in this study. This holds true for both ELL and special education co-teaching models (Dove, & Honigsfeld, 2016; Dove, & Honigsfeld, 2018; Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010; Kohler-Evans, 2006; Mastropieri et al, 2005; Pappamihiel, 2012; Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, & Patterson, 2016.)

The models are defined according to Cook and Friend (1993) below.

- **One teach, one observe, or assist.** “In this type of co-teaching, both teachers are present, but one -- often the general education teacher -- takes a clear lead in the classroom while the other gathers observational data or “drifts” around the room assisting students during instruction” (p. 425).

- **Station teaching.** “In this approach, the teachers divide the content to be delivered and each takes responsibility for part of it … some of the students may be completing independent work assignments” (p. 425).
• **Parallel teaching.** “The primary purpose of this type of co-teaching is to lower the student-teacher ratio ... each delivers it (instruction) to half of the class …” (p. 425).

• **Alternative teaching.** “In this approach to co-teaching, one teacher works with a small group of students to preteach or reteach while the other instructs the large group” (p. 426).

• **Team teaching.** “… both teachers share the instruction of students” (p. 426).

In all of these approaches, the unique needs of students as well as content objectives are addressed (Cook, Friend, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). The roles of the teachers should be flexible and the time teachers collaborate differs (Cook, Friend, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). The collaboration needed in these approaches varies as do their advantages and disadvantages (Cook & Friend, 1993). The advantages and disadvantages of these approaches will be explored within the context of ELL in the next section.

**Co-planning.** Co-planning is an absolutely necessary component of co-teaching (Dove, & Honigsfeld, 2018; Murawski, & Dieker, 2008; Pappamihiel, 2012). Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) explained that co-teaching allows both teachers to incorporate their expertise, learn new skills from one another, and design differentiated lessons. According to Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, and Patterson (2016), co-planning is necessary to achieve parity and must be employed in order to achieve effective co-teaching.
Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, and Patterson (2016), pointed out that, unlike co-teaching, literature describing co-planning models is lacking. For example, Kohler-Evans (2006) simply recommended that teachers find a common time to plan but did not provide an example of an effective co-planning structure. In order to fill the gap in literature, Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, and Patterson have created a framework for co-planning (2016). It consists of three phases; unit planning, which occurs at the beginning of the co-taught course, biweekly planning sessions which go over key learning targets, and daily planning that focuses on everyday lesson plans (Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, & Patterson, 2016). Likewise, Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) also recommend a three phase co-planning approach. In Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) model, the cycle consists of a pre-planning phase, a collaborative planning phase, and a post planning phase. Dove and Honigsfeld’s (2018) three phase model will be discussed in greater detail in a subsequent section on ELL co-teaching.

Research on co-teaching. Although there is a plethora of literature describing co-teaching, including the models of co-teaching, most of the impact is described anecdotally and the effects of co-teaching are unclear (Murawski & Swanson, 2001). According to Pappamiheil, (2012), there are limited meta-analysis studies of co-teaching, and of the studies that do exist, “these studies do not include large-scale, long-term research” (p. 4). Furthermore in Murawski & Swanson’s review of eighty-nine articles on co-teaching, only six articles provided any significant quantitative data, showing that co-teaching was moderately effective at improving student outcome (2001). At the time of this capstone (2019), the writer was unable to find any articles that contained large
scale quantitative research analysis on the effectiveness of co-teaching, which mirrors the findings of Murawski and Swanson (2001) and Pappamihiel (2012). Murawski and Swanson (2001) recommend further quantitative research into the effectiveness of co-teaching, as current research is sparse.

However, when co-teaching is viewed through the lens of collective action, strong inferences can be made about the effectiveness of collaborative endeavors such as co-teaching. Hattie (2016) did a meta-analysis of 1,500 studies and found that high collective efficacy had a higher impact on student achievement than any other factor (Donohoo, Eells, & Hattie, 2018). High teacher collective efficacy, i.e. "when a team of individuals share the belief that through their unified efforts they can overcome challenges and produce intended results," was shown to have three times more impact than socio-economic status (Donohoo, Eells, & Hattie, 2018).

**Summary.** From this section, we can conclude a number of things about co-teaching. One theme is that co-teaching, or collaborative teaching, is not a new approach. It has been used for approximately the past three decades to reach students whose needs fall outside of the expertise of the general education teacher. Initially, an approach used to meet the needs of special education students is now being used more widely and helping to make content more accessible to other students, including ELL students.

Another of the major themes seen in this section was the need for co-teachers to develop strong relationships as a foundation for co-teaching. These relationships need to be intentionally developed prior to beginning co-teaching. In addition to creating a more
pleasant working environment, positive relationships also allow each individual to utilize their expertise in the co-teaching and co-planning process, creating a foundation for effective co-teaching strategies to flourish.

The complexity of the co-teaching and co-planning process is another theme seen in this section. In co-teaching, there are multiple models. In order to determine which model to utilize, teachers must consider the unique needs of students and lesson content. Co-planning is a necessary component of co-teaching. We can conclude that in order to utilize the most effective co-teaching strategies, co-teachers must first be able to effectively co-plan.

One interesting theme that became apparent is the surprising lack of large-scale quantitative research on co-teaching. However, Hattie’s research on collective efficacy strongly implies that co-teachers who believe that they are able to increase student achievement through their collective actions would have a strong impact on student achievement. This means that although quantitative research on co-teaching strategies is needed, co-teaching should not be discounted because the collective nature co-teaching has been shown effective through research.

**Middle School Literacy Instruction**

Middle school ELA is uniquely challenging because of a dramatic shift that occurs in instruction between elementary school reading classes and middle school ELA (Alvermann, 2002). In elementary school, students are explicitly taught literacy skills; however, when students enter middle school, literacy skills are taught through content areas (Alvermann, 2002). This section will provide an overview of this challenge. The
second part of this section will explore methods and strategies for teaching literacy skills to meet the needs of all learners.

**Challenges in middle school literacy.** Middle school literacy instruction is a challenge for multiple reasons. Avermann (2002) explained that the biggest challenge is that middle school students need to engage in complex literacy tasks but only possess basic literacy skills. Blanton, Taylor, and Wood’s (2007) research supported this claim and showed that the majority of middle school students are not proficient in reading. Avermann (2002) and Blanton, Taylor, and Wood (2007) both argued that most middle school reading instruction fails to meet the needs of middle school students. Blanton, Taylor, and Wood (2007) explained that this issue often occurs because teachers do not have time or skill to teach both literacy skills and content knowledge through text.

In order to mitigate this challenge, all of the researchers surveyed on the topic agreed that teachers could learn to implement strategies to teach literacy skills through content and direct literacy instruction (Avermann 2002; Blanton, Taylor, & Wood, 2007, Hollie, 2012; Roberts, 2018). Blanton, Taylor, and Wood (2007) suggested strategies that are described in the following paragraphs.

**Funds of cultural knowledge.** One approach mentioned by many of the researchers involves using students’ fund of cultural knowledge, an approach known as culturally responsive instruction or culturally and linguistically responsive teaching (Alvermann, 2002; Hollie, 2012). Alvermann (2002) and Hollie (2012) explained that teachers need to bridge student’s home life with school. Hollie (2012) developed a variety of strategies for culturally and linguistically relevant teaching, including a variety
of call and response activities, movement activities, and behavioral management techniques.

**Groupwork.** Researchers working with middle school students often suggested that due to the need for adolescents to socialize with one another, group work is a recommended approach (Averman, 2002; Blanton, Taylor, & Wood, 2007; Roberts, 2018). Averman (2002) recommended project-based group activities, in which students practice literacy skills while authentically engaged with peers. In a similar vein, Blanton, Taylor, and Wood (2007) advised that teachers use reciprocal teaching that involves students leading group discussions and teaching one another literacy strategies. Roberts (2018) and Blanton, Taylor, and Wood (2007) also encouraged group strategies when they described ways in which to implement literature circles and book clubs. Roberts’ (2018) strategies also emphasized the importance of choice in group work.

**Summary.** From this section, we can conclude a number of things about middle school literacy instruction that can help determine the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school integrated English Language Arts class. One theme is that middle schools often do not meet the literacy needs of students who do not already possess foundational literacy skills. Therefore, in order to effectively teach middle school literacy skills, teachers need to use strategies that are not typically used. A second theme based on the literature review is the need for CLR strategies, group strategies, and teaching literacy through content, and choice may be effective strategies for middle school literacy instruction.
ELL Literacy Instruction

ELL students have specific needs within the middle school ELA classroom (Hadjioannou, Hutchinson, & Hockman, 2016). Therefore teaching strategies that meet the needs of ELL students need to be explored in order to determine the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school integrated English Language Arts / English Language Development class that is culturally and linguistically diverse. This section explores the needs of ELL students and strategies to meet their needs.

Needs of ELL students. Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) explained that most general education teachers do not have specific training to work with ELL students, yet most general education teachers have ELL students in their classes. It is necessary for general education teachers to develop a strong understanding of Secondary Language Acquisition in order to reach ELL students because language is foundational to learning (Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) argued that there are six principles necessary for general education teachers to understand in order to meet the needs of ELL students. They cited the research of Cummins, Freedson-Gonzalez, Krashen, Swain, Gass, Vygotsky, Thomas and Collier, Pappamihiel, Verplaetse and Migliacci, Wong-Fillmore and Snow, and Schleppegrell in the development of these principles.

- Conversational language proficiency is fundamentally different from academic language proficiency (Cummins, 1981, 2000), and it can take many more years
for an ELL to become fluent in the latter than in the former (Cummins, 2008).”
(as cited in Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008 p. 362)

● “Second language learners must have access to comprehensible input that is just beyond their current level of competence (Krashen, 1982, 2003), and they must have opportunities to produce output for meaningful purposes (Swain, 1995)” (Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008, p. 362).


● “ELLs with strong native language skills are more likely to achieve parity with native-English-speaking peers than are those with weak native-language skills (Cummins, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 2002)” (Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008, p. 362).

● “A safe, welcoming classroom environment with minimal anxiety about performing in a second language is essential for ELLs to learn (Krashen, 2003; Pappamihiel, 2002; Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008)” (Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008, p. 362).

● “Explicit attention to linguistic form and function is essential to second language learning (Gass, 1997; Schleppegrell, 2004; Swain, 1995)” (Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008, p. 362).
By incorporating these principles into their teaching, general education teachers can create learning environments that meet the needs of ELL students. The following sections will integrate some of these principles into strategies that can better meet the needs of ELL students.

**Scaffolding for ELL students.** Baker et al. (2014) asserted that according to their review of literature, ELL students make the strongest academic and language gains when they have the opportunity to learn language through content. In order for this to occur, they must be in the general education environment with access to content and language, oftentimes that is higher than their current level. As described in one of the six principles necessary for linguistically responsive teachers to know, ELL students must be given access to material that is slightly higher than their current level in order to make gains (Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

Scaffolding, which Lucas, Villegas and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) explained, was first developed by Wood, Bruner and Ross, uses instructional practices to make slightly higher material accessible, and can occur through a variety of instructional strategies. Scaffolding helpful for ELL students includes the use of instructional tools such as short videos, visuals, graphic organizers, (Baker, et al, 2014) and semantic mapping (Nichols, Rupley, Blair, & Wood, 2008). Hadjioannou, Hutchinson, and Hockman (2016) cited August and Hakuta when they emphasized that no single instructional tool will be effective for all ELL students due to their diverse needs.

WIDA is an organization that provides standardization in ELL levels through the **Access test (Proven tools and support to help educators and multilingual learners**
succeed,’” 2020). This test assesses the reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills of ELL students (“Proven tools and support to help educators and multilingual learners succeed,” 2020). In addition, WIDA has developed Can Do Descriptors, which describes what ELL students can be expected to accomplish according to their WIDA level (Field, 2012). Classroom teachers can use these levels to scaffold and differentiate assessments and lessons in order to meet the diverse needs of ELL students (Field, 2012).

Goldenberg (2008) argued that in order to meet the diverse needs of ELL students, teachers need to allow students to build background knowledge. Heineke and McTighe (2018) referred to this as funds of knowledge, and described that it connects learners previous experiences with new learning is a key scaffold for ELLs (Goldenberg, 2008). In accordance with CLR (Hollie, 2012) this process uses ELL students’ culture as an asset, not a deficit.

**Strategies for conversational and academic language usage.** Another scaffold that can be employed to support ELL students is giving opportunities for authentic conversation and academic language usage (Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). Lucase, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) referred to Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism when they emphasized that learning occurs within a social context. Therefore, in order for ELL students to acquire language and academic skills they must have an opportunity to interact with English-proficient skills (Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). Hollie (2012) gathered strategies for engagement that could be employed in classrooms to create authentic conversational opportunities.
**Strategies for academic vocabulary instruction.** Before students can use vocabulary authentically, students must first be introduced to the academic vocabulary necessary to understand the content. Wilhelm explained (as cited in Hollie, 2012) why academic vocabulary instruction is important; “When we teach a subject, or any topic within the subject we must teach the *academic vocabulary* necessary for dealing with it — not just the words, but also the linguistic processes and patterns for delving into and operating up that content” (p. 101). In order to teach the necessary linguistic processes and patterns, Echevarria, Vogt, and Short and Merkley and Jeffries (as cited in Nichols et al., 2008) explained that ELL students need vocabulary instruction that utilizes some background knowledge, visuals, modeling, and demonstration. Modeling strategies, such as teachers thinking aloud to determine unknown words have proved effective in the research of Nichols et al. (2008) and Baker et al. (2014). Also found effective was morpheme analysis, which asks students to find words with similar word parts to determine the meaning of unknown words (Nichols et al., 2008).

Hollie (2012) suggested concrete strategies that utilize students’ existing knowledge schemas to build vocabulary knowledge. These included using context clues, dictionaries, personal thesauri, and personal dictionaries (Hollie, 2012). Baker et al. (2014) on the other hand, emphasized the importance of teaching academic vocabulary words intensely across several days in varied contexts. They maintained that vocabulary should be chosen from a text and taught within multiple modalities (Baker et al., 2014). Nichols et al. (2008) united these practices and asserted that vocabulary instruction is most effective when it utilizes background knowledge and multiple opportunities.
**Small Group Instruction.** As noted by Lucase, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) ELL students need explicit instruction on linguistic form and function. One way to meet the unique needs of ELL students is through small group instruction. Baker et al. (2014) surveyed research on effective ELL instruction in the middle school classroom and found that small group instruction was moderately effective at improving ELL students’ academic and language skills. They recommended small homogenous group interventions that focus on phonemic awareness, reading fluency, and other needs of ELL students (Baker et al. 2014).

Similar to Baker et al. (2014), Avalos, Plasencia, Chavez, and Rascón (2007) advocated for Modified Guided Reading (MGR) as a strategy for ELLs in ELA classroom because according to their research, this method has shown promise as a way to increase ELLs reading levels. According to Avalos et al. (2007), MGR takes the basic structure of Guided Reading (GR), a popular, small group instructional approach developed by Fountas and Pinnell that uses differentiated text (1996), and alters it to meet the specific needs of ELL students. In MGR, “teachers are able to monitor ELLs' progress, meet their needs in order to facilitate literacy and language learning, and enable students to self-extend their reading and language proficiencies” (Avalos et al., 2007, p. 326). Roberts’ (2018) approach, although not specifically for ELL students, modified GR to apply it to whole class novel studies. As many middle school literacy approaches utilize whole class novels (Roberts, 2018), a method that incorporates MGR and Roberts’ modified whole class novel studies, may be an appropriate approach to teaching literacy.
skills in middle school ELA class to ELL students. This approach will be explored in subsequent chapters of this capstone.

From this section, a number of themes emerge about the needs of ELL students and instructional strategies to meet their unique needs. One of the most important themes is that ELL students need general education teachers that have an understanding of their unique needs as learners. An understanding of ELL students allows general education teachers to adjust lessons for ELL students. This leads us to another theme, scaffolding. This theme is important because it ensures that lessons are accessible to ELL students. One way to ensure that learning is accessible to students is to create opportunities for authentic use of academic language. In order for academic language to occur, ELL students should have explicit language and vocabulary instruction. This instruction can happen in whole group but is often found to be the most effective in small group instruction. It is important to acknowledge that ELL students should not be in a self-contained learning environment. Baker et al. (2014) explained that in order to increase academic rigor, oral and written English Language instruction should occur within content-area teaching.

**ELL Co-Teaching**

Co-teaching with an ELL teacher is one way to effectively teach literacy skills in a middle school integrated English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse. In Saint Paul Public Schools, one administrator found that the ELL co-teaching model has led to student improvement among ELLs (Murawski, & Swanson, 2001; Pappamihiel 2012; Silva, 2011). The research of Beninghoff and Leensvaart (2016)
also supported the claim that co-teaching ELL increases academic achievement. In one underperforming elementary school in Colorado with a high percentage of ELL students, co-teaching was the best strategy they found to increase academic growth (Beninghoff & Leensvaart, 2016). However, without specific strategies for co-teaching, teams can be unsure of roles and responsibilities (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018). In the first part of this section, ELD co-instructional strategies will be analyzed. Yet, effective co-teaching is not simply having an ELD teacher in the room (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2016). Effective co-teaching also includes co-planning, co-assessment, and co-reflection, some of which will be discussed in the second and third part of this section.

**ELL co-instructional strategies.** Beninghof and Leensvaart (2016) described that in an ideal co-teaching environment, two teachers with different expertise work together, each fulfilling a different instructional role. The ELD teacher is the expert on language learning, scaffolding, and vocabulary, whereas the classroom teacher determines the learning standards and pacing (Beninghoff & Leensvaart, 2016). As mentioned in the section on co-teaching, Cook and Friend (1993) developed five models for co-teaching, four of which Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) used to describe specific ELL co-teaching strategies and one which they renamed.

**One leads, one teaches on purpose.** Dove and Honigsfeld (2016) cautioned that if careful planning and instructional practice are not employed, one teacher may be downgraded to an assistant. Therefore, in order to maintain parity, increase student’s access to teacher expertise, and best utilize co-teaching models in the co-taught ELL classroom, instead of using the term *one teach, one assist*, Dove and Honigsfeld (2016)
rebranded the strategy one lead, *one teaches on purpose* (Cook & Friend, 1993). In one leads, *one teaches on purpose*, the purposeful teaching may consist of working with individuals or small groups who need assistance (Dove & Honsigfeld, 2016). Pappamihiel (2012) described the advantage of this strategy is that, “the teacher/floater model provides opportunities to pull small groups for immediate, unplanned reteaching or special instruction” (p. 2).

**Team teaching.** Dove and Honsigfeld (2018) stated that the goals for team teaching “are to design instructional activities that meet the needs of all students, even when they remain as one group, and ensure access to core curriculum for ELL’s” (p. 1). They went on to describe a series of strategies to meet the needs of ELL students ranging from low prep strategies such as think alouds, and *pro-prep* strategies such as creating visuals, two-column notes, write alouds, and scaffolded comprehension alouds (Dove & Honsigfeld, 2018). Beninghof and Leensvaart (2016) described co-teaching as dance with different moves. One move described is teachers identifying and teaching crucial academic vocabulary and teaching the whole class the new vocabulary using visuals, body movements, and choral speaking. Pappamihiel (2012) cautioned that “this iteration is the most difficult to successfully implement because of the high level of mutual trust and commitment on the part of both teachers” (p. 2).

**Parallel teaching.** Dove and Honsigfeld (2018) said that one of parallel teaching’s “main purpose is to reduce the student-teacher ratio so that teachers are better able to directly support, guide, ensure differentiated instruction, offer feedback, and monitor students’ progress” (p.7). They recommended strategies that could easily be
implemented in this model that could offer critical support to ELL students to access content information and utilize oral and written language (Dove & Honsigfeld, 2018). These strategies included conversational strategies that could give ELL students opportunities to use oral language skills as well as strategies such as sentence dissection, which build academic language (Dove & Honsigfeld, 2018). Pappamihiel (2012) stated that some challenges to this model were increased noise in the classroom, difficulty ensuring that all groups were meeting content objectives, and the potential lack of teacher flexibility.

**Alternative Teaching.** According to Dove and Honsigfeld (2018), in the ELL co-teaching classroom the alternative teaching model can front-load information by building background knowledge or it can reteach things that have been taught in class. There are a variety of strategies in the model described by Dove and Honsigfeld (2018) from pre-assessment strategies to learning strategies. Pappamihiel (2012) warned that if only ELL students are in the alternative teaching group, they could be further marginalized by peers.

**Station Teaching.** Station teaching, which Dove and Honsigfeld (2018) explained, involves students working in multiple small groups, creating an environment for cooperative learning. Cooperative learning can improve academic outcomes for all students as well as create positive interdependence, individual accountability, and social skills (Dove & Honsigfeld, 2018). Cooperative learning benefits ELL learners because they can learn alongside proficient English-speaking peers (Dove & Honsigfeld, 2018). Station activities such as writing rounds, guided reading, and jigsaws can easily be
implemented into this model. In this model, that danger is that students may be routinely separated into ability groups (Pappamihiel, 2012).

**Summary.** This section provided an overview of the benefits and challenges of ELL co-teaching. It also described various co-teaching models when applied to ELL co-teaching. From this section a couple of strong conclusions can be made in regards to the driving question of this capstone, *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?*

Based on this section, we can conclude that with the exception of one-teach, one-assist, the other models of co-teaching including team-teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, station teaching, and one teaches-one assist on purpose, can be effectively utilized in the co-taught ELL classroom, with some challenges. Based on the descriptions of models, it can be concluded that all of the above mentioned models can be effectively employed contingent on learning objectives, student needs, and the skills of the co-teachers in the room.

One of the most apparent conclusions that can be made is that of all the mentioned co-teaching models, one-teach one assist is the least effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills because it under utilizes the skills of the ELL co-teacher. Therefore, it should be avoided (Dove & Honsigfeld, 2018). In order to avoid the inefficient trap of one-teach, one-assist effective co-planning must occur. However, based on the fact that this can easily happen if strong planning is not employed, it is reasonable to assume that this model occurs in many ELL-co-taught classrooms (Dove &
Honigsfeld, 2016). The next sections describe strategies for co-planning, which support strong implementation of co-teaching models.

**ELL Co-Planning**

The section above described ELL co-teaching models and their challenges. One theme within all of the co-teaching models was the need for effective co-planning. In order to answer the question of this capstone, *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse*, this section will explore co-planning as a method of supporting effective co-teaching strategies in the middle school English language arts classroom.

In order to mindfully prepare for instruction and overcome potential challenges of different co-teaching models, Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, and Patterson, (2016) recommended that “co-teachers must be on the same page in (a) what will occur in the lesson for the day, (b) who will teach which components, (c) the instructional models that will be used, and (d) any accommodations or modifications that will be given to particular students” (p. 2). As mentioned previously, Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) described a three-part routine to ELL co-planning, pre-planning, collaborative planning, and post-planning. The three part routine of ELL co-planning is explored in the following paragraph.

In the pre-planning phase, which happens separately, co-teachers review the upcoming content curriculum and objectives and determine the necessary language content and objectives (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018). In the collaborative planning phase, they finalize aspects of the lesson, determine the model of co-teaching that will be used,
and determine roles and responsibilities (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018). In the post-planning phase, which also happens separately, the co-teachers complete tasks discussed in the collaborative planning session such as differentiating and scaffolding materials (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018).

In addition to describing a planning routine, Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) described the benefits of co-planning. They found that both co-teachers benefited from co-teaching and described that after collaborating with a colleague for an extended amount of time, co-teachers acquired each other's knowledge and skills through the inherent ongoing professional development (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018). They went on to say that co-planning ensures that both teachers address language progressions, demands, scaffolds, and supports (Dove and Honigsfeld, 2018).

**Summary.** This section explored co-planning as a method for supporting effective co-teaching strategies in the middle school ELA classroom. It described the benefits and strategies of co-teaching. It demonstrated that co-teaching benefits not only students and instruction but also teachers themselves as it acted as professional development. It then went on to describe the three stages of co-planning. We can conclude that by employing the three phase model of co-teaching, teachers would be more prepared to implement various co-teaching strategies in their classroom thus promoting literacy skills in a middle school classroom that is culturally and linguistically diverse.
**ELL Co-Assessment**

Co-assessment, as described by Dove and Honigsfeld (2018), influences co-planning and determines the supports necessary for language and content for ELL students to be successful in co-taught lessons. It is a necessary component for the entire collaborative instruction cycle (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018). Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) said that co-teachers should routinely collaborate to examine student work to determine their linguistic development, their academic needs, their cultural experiences, and their social-emotional aspects of learning. They continue to highlight the importance of co-assessment when they claimed that if teachers do not have co-assessment practices, co-taught lessons “may not fully focus on the learning needs of all students (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018).

**Summary.** Illustrated in this section is the importance of co-assessing in the co-instruction process. It discussed the need for co-teachers to routinely collaborate in order to determine the development of content as well as language skills. Based on the necessity of this co-assessment process, we can conclude that some aspect of co-assessment must take place in order to determine if the selected co-teaching strategies are effective in meeting content and language objectives. It is in this way that co-assessment helps inform a deeper understanding of *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse.*
Summary

Throughout this literature review the question, What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse? has been kept at the forefront. First, literature on literacy skill development was explored to develop a foundational understanding of how culturally and linguistically diverse students learn literacy skills. Then, methods and research on co-teaching was reviewed to determine effective strategies that could be used in a middle school English language arts classroom. Next, middle school literacy strategies were surveyed to determine methods that were age appropriate. After that, the needs of ELL students were investigated to determine specific strategies which would result in ELL student academic success. Finally, literature on co-teaching ELL students was reviewed in order to determine specific ways to utilize an ELL co-teacher that would benefit all students. Themes from each section were distilled in order to answer the question, What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?

No literature was found that specifically answers the question What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse? In order to determine the answer, themes from multiple disciplines need to be synthesized. One major theme that needs to be kept in the forefront stems from Vytosky’s (1978) social constructivism. Learning is social, and in order to construct meaning, students existing cultural and
linguistic schemas need to be accessed and honored within the middle school English Language Arts classroom. This means that teachers need to be mindful of students’ cultural, and linguistic needs when making instructional decisions. In order to do this teachers need to be keenly aware of the specific cultural and language needs of their students. Along the same vein, in order to meet the needs of middle school students, teachers must be aware of their developmental needs. Middle school students do well in groups when they are able to make choices. In the language arts classroom middle school, students need to have the opportunity to learn literacy skills within content instruction. This is similar to the needs of ELL students, who also benefit from learning language throughout content.

Having an ELL co-teacher can assist in this process, but co-teaching is a difficult endeavor that requires intentional relationship development, co-planning, and intentional co-instruction. There are multiple strategies for co-teaching and the most effective strategy is dependent on the co-teachers, content, and student’s needs. Although there is limited quantitative research on co-teaching and most effective strategy for co-teaching, co-teaching is a promising method for reaching ELL students because it increases collective efficacy, which according to Hattie (2016) is the strongest factor in student achievement. The above strategies are key in teaching literacy skills in a middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse.
CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

As outlined in chapter one, co-teaching is one pathway to ensure that all students have access to rigorous and engaging literacy instruction within a middle school ELA classroom regardless of home language or culture. However, simply having two teachers in one ELA classroom does not necessarily equate access to rigorous instruction. Specific strategies must be employed in order to effectively co-teach. These thoughts led to the guiding question, *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts classroom that is culturally and linguistically diverse?*

As I was unable to find any prior research on the implementation of ELL co-teaching strategies for literacy skills in a diverse middle school ELA setting, chapter two synthesized research on culturally responsive literacy skill instruction, the history and guiding principles of co-teaching, ELL literacy instruction, middle school literacy instruction, and ELL co-teaching. I concluded that there are a number of co-teaching strategies and models that may prove to be effective in the middle school ELA classroom. The efficacy of the strategies are determined by student needs and learning goals (Dove & Honsigfeld, 2018). Furthermore, in a co-taught linguistically and culturally diverse middle classroom, instruction is best if the content authentically integrates literacy skills, is reflective of students’ home cultures, and incorporates scaffolded social interaction,
such as group work (Averman, 2002; Blanton, Taylor, & Wood, 2007; Hollie, 2012; Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Roberts, 2018).

In researching culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) pedagogy and ELL co-teaching in the middle school classroom, I discovered a lack of specific instructional practices that combined best practices from the aforementioned areas. This project addresses this dearth of information by providing an example of how best practices in these areas could be applied to a curriculum unit. This chapter first provides an overview of the project. Next, it presents the research paradigm, framework, and working theories used in the project. Then, it highlights the choice of unit, context in which the unit will be applied, and intended audience for the project. Finally, it provides a more detailed project description and timeline. The objective of this project is to synthesize approaches for CLR, ELL-co-teaching strategies, and middle school best practices into a curriculum unit that can be used to authentically increase student’s literacy skills in my ELA classroom. The question, *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts classroom that is culturally and linguistically diverse?* drove my research and the development of the unit plan.

**Project Overview**

As I reflected on my question and ways to create authentic learning opportunities that would allow for ample opportunities for effective co-teaching, I asked myself, how can I apply what I have learned to engage students in class-wide novel study? I chose to focus on the novel study because this is my district’s primary approach to secondary language arts instruction. Therefore, for this project I decided to design a curriculum unit
that centers around a novel that is available in my district’s curriculum library, *Free? Stories Celebrating Human Rights* (Morpurgo et al., 2015).

*Free? Stories Celebrating Human Rights* (Morpurgo et al., 2015), is a collection of 14 short pieces on the topic of human rights. Each section focuses on the necessity of a different human right. The sections range in genres and include poems, plays, short stories, and technical writing. The project attempts to incorporate research that highlights best practices for ELL co-teaching, middle school literacy instruction, and CLR pedagogy and authentically engage students in the novel’s main topic of human rights. The project is intended to be used by middle school ELA teachers who are teaching the novel with an ELD co-teacher.

The approach for curriculum planning that I based the novel study of *Free? Stories Celebrating Human Rights* (Morpurgo et al., 2015) comes from, *Using Understanding by Design in the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classroom* (UbDCLDC) (Heineke & McTighe, 2018). This method, developed by Heineke and McTighe (2018), is based on the original Understanding by Design (UbD) Framework but is extended to include the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. Similar to the original UbD, UbDCLDC utilizes three stages of curriculum design: Stage 1 – Identifying Desired Results, Stage 2 – Determining Acceptable Evidence, and Stage 3 – Planning Learning Experience and Instruction (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Like UbD, UbDCLDC begins by first determining the desired results of student understanding and then plans lesson activities based on these final results (Heineke &
McTighe, 2018). Unlike the original UbD, within this new framework there is a specific focus on what linguistic knowledge students will need to use in order to be able to achieve the desired results (Heineke & McTighe, 2018). In Stage 2, Determining Acceptable Evidence, UbDCLDC has educators reflect on ways to assess content knowledge that accounts for language differences and existing funds of knowledge (Heineke & McTighe, 2018). In Stage 3, Planning Learning Experience and Instruction, the UbDCLDC, promotes equitable learning environments for all students by incorporating disciplinary learning and language learning into daily lessons and activities (Heineke & McTighe, 2018).

The goal of UbD is in-depth student learning (Heineke & McTighe, 2018). UbDCLDC adapts the existing framework and makes it more equitable (Heineke & McTighe, 2018). Complex disciplinary and transferable knowledge is broken down into learning activities while also ensuring that all students are able to access the “big ideas” regardless of language usage or diverse cultural ways of knowing (Heineke & McTighe, 2018). In Stage 2, student assessments are differentiated to support language development and are scaffolded according to student’s cultural and linguistic needs to ensure in-depth student learning (Heineke & McTighe, 2018). In Stage 3, in-depth equitable student learning is achieved through the creation of learning plans that are scaffolded for rich language development (Heineke & McTighe, 2018).

By utilizing UbDCLDC within a novel study approach, students are given the opportunity to authentically access literacy skills. Literacy skills and language development are considered in every stage of curriculum development. This creates a
solid framework to ensure that the needs of all students in a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom are met. Needs are supported further by the suggestion of effective co-teaching methods, and opportunities for further co-planning. All of these things help determine the answer to the question of *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts classroom that is culturally and linguistically diverse?*

**Project Description**

In following the UbDCLDC framework, I began my project with Stage 1—backward design. I started with the sixth grade Minnesota State Standards that address literacy skills in the domain of reading comprehension (Minnesota Department of Education, 2010) (see Appendix).

In Stage 2 of UbDCLDC, I developed a differentiated performance assessment and created a pre-assessment and formative assessments to gauge student learning of the state standards before, during, and after the curriculum unit. These assessments included a prior assessment that gives insight into student background, language development, and skills in the domains listed above. There are a series of culturally and linguistically responsive formative assessments that were recommended by Hollie (2012) to determine students’ mastery of the MN State Standards. Finally, there is a summative performance based assessment. The summative assessment is in the form of a group writing project that assesses students’ mastery of a specific MN State Standards. More precisely, it consists of a small group created newspaper on human rights, that requires students to express inferential information based on the class text, and make persuasive claims.
supported by textual evidence. The assessments are differentiated according to students’ WIDA levels as described by Field (2012).

In Stage 3 of UbDCLDC, I created a series of 11 daily lessons that will support students in their development of skills relating to the MN State Standard that they are assessed on. Lessons are to be used along with the novel *Free? Stories Celebrating Human Rights* (Morpurgo et al., 2015). In order to remain authentic to best practices in co-teaching, I hoped that some learning activities would be co-planned with my ELL co-teacher. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this was not possible. Instead, within the daily activities there are templates to be used during ELL co-planning sessions which encourage daily co-planning, bring in ELL teacher expertise, and post-lesson co-reflection. Some scaffolds for ELL students are integrated throughout the daily lesson, making it accessible to linguistically diverse students, although ELD consultation is still encouraged for further language considerations. For example, some essential vocabulary, access to visuals, and sentence frames are created which allow for ELL students to engage with content (Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

This curriculum project attempts to highlight daily lessons that showcase best practices in middle literacy, co-teaching methods, in a classroom that is culturally and linguistically diverse. It follows the framework of UbDCLDC. and attempts to provide an example which shows some of the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts classroom that is culturally and linguistically diverse.
Supporting Research

In my project, I attempted to create a co-taught ELA UbDCLDC curriculum unit that intentionally brings in content knowledge from both an ELL teacher and content teacher. As mentioned previously, because of restrictions associated with the COVID-10 pandemic, unit co-planning was not possible. Honigsfeld and Dove (2016) argued for the need for content area and ELL teachers to co-teach in order to meet the needs of ELL students. They went on to explain that co-planning is a first step (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2016). Therefore, not having the ability to co-plan the unit collaboratively with my ELL co-teacher made the endeavor difficult, however as mentioned previously, space within daily lesson plans exist to encourage further co-planning. An attempt to meet the needs of ELL students was made, however, this unit plan will illustrate the need for further co-planning to be truly effective ELL co-teaching.

One approach that was possible to implement, despite not having the ability to co-plan was CLR. C Hollie (2012) cautioned that CLR is not a curriculum, instead it is a way to approach the instructional experience. Therefore, my curriculum described instructional experiences and activities that infuse CLR and as Hollie described, “validates, affirms, illuminates, inspires, and motivates” (2016) students within my specific classroom.

By incorporating some research from Honigsfeld and Dove (2016) and a great deal of approaches from Hollie (2012), I created a unit plan that is effective for the needs of my students, that can be altered when the expertise of an ELL co-teacher is available. It is important to note that although this unit plan highlights some practices for ELL
co-teaching within a linguistically and culturally diverse ELA middle school classroom, it is not intended to determine *the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts classroom for all culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms*. The needs of CLD are diverse, therefore a one-size-fits all approach to UbdCLDC curriculum design for CLD is not effective (Heineke & McTighe, 2018).

**Context of Project**

As mentioned previously, the intended audience for this project are the students in my specific classroom. It was tailored to their specific needs. However, it may be used as a reference guide for teaching *Free? Stories Celebrating Human Rights* (Morpurgo et al., 2015) to teachers within my district and similar districts with the caveat that it does need to be differentiated according to the needs of students found within each unique classroom within the district.

**Setting.** The school is found within a diverse large urban district in the upper Midwest. Within the school there is considerable racial and ethnic diversity; the school is racially segregated, with 98.3% of the student population considered racial minorities. Of the racial minorities, 47% of that enrollment identify as African American, 45% of enrolled identify as Asian, 3.2% of students identify as Hispanic, 1.7% of students identify as American Indian, and 1.7% of students identify as White (Minnesota Report Card, 2019). However, two commonalities that almost all students share is poverty, with over 89% of students qualify for the state’s free lunch program, and lack of success
towards reading standards, with 80% of students testing as not proficient in reading according to MCA scores (Minnesota Report Card, 2019).

**Participants.** My classroom, which is made up of 27 students enrolled in 6th grade between the ages of 11-12 years old, is reflective of the overall school demographics. Within my classroom, 100% of students are considered racial minorities. In terms of race within the classroom, 40% of students identify as African American, 7% of students identify as Native American, 7% of students identify as Hispanic, and 46% of students identify as Asian. Of students who identify racially as Asian in my class, 100% of those students identify culturally as Hmong.

Within my classroom there is considerable linguistic diversity, with 40% of students qualifying for ELL services, while 19% of students are bilingual but do not receive services. In terms of language spoken in the classroom, 30% of students speak Hmong and English, 8% of students speak at least Spanish and English, and 27% of students speak at least Somali and English. It should be noted that according to anecdotal data, at least two students are trilingual. In terms of other exceptionalities, 30% of students receive special education services, 50% of students who receive special education services are dual eligible for both special education services and ELL services, and 22% of students receive gifted and talented services.

With regards to ELA Fastbridge testing, which measures proficiency in Minnesota State Standards, 69% of students are at high risk for not meeting grade level standards, 13% are at moderate risk for not meeting grade level standards, 10% are at
some risk for not meeting grade level standards, and 8% exceed meeting grade level standards (One Simple Formative Assessment Solution, 2019).

In terms of the context of the district, school, and classroom, it is obvious that although many students are underachieving, my classroom is culturally and linguistically diverse. Students within my classroom come with a tremendous wealth of cultural and linguistic background and knowledge. For example, based on anecdotal data, I know that at least 50% of my students are refugees or are children or grandchildren of refugees. These students’ experiences, as well as the lived experiences of other students, are often steeped in trauma, but rich in insight of the human experience. Bringing these narratives to the forefront is not only CLR but also creates rich and dynamic class discussions. As a CLR educator, I try to create experiences in which these cultural narratives can be celebrated. I choose the text *Free? Stories Celebrating Human Rights* (Morpurgo et al., 2015) because I know that given the context of my classroom and my students’ lived experience, there is the potential for topics found within the text to be deeply engaging to students (Morpurgo et al., 2015). As I seek to continue to find answers to the question *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in a middle school English Language Arts classroom that is culturally and linguistically diverse?* it is necessary to build on students' funds of knowledge and keep their identities and human experiences at the forefront of my exploration.

**Timeline**

As I continued, I kept my students at the center of my plan and execution of this project. My timeline for this project was as follows: In September to November 2019, I
drafted chapter 1-3 of this project. In November to December, I revised chapters 1-3. During Jan 2020 to April 2020 I completed the curriculum project independently. During this time, the world was affected by COVID-19, which created some obstacles in project completion. In May 2020, I wrote chapter four. I completed the project in May, 2020.

Although, my aspects of the question *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts classroom that is culturally and linguistically diverse* are yet to be explored.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I began by revisiting the question, “What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for co-taught ELA classroom that is linguistically and culturally diverse?” I described my project and listed MN state standards that will be covered within this project. Next I described the research that supports my capstone project and introduced the UbD approach that I will be using. After that, I described my inability to work collaboratively to create this project, which was a detriment to the project. Next, I discussed the classroom this would be implemented in and the intended audience of the project. Finally, I presented the timeline and necessary steps in the development of my project.

In chapter four, I will reflect on my major learnings from my research and curriculum writing experience, my research and literature review, and determine the implications of this project. I will then conclude ways in which this discourse adds to the field of education and my future endeavors related to the most effective co-teaching strategies for a co-taught ELA classroom that is linguistically and culturally diverse.
CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Introduction

I began teaching this year by asking myself, “How do I teach literacy skills in a middle school ELA classroom? How do I make the ELA and literacy skills accessible to all of my middle school students regardless of their language ability?” Through experience I learned that the only way I would be able meet the needs of my students was if I was not doing it alone but was co-teaching. In order to determine how best to co-teach, I researched the question, *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in a middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?*

First, I reflected upon this question in regards to my practice. Next, I reviewed existing literature, attempting to discover what others learned in regards to best practices in co-teaching, middle school literacy instruction, ELL instruction and culturally diverse learners. I then synthesized this information and applied my findings to a unit plan which reflected what I gleaned from my literature review.

In this chapter, I will reflect upon my experience as a researcher/writer and educator, reflect on my literature review, and explore the limitations of my project. Through this reflection, I will attempt to answer my question, determine next steps and explore policy implications of the project. Finally I will reflect on the answer to my question and evaluate its potential contributions to the field.
Reflections on My Process as a Researcher/Writer

Prior to my career in education, and throughout my undergraduate experience, I dreamed of becoming a researcher. To find a topic and know as much as there was to know about it, to throw myself into writing and the world of academia. However, I graduated with my bachelor’s degree at the brink of the 2009 economic recession. A career in research and academia seemed unwise as I watched adjunct professors struggle to make ends meet. And so I went another path, and taught in Thailand, as described in Chapter 1, secretly hoping to glean universal truths about the field of education through hands-on learning and reflection. I learned a tremendous amount, began co-teaching, and then fell in love with my students and teaching. I put my love of research aside and viewed it as an overly idealistic dream and focused my energy in teaching at a “failing” school in order to discover what would work to reach my students. My love of research faded away until I started this project. I fell in love with writing, and research all over again. I rediscovered my voice as an academic writer and I hoped that the research and writing would never end. That once again, I could become lost in the world of research.

In the middle of creating my project, the world changed immensely, due to a pandemic, COVID-19. I became an online teacher, socially isolated, and the primary supporter of a health care worker. My priorities ceased to be on research and instead turned to survival. My voice as an academic writer dampened. I attempted to continue to create my capstone project but almost all of my motivation was lost. Before COVID-19, I hoped to enroll in a doctoral program to continue research and writing. Now, I just hope my family survives. It again seems frivolous to become lost in the world of research,
when facing the loss of life and all aspects of normalcy. In this process, as in everything, there is now my project before COVID-19 and my project during COVID-19.

Before COVID-19, as mentioned previously, I really enjoyed researching, this was especially the case of my literature review. Since there was no previous research on my specific question, *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in a middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?*, I found myself needing to synthesize a variety of topics in order to find the answer to my question. I increased my knowledge base on middle school literacy instruction, co-teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, and best practices in ELD. All areas that will benefit my teaching practice.

Throughout this process, I improved my skills in summarizing research, and then synthesizing information. This allowed me to hone in on salient information without adding significant personal biases that were unsupported by research. Although this process was tedious, as it forced me to very precisely cite my sources, it insured that any conclusions that I reached were heavily supported by research.

Researching and writing the literature review was the most challenging aspect of my capstone, however, it was also my favorite and has proven to be one of the most beneficial. In the next section, I will examine the parts of the literature review that proved to be the most important for my work.

**Reflections on the Literature Review**

There were a number of researchers that proved to be highly important to my project. My project question involved synthesizing best practice in working with
culturally and linguistically diverse students, middle school literacy instruction, and
ELA/ELD co-teaching. Various research in all of the categories helped to shape my
project. In this section, I will reflect on which research on working with linguistically and
culturally diverse students and middle school literacy instruction was most important to
my project.

When it came to supporting linguistically diverse students, specifically ELL
students, the work of Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) had a tremendous
impact on most of my capstone. Their work provided an overview of information that
content teachers needed to consider about ELL students. As I was creating my project I
found myself continuing to reference their six principles that content teachers needed to
know, specifically that I needed to pay explicit attention to form, function and academic
language use (Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

In a similar vein, Hollie’s (2012) work guided my understanding of linguistically
and culturally diverse students, but in terms of culturally relevant practices. As I was
creating my project, I found myself asking, “does this reflect my students?” I would then
access the strategies suggested by Hollie (2012) in order to determine if it was culturally
relevant.

I would be remiss if I did not also include the work of Heineke & McTighe
(2018) as important in supporting culturally and linguistically diverse students. I found
that their work in many ways synthesized the findings of other research and applied it to
UbD. This was invaluable research because it allowed me to continuously reflect on my
culturally and linguistically diverse students throughout the three stages of the curriculum design process.

In order to determine if my curriculum was appropriate for middle school literacy instruction, I often referred to the work of Averman, (2002), Blanton, Taylor, and Wood (2007), and Roberts (2018). All of their work described ways in which to use group work as a method for meeting the academic and social needs of middle school students. Since group work was emphasized by all of these researchers, I intentionally utilized group work in the learning activities.

These important points of the literature review, namely, research surrounding best practices in middle school literacy and supporting linguistically diverse students, deepened my understanding of the material around my capstone project. However, I had not anticipated that these aspects of my literature review would be most important prior to completion of my project. Rather, I anticipated that the research on ELD co-teaching would be the most influential, because it seemed to most directly answer my research question exploring *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in a middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?* However, I did not use substantial research on co-teaching in my capstone project. This led me to make new connections with my literature review.

**New Connections.** As I was working on this project, I found myself reflecting on the work of Beninghoff and Leensvaart (2016) and Dove and Honigsfeld (2016) with great frequency. Both sets of researchers describe effective methods for co-teaching with an ELD teacher. I attempted to describe ways in which to best utilize co-teaching as they
had described in my project. However, I continually found myself at a loss because according to Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) co-planning is extremely important to effective co-teaching. Without co-planning, I could not determine which method would truly be the most effective while working with a co-teaching. This often left me feeling frustrated and like my project was a failure. It was working through this frustration that I developed a new understanding of aspects of my literature review, which I will elaborate on next.

Within my literature review, I emphasized research on the importance of co-planning. However, I did not truly understand how needed the opportunity to co-plan and consult with an ELL teacher really was. At a certain point, I realized I had come to the threshold of what I could do as a lone content teacher to support ELL students and plan for ELD/ELA co-teaching. As a content teacher, I can be aware of WIDA can do levels as suggested by Field (2012). I can also be aware of different needs of ELL students (Lucase, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). I can even brainstorm various co-teaching strategies as suggested by Benninghoff and Leensvaart (2016) and Dove and Honigsfeld (2016). However, I can not do it all by myself. In order to make the beauty of co-teaching work and support ELL students, I need to consult with an ELD teacher about language demands and how best to reach ELL students. That is the expertise of the ELD teacher, and we need to collaborate in order to best meet the needs of students.

My inability to fully apply what I learned about co-teaching to my capstone project further emphasized the need for co-planning. My inability to co-plan to create this
project was my greatest limitation, but it was also my biggest take away. I will further describe this limitation in the next section.

**Limitations**

As I envisioned my capstone project, I imagined that the research of Honigsfeld and Dove (2016) would be at the center of the project. One of the cornerstones of their research is the necessity of co-planning as a means to effectively co-teach in an ELL classroom. I had originally intended to do the pre-planning of the curriculum myself, then co-plan with my ELD co-teacher. Unfortunately, because of COVID-19, this co-planning was not possible. As I created my lesson plan and attempted to create learning experiences that would support the language development of ELL students and determine which co-teaching approach would be most effective, I found myself with a dearth of skills. I am not a trained ELD teacher, therefore I do not necessarily know how best to reach my ELL students. I have a general understanding of the needs of ELL, but as a classroom teacher I am not equipped to anticipate all of the linguistic needs of my ELL students. I need the expertise of my ELL co-teacher.

In a similar vein, without experiencing the co-planning process, as a single teacher, I cannot determine which method of co-teaching to implement. It needs to be a team decision. To suggest that I alone can determine which co-teaching method is best to implement is creating a foundation lacking parity. Therefore, in order to mitigate this problem, I created opportunities within the unit plan for co-planning. This allows for authentic co-planning and for the utilization of both content area expertise and ELD expertise.
The limitations of this project, mainly not having the ability to co-plan a co-taught unit, highlighted the importance of co-planning. The importance of co-planning was highlighted both in terms of accessing ELD teacher expertise as well as determining effective co-teaching methods. It's through these limitations that an answer to my research question may be found.

**Arriving at an Answer**

The question that I researched was “What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?” My intention was to create a UbD Unit that highlighted effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse. Because of COVID-19, I was unable to complete this project. However, some answers to the question can be gleaned.

The first is, working in isolation, is it not possible to determine the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse. In order to find the answer to this question, it requires both the expertise of a content teacher and an ELD teacher. Co-teaching is a collaborative process and as such, collaborative unit planning is also necessary.

Secondly, as a content teacher, I can determine the standards to focus, create plans for engaging learning activities, and find content resources, some of which are beneficial for ELL students. However, in order to meet the linguistic needs of culturally and
linguistically diverse students, it is necessary to seek consultation of an ELD teacher. Similarly, effective co-teaching strategies are based on the unique needs and talents of both co-teachers.

In the section, I explored my inability to answer my research question in isolation. Co-planning with an ELD teacher is necessary. The expertise of both teachers is needed to create a curriculum that determines *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?* In the next section, I will explore future projects I would like to pursue on the topic.

**Future Projects**

As described previously, due to complications involving the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to complete my capstone project as originally intended, thereby finding it impossible to accurately answer my research question. My original intent was to go through the pre-planning process and describe content specific learning opportunities and then co-plan with my ELD co-teacher. Since this was not possible my project fell short.

In the future, I would like to use my UbD unit as a base for co-planning with my co-teacher. In stage 3 of the UbD, I left blanks that were to be completed during co-planning with an ELD teacher. If I was able to co-plan, this would strengthen the language demands, and provide a true example of a co-planned UbD unit plan to be used during co-teaching. It would allow for further differentiation instruction that would meet the learning demands of all ELD students.
The project would also have benefited immensely if I were able to utilize the expertise of an ELD teacher to determine specific resources and learning activities that would benefit ELL students. In the future I hope to have the opportunity to complete the co-planning process and bring in expertise from an ELD teacher. As it stands the project is incomplete. However, I believe it can be used to highlight the need to collaborate with ELD teachers because of their expertise in reaching the needs of ELL students, which can have policy implications.

Policy Implications

Although my question remains unanswered and my project is incomplete, it still emphasizes the need for co-planning and collaboration between service providers in order to meet the needs of all students. This project is small in nature, but the need of ELD teacher expertise within the classroom has big implications. Sharing my findings and their findings with stakeholders can result in a far greater impact than simply impacting my own practice.

As described by Heineke & McTighe, (2018) there is a shift in policy regarding ways in which culturally and linguistically diverse learners are taught. They suggest that current practices in ELL silo students and prevent ELL students from accessing rigorous academic instruction. Their approach emphasizes language demands and further linguistic understanding by classroom teachers to meet the need of demands of culturally and linguistically diverse students. However, there is a danger of placing all of this responsibility on classroom teachers who do not have the linguistic expertise of ELD teachers. In placing the responsibility of meeting the language needs solely on content
teachers, there is a risk of deprofessionalizing ELD teachers, thereby potentially putting ELL students at risk of not having access to experts in Secondary Language Acquisition.

In order to ensure that ELL students have access to ELL teachers, policies that support the service need to continue to be strengthened. Policies must reflect the need for ELD teacher expertise and incentivize co-teaching, as well as provide time for teachers to collaborate. Because as my capstone shows, even with the best intentions one sole teacher cannot meet the needs of ELL students alone.

My project emphasized the need for co-planning between ELD and content teachers in order to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Classroom teachers such as myself have expertise in content and standards. We lack expertise in secondary language acquisition and that is okay. Future policies must emphasize collaboration. The needs of ELL students cannot be solely placed on classroom teachers, and there is a need for co-teaching in this population.

Although this project is small in nature and the limitations I experienced in my project, namely not having the opportunity to co-plan, point to policy implications. Policies encouraging ELD co-teaching and support need to be continually strengthened in order to ensure that linguistically diverse students have access to an equitable education.

In the next section, I discuss ways in which the information I learned can be shared.

**Communicating Results**

In research results are only as important as their dissemination. In order to bring this research to life, I will communicate my findings to leaders within my district. I will also share my work with other district teachers.
I will share my results and its implications with a leader within the multilingual department of the district, have a discussion with the administration at my school. These are individuals who have the ability to implement changes system wide. In addition to providing evidence that can be used to advocate for ELD co-teaching and co-planning.

The curriculum that I created can be used by other teachers within my district online, who plan to co-teach with an ELD teacher. The format emphasises collaboration with an ELD teacher, and will provide a basis for other planning. These tools may benefit instruction district wide through the implementation by individual teachers.

Curriculum guides such as the one I created can serve as a foundation for reaching ELL students. It can also provide support for teachers advocating for systemwide support of ELD co-teaching. By sharing my project, there exists an opportunity to pull ELL students out of silos and provides students access to rigorous academic learning experiences.

**Professional Value**

Many educators struggle to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Too often they feel overwhelmed in meeting the needs of these students alone. My project illustrates the complex needs of these students and the necessity of collaboration.

It shows that ELD co-planning is a need if we are to meet the educational demands of some of our most vulnerable students. Within my district for example, teachers are asked to co-plan but seldom have the time or skills for quality co-planning.
My project highlights the need for collaboration and provides teachers evidence that they can use to advocate for ELD co-teaching and co-planning.

In this section, I explained how my project can benefit the teaching profession. I expressed the current dilemma some teachers experience. As well as providing a resource to help support ELD co-teaching and co-planning.

**Summary**

I began this project with the goal of finding the best way to teach my students with my ELD co-teacher. It was my second year trying to teach sixth grade ELA. I had spent the first year teaching sixth grade feeling unsuccessful and overwhelmed with the diverse needs of my students. So I asked my ELD teacher to join me in teaching my class. I wanted to determine how we could best work together so I attempted to answer the question, *What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?*

However, this project turned out to be more complex than anticipated as I found no prior studies specifically focused on ELD co-teaching in middle school English Language Arts. This meant that I had the opportunity to learn more about co-teaching, middle school, the needs of ELL students, and how to support culturally and linguistically diverse learners. I then synthesized what I learned by completing a UbD curriculum that brought in best practices from all of the angles.

Within this process, I was able to rediscover myself as a writer and a researcher, remembering it is something that I love. The process had added complexity as it took
place during a pandemic which added stress and changed my plan for project completion. The pandemic meant that I did not have the ability to co-plan with my ELD teacher. For me this highlighted the importance of collaboration.

My new insight into the importance of collaboration was my greatest takeaway. It inspired me to advocate for increased system supports for ELD co-planning and co-teaching. Through this project I was able to create a UbD plan that could be used by other teachers seeking to co-teach the novel, “Free? stories about human rights” (Morpurgo, M. et al., 2015).

At the heart of this capstone and project, at the center of my guiding question, is one simple question: how can I best serve my students? My students are historically underserved and underachieving. I feel like it is my duty to provide them with equitable access to education. At the beginning of the last year, I saw the vast majority of my sixth graders struggle and I wondered, how can I best collaborate with the ELD teacher to make this class work for them? My guiding question, What are the most effective co-teaching strategies for teaching literacy skills in middle school English Language Arts class that is culturally and linguistically diverse?, stems from the simple ambition to make learning equitable. This capstone and its subsequent project are my contributions to answering this question.
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APPENDIX

Minnesota State Standards

6.4.1.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.