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## **Implementation of Co-Teaching to Benefit Students with Unique Needs**

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Implementation of Co-Teaching to Benefit Students with Unique Needs

By

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

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Introduction.....	5
History of Co-Teaching.....	6
Personal & Professional Experiences.....	6
Rationale.....	9
Conclusion.....	11

### CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Introduction.....	12
Co-Teaching.....	12
<i>Definition of Co-Teaching</i> .....	12
<i>History of Co-Teaching</i> .....	14
<i>Rationale of Co-Teaching</i> .....	14
<i>Summary</i> .....	16
Effects on Students.....	16
<i>Special Education</i> .....	16
<i>Multilingual Learners</i> .....	18
<i>Gifted and Talented/Advanced Learners</i> .....	19
<i>General Education Students</i> .....	20
<i>Summary</i> .....	21
Effects on Teachers.....	21
<i>Benefits</i> .....	22
<i>Challenges</i> .....	23

<i>Summary</i> .....	26
Implementation Strategies for Co-Teaching.....	26
<i>Communication</i> .....	26
<i>Six Strategies</i> .....	28
<i>Co-Planning</i> .....	31
<i>Summary</i> .....	32
Conclusion.....	32
<b>CHAPTER THREE: Project Description</b>	
Introduction.....	34
Description of the Project.....	35
<i>Principles Used to Educate Adults</i> .....	34
<i>Summary</i> .....	38
Goals of Professional Learning Session.....	39
<i>Assessment</i> .....	39
Setting and Audience.....	41
Timeline.....	41
Conclusion.....	42
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION</b>	
Introduction.....	44
Notable Research and Key Learnings.....	45
Limitations of the Project.....	47
Future Projects .....	48

Enrichment to the Profession.....49

Summary.....49

**REFERENCES.....51**

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### Introduction

At the beginning of each school year, classroom teachers are given a class list of their upcoming students. On that list, there are various icons that indicate student needs as well as give a little insight into the students that will be part of your classroom all year long. Three icons that always catch my attention are the icons for multilingual learners, gifted and talented students, and special education students. These icons catch my interest because this means that these students will need extra attention in order to become the most successful that they can be.

It is essential that teachers understand what the best practices are to educate multilingual, gifted and talented, and special education students. It is evident that there is a large achievement gap between special education students and non-disabled students. A gap also exists between multilingual learners and native English speakers. Furthermore, gifted and talented students are often stagnant in the mainstream classroom due to the lack of enrichment and a focus on students with more apparent needs. Educators may need to make significant changes in their teaching methods to better educate these populations, and I believe that there is great value in co-teaching. Based on my curiosity and readiness to make changes in my elementary school, my research question is: *How can educators learn to implement co-teaching to benefit students with unique needs in the general education classroom?*

This chapter will contain the history of co-teaching, my personal and professional experiences working with multilingual students, gifted and talented students, and specialist educators. In addition, it will contain my rationale for choosing this topic and I will discuss the importance of co-teaching in closing the achievement gap. Finally, there will be insight as to what the rest of the chapters will include.

### **History of Co-Teaching**

According to the *National Association for Co-Teaching* (2023), “Co-teaching can be defined as two teachers working together with groups of students; sharing the planning, organization, delivery, and assessment of instruction, as well as physical space” (para. 1). Co-teaching is not a new concept. It has been around since the 1970s. This type of teaching was created after Public Law 94-142, now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, where a mainstream classroom teacher and a special education teacher worked together to educate various students. In recent years, co-teaching has expanded to a variety of educational groups such as English language teachers, student teachers, and gifted and talented specialists (National Association for Co-Teaching, 2019).

### **Personal & Professional Experiences**

Growing up in a white, middle to upper-class community, I did not see much diversity. All my classmates looked like me and the only time I spent with students different from myself was when we were playing a team from a different city or traveling. As a young woman, I was drawn to different cultures. I wanted to learn about how other people lived as I branched out from my own community. I had the opportunity to study Spanish throughout my education and travel to various places and experience a

variety of cultures. I believe this is where my passion for teaching and learning started. I was intrigued to learn more.

Since my undergraduate education, I have been drawn to multilingual learners. I found it fascinating to learn about different cultures, life experiences, and languages through the eyes of young learners. My most fond memories from receiving my education were when I was working towards my English Language Learners Endorsement and I had the opportunity to work with both elementary and secondary students who had immigrated to North Dakota from around the world. I was able to learn under one of the most caring and knowledgeable teachers I have ever worked alongside. She connected with each student she had with such ease. This experience initiated my passion for teaching multilingual learners. Even though I am a mainstream fifth-grade classroom teacher, I am always looking for ways to better educate and support the multilingual learners in my classroom.

In one of my courses at Hamline University, I had the opportunity to attend the Minnesota Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Conference in the fall of 2022. This conference opened my eyes and allowed me to better understand and service multilingual learners in the mainstream classroom. One presentation on co-teaching was particularly memorable. The presenters flawlessly described how a kindergarten teacher and an English language teacher could work collaboratively throughout the year. They showed us videos of their lessons and planning sessions. I instantly noticed how in tune the two educators were with their practices and how they were able to work with so many students at one time. For example, while the mainstream teacher was leading the discussion at the front of the room, the English language teacher



was translating and working very closely with several Spanish speakers. These roles were adjusted based on the given lesson. It was apparent that this practice was crucial in aiding comprehension for students. Another aspect that I noticed was that the mainstream classroom teacher and the English language teacher had a great working relationship. They were able to plan together, bounce ideas off each other, and naturally co-teach in the classroom. Both of these teachers had respect for each other's opinions and expertise.

Along with the discussion on co-teaching, I also attended a seminar on the implementation of co-teaching. The presenters discussed the steps it took to transition from a pull-out model to a co-teaching model. It was clear that this took a lot of time and effort from both sides. The biggest obstacle that they encountered was time. Working with various schedules was difficult, but once they were able to find time to collaborate and co-teach, there were great benefits. It is apparent that both time and resources are great hurdles for schools to overcome when transitioning to a co-teaching model.

In addition to my experiences working with and learning about multilingual learners, I have had the opportunity to work with gifted and talented students. These students are unique, intelligent, and eager to learn new things. When I first started my career, I had students who were identified as gifted and talented, but I did not have any support in educating them. I did my best to push them in the general education classroom but often struggled with supporting them. When I started my current position, I had the opportunity to work closely with a certified gifted and talented teacher. She comes into my classroom once a week and we often co-teach a lesson together. This has been a great experience because we can collaborate with one another and work closely with the students in my classroom to ensure their needs are being addressed.

Recently, I have had collaborative instances that have not benefited my students to the fullest. This year, I have a special education teacher that comes into my classroom for fifteen minutes daily but acts as an educational assistant instead of a co-teacher as they just sit with a student and do not provide any educational benefit. There is no previous discussion on what is being taught or what the students should be working on. There is a lack of connection between myself and the Special Education teacher. Due to this, the student is not benefiting from having two teachers in one space and is receiving instruction that has no connection when outside of my classroom which leads to a lack of growth. Co-teaching has the potential to be very powerful, but both teachers need to be using their skills and expertise.

### **Rationale**

I am completing this capstone project on the topic of co-teaching because I see great potential. I know that if I had the opportunity to work collaboratively with my special education, English language, and gifted and talented teachers, we could achieve great things. I would like to see my school transition from a pull-out and push-in method to a co-teaching model. In order to do this, educators need allotted time to plan, teach together, and build working relationships.

There are many aspects of co-teaching that I wish to learn from this project. I am hopeful that what I learn will expand beyond students' needs so I can find various educator benefits as well. Once I have this information I hope to create a professional development session to educate my colleagues. I desire to be able to explain the potential growth we could have at our elementary school provided we have the opportunity to

collaborate with specialist educators. From there, I am optimistic that co-teaching will encourage positive growth in all students.

I am a strong advocate for giving students equal access to education. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national recipients of federal financial assistance (*Legal Highlight: The Civil Rights Act of 1964*, n.d.). In addition to this act, Title VI was created to prohibit the denial of an equal education opportunity based on limited English proficiency. There are many acts that are in place to provide all students, specifically multilingual learners, the opportunity for a great education, but are schools really providing the best education for these students?

There are discrepancies in every classroom around the world, and the global pandemic has only exacerbated this fact. According to the *English Learner Education in Minnesota 2020-2021 Report*, there were 76,361 English language learners in Minnesota in 2019. This data shows that 8.5% of all Minnesota students are multilingual learners. Within these numbers, English language learners are more likely to take more than four years to graduate high school or drop out altogether. According to the same report, in 2020, only 67.2% of English language learners graduated high school (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020). This is an alarming statistic and highlights a great need for improvement.

Similarly, there is a significant achievement gap when looking at special education students. According to a study written by Gilmour (2018) within the 23 schools she observed, special education students, on average, performed three years below students without disabilities. Having more teachers in a classroom to assist with understanding will be monumental in closing the achievement gap.

In my experience, it has been very difficult to provide equal opportunities to gifted and talented students because there is a great variety of educational levels that require differentiation. Students who need to be challenged in the classroom will benefit from co-teaching in this area as well. Bringing in the expertise of the gifted and talented specialist in a co-teaching capacity has the potential to be very influential.

### **Conclusion**

The variety of students I have in my classroom greatly impacts me. Due to my past experiences both personally and professionally, I want to do my best to educate them and give students all the skills they need to be successful. In order to meet the needs of every student in my fifth-grade classroom, I need to work collaboratively with the other educators in my school. I believe that co-teaching has great benefits for both students and educators, and I look forward to learning more and answering my research question: *How can educators learn to implement co-teaching to benefit students with unique needs in the general education classroom?* In the upcoming chapter, I will be reviewing an abundant amount of research regarding co-teaching. I will be looking at various studies in an assortment of settings to get a true understanding of the value of co-teaching. In the chapters to follow, there will be further information regarding my professional development session where I hope to educate my colleagues and enact a change in teaching styles.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to understand and explore the question: *How can educators learn to implement co-teaching to benefit students with unique needs in the general education classroom?* To accomplish this, teachers must understand the history and rationale behind the idea of co-teaching. The first section in Chapter 2 will include information about what co-teaching encompasses. It will also include how and why it has been implemented in various school settings.

The next section will include what effects co-teaching has on students with various needs. There will be information showing the effectiveness of co-teaching with Special Education students, multilingual learners, and gifted and talented students. In addition, this section will include the effects of co-teaching on general education students. It is important to understand the reasoning behind why co-teaching works or does not work in the classroom.

The chapter will end with two sections dealing with the effects co-teaching has on educators and various implementation strategies. These sections will touch on the benefits and struggles teachers see when co-teaching. The last section will give details about the six different co-teaching implementation strategies and ways to combat the lack of time for co-planning.

#### Co-Teaching

### ***Definition of Co-Teaching***

Co-teaching is having multiple teachers in one classroom. The teachers work in collaboration to plan and teach students in a shared workspace. They work together to assess students' learning in a variety of ways. In this model, it is essential that co-teaching is used to its full potential rather than demonstrating the idea of one main teacher and a teacher assistant. Cushman (n.d.) explains that co-teaching is not occurring when one teacher teaches and the next follows. Co-teaching is also not happening when one teacher is teaching and one is observing. Finally, co-teaching is not transpiring when one teacher is acting as the expert, and the other is a tutor.

“Co-teaching is two or more people sharing responsibility for teaching some or all of the students assigned to a classroom,” (Cushman, n.d., p.3). This involves allocating the responsibility of planning, instructing, and evaluating. Co-teachers must develop a trusting working relationship where they will work together to combat potential challenges and celebrate advancement:

Co-teaching can be likened to a marriage. Partners must establish trust, develop and work on communication, share the chores, celebrate, work together creatively to overcome the inevitable challenges and problems, and anticipate conflict and handle it in a constructive way. (Cushman, n.d., p. 3)

When done correctly, co-teaching has the potential to be a very effective teaching strategy. In a study conducted by Loertcher (2014) in sixteen schools (grades k-12), librarians and educators worked together to co-teaching a unit of study. Within this study, the level of success and participation from the students rose from 50 percent to a range of 70-100%. These schools reinvented their library space to create an excellent learning

culture. This was the common space to work and learn together in the school's library, and the teachers and librarians worked cohesively to create such an environment. This example emphasizes that co-teaching goes above and beyond teaching content, the collaboration can project further by creating community learning spaces around schools.

### ***History of Co-Teaching***

Co-teaching, also known as collaborative teaching, is not a new idea. This way of teaching has been around for decades. The co-teaching model was created to improve proficiency levels after the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was signed into law. NCLB was put into action to make the United States more internationally competitive and increase the federal role in all schools. This act intended to ensure that all subgroups of students, like special education students and English language learners, had the opportunity to academically succeed in the mainstream classroom (Klein, 2020). According to Loertscher et al., (2015), "co teaching is the art of two or more mentor adults who plan, teach, and assess a learning experience together." Co-teaching can be used to help educate a diverse population of students at a variety of proficiency and grade levels.

### ***Rationale of Co-Teaching***

Beyond the definition of co-teaching, it is essential to understand the rationale behind the teaching strategy. As previously mentioned, this way of teaching was created in response to the No Child Left Behind Act where schools around the country focused on lessening the achievement gap between general education students and students with various needs (special education, multilingual, gifted, and talented learners). As Cook, L. & Friend, M. (1995) stated, four rationales for co-teaching are:

1. Increase instructional options for all students
  - a. Co-teaching brings multiple experts into one classroom. This allows students to learn from various teachers and more importantly, teachers can work together to ensure student needs are being met. Students gain more options and have more individualized opportunities for learning.
2. Improve program intensity and continuity
  - a. Co-teaching allows students to receive more pinpointed instruction. This method of teaching lowers the student-to-teacher ratio and increases the opportunity for participation.
3. Reducing the stigma for students
  - a. Co-teaching encourages an inclusive classroom and community morale in the general education classroom. This technique narrows the stigma associated with students leaving the general education classroom to work with various specialist teachers and encourages collaboration.
4. Increasing professional support
  - a. A natural consequence of co-teaching is that educators feel support from their colleagues. Teachers work very closely together and can share their ideas. Co-teaching provides support for the tough moments as well as the moments to celebrate.

This teaching technique allows students to feel included and part of the classroom at all times. Educators feel supported and feel they can share their expertise with both their colleagues and the students in their classroom. Co-teaching allows schools to use all their resources in one common area successfully.



### ***Summary***

Co-teaching is an excellent teaching strategy that provides proper instruction for a wide range of students. This approach was invented as an answer to closing the achievement gap present in classrooms across the country. The strategy was created to close an achievement gap that is still present today. The next section will present an abundant amount of information regarding the effectiveness of co-teaching on an assortment of students.

### **Effects on Students**

Co-teaching gives students access to multiple teachers in one classroom. Typically, in the mainstream classroom, the general education teacher will be paired with special education, English language, and/or gifted and talented teacher. In these settings, students show great growth throughout the school year in a variety of ways. Co-teaching classrooms have a reduced teacher-to-student ratio which gives opportunities for a variety of instructional options. This method of teaching also increases student engagement and gives a greater sense of community and inclusion (Christensen, 2021). These benefits affect students with a wide range of proficiency levels in a multitude of subjects.

### ***Special Education***

Co-teaching was initially created to improve the achievement gap between special education and proficient students. A study conducted by Hang & Rabren (2009) looked at the effectiveness of co-teaching in a variety of school settings. This study looked specifically at the academic achievement and behavioral performance of special education students present in the mainstream classroom. Hang & Rabren found great

improvement in both reading and math in the co-taught classrooms. Oppositely, this study showed a higher amount of absences which affected the data in the behavioral performance data collection. Educators and students participating in this study stated that there was an increase in confidence in special education students. The increased confidence was due to the increased support and learning more throughout the school day. The practice of co-teaching had a positive impact on the special education students who felt a sense of belonging and increased assurance in their educational setting.

Wilson (2006) conducted a study asking students their beliefs on co-teaching and whether or not they believed that this method was beneficial for them as students. This study showed that a majority of students believed that co-taught classes led them to learn more information. Even though students believed that this method of education improved their education, data did not support this. Wilson (2006) believed that with time a positive attitude could lead to better results academically. This study indicates a potential for success in co-teaching.

An article written by Salend et al. (1997) discovered multiple teachers' perspectives on the way special education students changed through the co-teaching process. It noted it was easier to create a sense of community in the classroom because of the interactions between the students. This sense of community led to a greater amount of kindness and collaboration in the classroom. In addition to the positive behaviors, educators noted an improvement in success both developmental and pre-academically, focusing on fine-motor skills. The students were engaging at a higher level than was expected by both educators and administrators.

### ***Multilingual Learners***

Adapting for multilingual learners (English language learners) in the mainstream classroom may be difficult for the general education teacher because of the wide range of students' English proficiency levels. As there tends to be a lack of knowledge regarding best practices when working with multilingual learners, co-teaching with an English language teacher is a way to combat hardships.

Abdullah (2009) states that co-teaching multilingual learners in the mainstream classroom is a great way to have multilingual students truly immersed in the content. The study explains that it is important that educators integrate best practices for multilingual learners into the mainstream classroom in order for multilingual learners to be more successful. If educators share their expertise, co-teaching gives multilingual learners a great opportunity to practice their English with their peers and encourages them to try new things more often compared to an English as a second language classroom.

Additionally, multilingual learners start to look at their peers as sort of role models when it comes to learning the English language. Moreover, native English speakers get the opportunity to learn about various cultures and languages from multilingual learners. This creates a sense of belonging and community in the mainstream classroom.

Similarly, Christensen (2021) voices that co-teaching is a great way to model what teamwork looks like. This is very beneficial when it comes to multilingual learners and native English speakers. It is a great life lesson to be able to communicate and work well with people that are different from you. Demonstrating what it looks like to have

proper academic conversations, how to respond to one another when there is disagreement, and what it looks like to share your ideas confidently are all aspects that co-teachers can exemplify when co-teaching. Displaying these practices to a wide range of learners is a very beneficial aspect of co-teaching.

### ***Gifted and Talented/Advanced Learners***

Gifted and talented, or advanced learners, are students who accelerate above their grade level in the general education classroom. Co-teaching leads to higher differentiation in the mainstream classroom which benefits these types of learners. Mofield (2020) notes that collaboration among teachers tends to better student outcomes, specifically in gifted and talented students. A study conducted by Masso in 2004 showed that co-teaching in math can be beneficial for learners due to educators having the ability to create differentiated instruction and flexible grouping that fit the needs of their students. In one example, the researcher noted a time when a student proved mastery before a unit, so they were exempt from the main lessons and were able to participate in a number of enrichment activities with the co-teacher to specifically assist and enhance their needs. Another beneficial aspect of this style of co-teaching is that students were able to work with similarly skilled students. When students are grouped together with like-minded peers, engagement during the lesson is elevated and students are more likely to share their reasoning and ideas during a lesson.

In the same study, students were asked their opinions of the co-teaching model that was being demonstrated in their classroom. Results showed seventy-five percent of students preferred the small group aspect of the math lesson in comparison to the whole group. In addition, the same percentage of students stated that they were engaged more

often, and they articulated that their confidence in math was elevated working with students of similar abilities. Moreover, students also felt more excitement about math due to the co-teaching model.

Modfield (2020) expressed that not all cases showed success with co-teaching. It was mentioned that if there was not enough time to co-plan, the co-taught lessons lost their effectiveness. This was evident in a study conducted by Lenard & Townsend (2017), where gifted and talented students excelled in their co-taught science courses, but did not in their math and reading courses. Upon further investigation, the reasoning behind this was a lack of preparation time between the two co-educators. The data has shown repeatedly that co-planning is the backbone behind the effectiveness of co-teaching.

### ***General Education Students***

General education students benefit from co-teaching because it keeps diverse students in the mainstream classroom. Before co-teaching, a common practice to assist both multilingual students and special education students was to pull them out of the mainstream classroom. Abdallah (2009) states that general education students benefit from co-teaching because they are exposed to various cultures from around the world. Students are exposed to different beliefs, languages, and ways of life when multilingual students are left in the classroom. They are also able to look at themselves as a role model when working with both special education students and multilingual learners. General education students are able to model the language to multilingual learners and aid in a variety of ways.

In addition to being exposed to a variety of people, general education students benefit from co-teaching because they receive differentiated education. Students are

given the opportunity to obtain more specialized education that fits their needs when two educators are present in one common space. Having two educators in one space gives students a greater opportunity to participate and be more engaged in the lessons.

### ***Summary***

If conducted properly, co-teaching can benefit a variety of students with various proficiency levels. Multilingual students are more likely to practice their English with their peers if left in the mainstream classroom. Special education students benefit from having two educators in one space where they can receive continuous assistance throughout the lesson. Additionally, co-teaching encourages gifted and talented students to work with students who have similar proficiency levels and have a greater opportunity for enrichment with differentiated instruction. Co-teaching is so inclusive, that general education students are exposed to many different students and are able to learn from one another.

All students benefit from having more than one educator in one space for grouping, engagement, and opportunities to excel. Studies show that these benefits only take place when the two educators have the ability to be prepared for the co-taught lessons. On top of the benefits co-teaching has on students, there are just as many, if not more advantages for educators.

### **Effects on Teachers**

Co-teaching has positive effects on not only students but also educators. Allowing educators to collaborate has monumental effects on their mindset both professionally and personally. According to Chanmugam & Gerlach (2013), co-teaching increases professional satisfaction for many reasons. Co-teachers create a relationship where they

trust each other and give one another support both inside and outside of the classroom. Furthermore, with two teachers in a shared space, educators can share their expertise and work together better to educate the diverse needs present in any given classroom.

### ***Benefits***

In any co-teaching situation, there are successes, failures, and challenges. In a case study conducted by Mastropieri et al. (2005), researchers looked at co-teaching in an upper elementary and middle school earth science class. The fourth-grade team chose to participate in co-teaching and the middle school co-teachers were assigned to co-teach. Throughout the collaboration, it was evident that there were several positive impacts that co-teaching has on educators. First and foremost, creating an excellent working relationship is what makes co-teaching successful. Due to these great relationships, students enjoyed and were more motivated to participate with multiple educators in one area. When students are motivated in the classroom, educators have a better mindset and willingness to try new things.

The educators in the case study went above and beyond to co-plan with one another. At the elementary level, there was no allocated time to co-plan, so educators met during their lunch to co-plan their science unit. At the middle school level, teachers were allotted time in their schedule to co-plan which was more valuable because they did not have to take away from their duty-free time. Having a plan and idea of what the lesson is going to look like (what strategy to use) is key to the efficiency of a co-taught lesson.

Having similar educational values is just as important as planning time. This study showed the importance of having teachers with similar interests and teaching styles. At the elementary level, both educators believed in more of a hands-on approach

to teaching, which made the cohesion of the lessons easier. In a study conducted by Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta (2022), educators stated that having similar educational values is very high on the list of aspects that make co-teaching successful, “a positive relationship and smooth collaboration between the teachers play an important role in the perceived successful co-teaching” (para. 11).

Mastropieri et al. (2005) similarly declared that educators need to have similar values and effective instructional skills, especially management skills. Educators are to share tasks and share students. This idea tends to lessen the stress for educators because all the tasks are not put on one educator’s shoulders. Similar to having similar classroom management skills, educators need to have similar ideas for teaching adaptations for students with special needs. This idea highlights the specialist teacher’s expertise. The special education teacher can share their expertise with the general education teacher and both educators can use common skills to adapt lessons to properly educate students in the shared space. Having common ground on this subject produces success in a shared classroom.

Educators who participate in co-teaching have the opportunity to connect, collaborate, and work closely with other educators. They can share responsibilities, expertise, and support with one another. To have success, educators must have the opportunity to co-plan and build relationships. This is not an easy process and if not given ample time and opportunities to prepare for co-teaching, some challenges may arise.

### ***Challenges***



Changing from a pull-out method, where specialist teachers take groups of kids out of the classroom, to a co-teaching model can be difficult. Gately and Gately (2001) (as cited in Murawski's (2005) article *Addressing diverse needs through co-teaching: take baby steps!*) reported that their co-teachers go through three stages while working and learning from one another. These stages are: beginning, compromising, and collaboration. In many cases, educators need to have the time to adjust to one another's ideas, beliefs, and ways of teaching. Compromising becomes very prevalent in that educators need to meet in the middle to better educate their shared students which can be a difficult practice for some educators. When educators build that relationship and accept that they may have to compromise, collaboration can transpire.

To coincide with the idea of compromising, Cook, L. & Friend, M. (1995) stated it is important to notice that special education teachers are part of the teaching process in a way that is not the act of pulling special education students to the side to receive instruction in the mainstream classroom. This does not have any benefit, nor does it fix the stigma that other students may have about students with disabilities. It is important that both educators are sharing their expertise to the best of their ability. Neither teacher should feel like an assistant, co-teaching should feel like a team where not one educator is better or more important than the other.

Another large part of creating an atmosphere that supports a co-teaching method includes various logistical concerns. According to Friend (2007), planning time is a great concern for both educators and administrators. If weekly shared planning time is not feasible, administrators need to look for different avenues to encourage collaboration. Some options include giving educators an extra stipend or getting a substitute teacher to

allow teachers to plan together. Ideally, co-planning should be a set part of the daily schedule to encourage success. A study conducted by Pappamihiel (2012) showed many challenges in an elementary school transitioning from a pull-out method to a co-teaching model due to a lack of collaboration. The administrators at this school did not give educators ample time to co-plan together. Due to this, educators were not able to create a positive working relationship and have cohesion in their lessons, which ultimately lead to a failing co-teaching experience for both the educators and students.

In addition to co-planning time, it is important for educators to participate in professional development. In the same study conducted by Pappamihiel (2012), administrators transitioned educators into a co-teaching model without proper information on how to do so which caused a great deal of discouragement and poor attitude about the teaching method. Specifically, the English language teachers felt frustrated with this because they often felt like guests or assistants in the mainstream classroom where their voice was not heard. Setting expectations for what co-teaching should look like is key to success.

Furthermore, educators must group students in a way that encourages quality co-teaching. This includes having students with similar needs placed in the same classroom so that educators can use their best practices to service students. When this is done, educators can better differentiate their instruction and grouping. This benefits all students, especially special education students, multilingual learners, and advanced students.

Co-teaching can be effective and impactful if educators get the opportunity to create relationships with one another to build trust. If time is allotted for this process,

educators will share their expertise with students which leads to a less stressful and more successful learning environment. Educators need support from their co-teachers and the administration to make co-teaching possible.

### ***Summary***

Co-teaching is a great way to encourage collaboration between educators to benefit a wide variety of students. Educators need to be allowed to create a relationship with their co-teacher to share students, space, and goals throughout the year.

Administrators need to make sure that teachers get the appropriate time to co-plan during the school day. If there is no time for educators to build their work relationships and co-plan for daily lessons, then co-teaching will not be a successful method of teaching.

The next section will look at various implementation strategies that teachers can use as they transition from a pull-out method to a co-teaching model.

### **Implementation Strategies for Co-Teaching**

Time and effort need to be put in by several people for co-teaching to be successful. Before transitioning from a pull-out method to an inclusive co-teaching model, teachers need professional development that illuminates the purpose of co-teaching, what it looks like and information on co-teaching structures. Educators must be given ample time to create a relationship with their co-teacher to construct an optimal learning environment. Once educators have a trusting relationship, it is key that they get an allotted time to plan and collaborate to discuss the best practices and how to structure their teaching in their shared space.

### ***Communication***

Murawski (2008) stated that “co-teaching is often referred to as a ‘professional marriage’” (p. 27). Communication is extremely valuable when educators participate in co-teaching. It is essential that educators put in the time and effort to understand one another and grow a mutual understanding and respect for each other.

To have a successful co-teaching experience, Murawski (2009) mentions that the first step is to allow educators to pick their co-teaching partners. If educators can volunteer and have a say in who they are working with, it will be easier to create that well-rounded relationship. In addition, it is key to give educators professional development to educate teachers on the process and strategies of co-teaching.

Similarly, Scruggs & Mastropieri (2017) agree that communication is key to the development and maintenance of a great co-teaching relationship. In their article *Making Inclusion Work with Co-Teaching* (2017), the authors list various elements that need to be considered when working on communicating collaboratively during co-teaching. Some of these elements include engaged listening, depersonalizing situations, finding shared goals, and brainstorming feasible solutions.

Another aspect that educators need to consider is that not all communication styles and beliefs are the same. Educators may find varying beliefs in this manner. Conderman et al. (2009) declare that it is important to understand what your co-teacher prefers and to respect that even if it is different from your thoughts. The authors advise that if educators find themselves in a situation where it is difficult to reach common ground, educators do their best to compromise, accommodate, and try. Educators must have an open mind and be willing to try new ideas and strategies.

Communication is essential in building and maintaining an effective co-teaching model. Once educators have built mutual respect for one another, educators can decipher which teaching model works best for both of them. The next section will look at the six co-teaching strategies in great detail.

### ***Six Strategies***

There are several ways that co-teaching can be conducted. Educators must pick a strategy that benefits themselves and their students where the educator's knowledge and expertise can be best utilized. According to Cook and Friend (1995), six strategies work well when conducting co-teaching strategies in the general education classroom. There are pros and cons to each strategy and educators must decipher which strategies will work best for them in any given situation.

The first two strategies that Cook and Friend (1995) created are the *one teaching, one assisting/observing* methods. In this situation, both educators are in one room, but one educator takes the lead while the other observes and moves around the room. The second educator is assisting or observing students as needed. Cassel (2019) stated that there are many times that this model does not work due to a lack of purpose. Educators must build relationships and trust with one another to have success in this method. A pro of this type of method is that there are more eyes on students who require extra attention during instruction.

In addition, Cook and Friend (1995) invented the idea of *station teaching*. This strategy is conducted when teachers divide content into more than one segment and present the content at different locations within the same classroom. Essentially, two teachers are teaching different topics to two different groups of students. Eventually, the

educators swap students and teach the same mini-lesson again to the new students in their group. This way, students are receiving the same information from the two educators. Ideally, there would be three groups where the group not with a teacher is working independently or with partners. This way of teaching enhances small groups and gives educators the ability to check in closely with students. Consequently, this strategy requires impeccable timing and takes additional time to plan (Cassel 2019).

Furthermore, Cook and Fiend (1995) created *parallel teaching*. This type of teaching involves splitting the class into two separate groups and teaching the same content to both groups simultaneously. This allows students to be split based on various needs and makes differentiation easier. Additionally, students tend to participate more in a small group compared to a whole class lesson. One disadvantage to this type of co-teaching is that both teachers need to have expertise on the subject (Cassel, 2019).

Another style of co-teaching is *alternative teaching*. According to “Six Approaches” (2004), alternative teaching is very appropriate for a room with a large amount of specialized attention. To make this approach successful, one teacher will take a majority of the students and one teacher will take a small number of students to the side and work in a small group. Cassel (2019) states that this style of teaching closes the instructional gaps and can target a certain group of students, but involves a lot of planning time and collaboration between the two educators.

The last co-teaching strategy is known as *team teaching*. According to Cook, et al (2010), this is when both educators lead large-group instruction. Educators lecture together where they may represent opposing viewpoints or show various ways of thinking. Cook & Fiend (1995) state that this strategy also involves modeling various

conversation strategies or splitting the tasks (one speaking, one note-taking).

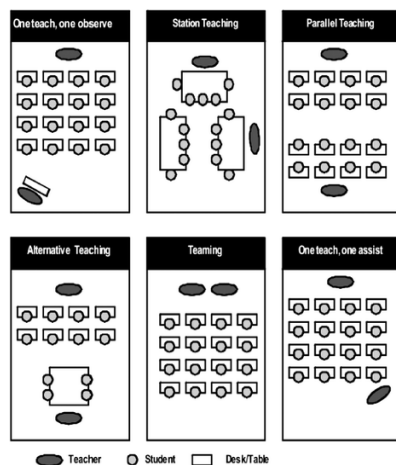
Additionally, Morin (n.d.) states that this approach can also work well with a paraprofessional and a general education teacher to support special education students.

Cassel (2019) has high praise for team teaching. The author states, “A true team-teaching lesson is a thing of beauty,” (para. 21). As the author continues, it is stated that this type of teaching offers both teachers the opportunity to highlight their expertise. On the other hand, this team teaching takes a great deal of planning and needs an exceedingly healthy relationship.

Co-teaching can be flexible. Every classroom may look diverse and every school has different resources (number of teachers, desk style, common tables, floor space). It is important to note that these co-teaching models can vary based on lessons and student needs. In addition, there is a great amount of flexibility. What co-teaching approach works well one day, may be different the next. Below is a graphic created by Friend & Bursuck (2009) that provides readers with an idea of what each type of co-teaching looks like in a shared space.

**Figure 1**

*Co-Teaching Approaches*



*Note.* Reprinted from/Adapted from *Co-teaching: an illustration of the complexity of collaboration in special education* (p. 12), by M. Friend & L. Cook, 2010, *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation* (Routledge). 2012 by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC

### ***Co-Planning***

A common theme stated throughout studies and the success of co-teaching is co-planning. Co-planning is essential in the achievement of a co-taught lesson. Scruggs & Mastropieri (2017), show the possibilities of co-planning between a specialized education teacher and a general education teacher. This article stated that lack of time for planning was an extreme hurdle for these two educators to overcome. Both educators used technology to aid in conquering this problem. Google Docs is a tool that educators can use to co-plan when not in person. Scruggs & Mastropieri (2017) provide an example of how a co-planning template can be used through Google Docs by two educators.

In their example, Scruggs & Mastropieri clearly stated what the focus of the lesson is, the materials that are needed for the lesson, and the learning target for the lesson. In addition, it shows what each educator's job is and defines who is taking the lead and when. Lastly, this document gives teachers the opportunity to list which students need extra assistance and in what areas it is needed. Educators can make adjustments to the lesson without being next to one another. This way, educators know what to plan for and expect before teaching a co-taught lesson. This way of co-planning is ideal when two educators cannot meet together to plan in one shared space. Using Google Docs is also a great way to have shared notes and resources.

### ***Summary***



There are six co-teaching strategies that can appropriately serve a multitude of students in one space. Before diving into choosing the best strategy for both educators and students, it is essential that educators build a well-rounded working relationship. It is fundamental to have exceptional communication and an understanding of co-teaching partners' needs and skills. If these are present in one classroom, co-teaching has the potential to be extremely effective. In addition to a well-rounded work relationship, it is paramount that educators have a way to co-plan together. If it is possible to be put into the workday, educators need to find creative ways to collaborate virtually.

### **Conclusion**

This literature review was conducted to better understand co-teaching and to answer the question: What are the benefits of co-teaching? After researching I have gained further insight and understanding of the rationale behind co-teaching, what it should look like in the classroom, and the benefits for both educators and students. As a fifth-grade teacher with a lot of diverse needs in my mainstream classroom, this approach to teaching makes me hopeful.

Co-teaching has the potential to be effective for a wide variety of students at all proficiency levels. When there are two educators in one shared space, students' needs can be met regularly. Educators can use their expertise to adjust lessons how they see fit to give students what they need to be successful in the classroom. Due to this, students' engagement is much higher and they are more likely to participate in lessons.

Co-teaching has six different strategies. Each style has its own benefits. In my personal experience of working with a Gifted and Talented specialist, we have tried a few different strategies depending on the content we are teaching. For example, we often use

the team teaching strategy because we have a great working relationship. We are able to bounce ideas off one another and demonstrate to our fifth-grade students what it looks like to have an academic conversation and work well with one another. From there, we often do some grouping and parallel teaching. This works well for us because she can work closely with the advanced students and expose them to a higher level of the concept we taught together while team teaching.

There are quite a few obstacles that educators may face when transitioning from a classic pull-out method to a co-teaching model. Educators need to have support from the administration where they receive proper professional development to illustrate what co-teaching is and why it is an effective tool in the classroom. In addition, it is important that educators get the opportunity to get to know and understand their co-teacher on many levels. It was previously stated that co-teaching is similar to marriage. Co-educators need to be aware of each other's talents, skills, and ways of teaching. Lastly, in order for co-teaching to be successful, co-teachers must have the chance to co-plan. This is key to having a thriving co-teaching experience. If all of these pieces are present, studies show that co-teaching is enjoyable because educators share responsibilities, ideas, and much more.

As my Capstone Project continues, Chapter Three shows how the research in Chapter Two is used to create a series of professional development sessions. These sessions are created to inform my colleagues about co-teaching and encourage them to participate in co-teaching in the upcoming year.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Project Description

#### Introduction

The information I collected in Chapter Two showed great benefits of co-teaching for both educators and students for a multitude of reasons. In order to have success with co-teaching, educators must have prior knowledge and understanding of what co-teaching is and what strategies can be used in the classroom. According to Murawski (2008), it is essential that educators receive well-thought-out professional development prior to co-teaching. Once educators have the opportunity to learn and collaborate during professional development, they will be more successful with the co-teaching model. Educators will gain a great deal of support and collaboration in the co-teaching setting. In order for educators to gain full understanding and transition from a pull-out method to a co-teaching model, I created a professional development session to address my research question: *How can educators learn to implement co-teaching to benefit students with unique needs in the general education classroom?*

This chapter includes a great deal of information about the professional development I will create. The foremost section of the chapter provides a description of my project. The following sections define various research-based practices that will be used when presenting the professional development for well-educated experts. In addition, this chapter covers intended goals for the professional development session along with information regarding assessments, intended audience, setting, and timeline of my project completion.

## **Description of the Project**

My project is a series of professional development seminars created to inform my colleagues about co-teaching, the benefits for both educators and students, and implementation strategies. Once educators receive this information, I am hopeful educators will choose to switch from a pull-out method to an inclusive co-teaching environment. In addition, the professional development gives educators the opportunity to start building a positive working relationship with their chosen co-teacher.

Throughout Chapter Two, the research shows the importance of giving educators proper professional development and understanding of expectations when it comes to co-teaching. Pappamihiel (2012) shows the significance of professional development and developing a relationship between co-teachers. If educators are not in sync with their co-teachers, then lessons will not be successful. This idea goes hand in hand with student success; in order for students to have success in the classroom, educators must take time to gain full understanding and create a well-balanced working relationship as they venture on the co-teaching journey.

There is a great difference between educating youth and educating adults. For that reason, it is important to note the research and rationale I use to create and execute a professional development session. The following section will note various adult learning principles and why they are important when creating a professional development session.

### ***Principles Used to Educate Adults***

My colleagues and I attend multiple professional development sessions throughout the school year on a variety of topics. During these sessions, there are times when we learn a great deal of new information and there are times when the session feels

like a waste of time. After discussing professional development with my colleagues, many of them feel that if they can not implement what they have learned in a short period of time, it tends to be forgotten and often not successful. In order to avoid these results with my professional development session, I learned more about how to educate adults, specifically teachers, effectively prior to creating the professional development sessions.

Anders (2023) states that the reason that professional development sessions geared toward teachers tend to feel unsuccessful is that they are often presented by adults who know the information well, but do not know how to organize and deliver the information to adult learners. The author states that there are five adult learning principles that need to be considered in order to provide an effective professional learning session.

1. Self-directed learning

- a. Adults often have developed methods in which they prefer to learn, so it is essential that professional development sessions include multiple ways that educators can learn and explore a given topic. Avoid lecturing to the audience. Anders (2023) states that presenters should give educators the chance to explore topics prior to the session so that they can find information that is suitable for them.

- i. Prior to Workshop Week, I will send educators attending the professional development a short article to read and encourage them to do further research on the topic in whatever way they see fit (articles, podcast, TedTalk, etc.)

2. Building on experience

- a. Teachers are experts. It is important that professional developments contain new information, methods, and approaches to enhance teaching, but also recognize educators' previous teaching experiences. Build on what educators already know.
    - i. My professional development includes times of reflection, so that educators can share their personal experiences, what they have tried, and what has and has not worked in the classroom.
3. Taking responsibility for learning
    - a. "Adult learners should be allowed more freedom in all aspects of their continuing education." (Anders, 2023, para 6). It is essential for presenters to give educators a number of choices when it comes to their learning. This includes what information they receive and how they receive it.
      - i. While presenting, I have a variety of educational sources that educators can use to enhance their learning. I also use a variety of tools that will and will not incorporate technology so that every educator feels comfortable and responsible for their learning.
4. Problem-focused
    - a. In every occupational setting, there is room for improvement and growth. It is essential that professional development sessions include a problem that needs to be addressed. Specifically with educators, it is important that they feel like they are part of fixing the problem.
      - i. While conducting professional development on co-teaching, it will be important to include the deficits of the pull-out method and the

importance of an inclusive learning environment for both educators and students.

5. Intrinsically motivating

- a. Anders (2023) notes that educators do not appreciate demanding or inflexible learning situations. It is important to include variety. If professional developments are a series of sessions, each session should be different to enhance engagement.
  - i. With having one main professional development, it is essential to include a variety of fascinating activities throughout the session. It is also important to note that all educators will learn about co-teaching, but actually participating in co-teaching will be a choice for all educators.

***Summary***

Professional development sessions have the potential to be very influential when done correctly. In order for educators to buy into co-teaching, they need to be appropriately educated about the topic. Giving educators the opportunity to explore the topic in a way that they see fit is highly beneficial for professional development audiences. In addition, my professional development contains a variety of activities that give educators opportunities to share their experiences, expertise, and thoughts on co-teaching. Finally, once educators have a great understanding of co-teaching, I give them the chance to start building a strong foundation with their co-teachers by looking at the various co-teaching strategies together.

## Goals of Professional Learning Session

Identifying the need for an instructional shift from a pull-out method to co-teaching will be crucial. During the session, educators have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences with the pull-out method when it comes to their special education students, multilingual learners, and gifted and talented students. Some reflective questions may include:

- What does the pull-out method look like in your classroom?
- How do students transition to and from the mainstream classroom?
- Do you have any concerns about this method?
- How do your students feel about being pulled out of the classroom?

After reflecting on what educators have experienced with the pull-out method, co-teaching is introduced. Educators are given the opportunity to explore the history and rationale of co-teaching through a learning style that works best for them (video, articles, podcasts, etc.).

Following the history and rationale, educators are provided with the benefits of co-teaching for special education students, multilingual learners, advanced learners, and themselves. Some goals for this section of the professional development session may include:

- Discovery of the importance of inclusion through co-teaching
- Understanding how educators benefit from co-teaching
- Reflection on switching from a pull-out method to a co-teaching model
- Contemplation on who they may want to co-teach with



Once educators have a great understanding of what co-teaching is, the rationale, and the benefits, they will dive into what co-teaching looks like in the classroom.

Educators will be provided with the *Six Co-teaching Approaches* graphic created by Friend & Bursuck (2009). Goals for this section of the session may include:

- Researching the six different approaches
- Collaborating with an educator that is interested in co-teaching
  - Start building a relationship and discussing shared teaching values
- Going into the mainstream classrooms to see what the approaches would look like with the given classroom resources

### ***Assessment***

The conclusion of the first professional development session includes a short assessment in the form of a Google Form to gain an understanding of educators interest in co-teaching and next steps. Once information is gathered, more information will be shared. Administrators will have to assist in finding time in schedules for co-teaching and co-planning. In addition, various check-ins throughout the year will be scheduled with the co-teaching educators to ensure the transition from pull-out to co-teaching is going well.

Furthermore, at the end of the year, educators who have participated in co-teaching will compare their students' reading scores from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. This information will be provided by Benchmark Assessment System. In addition, students will have the opportunity to participate in a survey to evaluate their experience with co-teaching. This will be provided through an online survey. This information will be used to evaluate the success of co-teaching in a variety of classrooms. Student survey questions will include:

- I enjoy having two educators in my classroom. (Agree→ Disagree)
- Having two teachers has helped me with my learning. (Agree→ Disagree)
- I have improved in reading this year. (Agree→ Disagree)
- I have improved in math this year. (Agree→ Disagree)
- Next year I would like to be in a co-taught classroom. (Yes or No)

### **Setting and Audience**

The professional learning sessions occur in an elementary school that is part of a large school district south of St. Paul, Minnesota. This elementary school serves around six hundred students from preschool through fifth grade. There are a variety of educators that work at this school, totaling around forty professionals. The primary participants of this professional learning session will be classroom teachers (ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade) and specialist teachers including special education teachers, English language teachers, and gifted and talented teachers. In addition, two administrators, one math coach, and one literacy coach will be attending.

### **Timeline**

The professional development session will occur before the start of the year during Workshop Week. This session will be two hours long to give educators appropriate time to learn, collaborate, and plan the next steps. Following the main professional development session, educators will meet in the late fall of 2023 for a sixty minute check-in. This session will be with the educators who have been participating in co-teaching since the first professional development. During this meeting, educators will reflect on what is going well and dive into appropriate co-teaching planning methods. In addition, throughout the school year, there will be several check-ins with educators who

choose to participate in co-teaching. These check-ins will occur on staff development days that are part of the school year's schedule (non-student contact). These occur in the following months: October, December, January, March, and April. Check-ins will be ten to fifteen minutes long giving educators the opportunity to reflect and share any concerns that they may have. This will also be a collaborative meeting where we can discuss problems and solutions.

### **Conclusion**

Having a well throughout professional development is key to the success of co-teaching. Educators need to have a great understanding of the rationale behind co-teaching and the benefits of co-teaching for both themselves and students, and they need to know various implementation strategies. More importantly, educators need to have the opportunity to start building a successful working relationship with their co-teacher. In order to do this, professional development needs to have variety and flexibility that gives educators the opportunity to share and learn in a way that sees fit.

In Chapter Three, I described what my project looks like. I also included information regarding best practices to keep in mind when educating teachers that I will use while creating my professional development session. In addition, the chapter included goals for the session and the next steps. A description of the setting and audience was incorporated along with a timeline. These aspects are important to include when giving educators a tremendous understanding of my research question: *How can educators learn to implement co-teaching to benefit students with unique needs in the general education classroom?*

In Chapter Four, I list some notable research from Chapter two. In addition, Chapter Four will include a comprehensive understanding of my project including various limitations, future projects, and the way my project brings enrichment to the education profession.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusion

#### Introduction

The basis of this capstone project was to investigate the question: *How can educators learn to implement co-teaching to benefit students with unique needs in the general education classroom?* Every classroom is full of students with many different needs. As a fifth-grade educator, I want to help every student in the best way that I can. As a result of this capstone project, I have found co-teaching to be an extremely beneficial teaching strategy to meet the needs of students with unique learning needs.

Completing this capstone project has been a memorable experience. As I reflect, I can honestly say that I fully enjoyed all aspects of this project. As a researcher, I found an abundant amount of information regarding co-teaching and various studies conducted around the world. It was evident to me that no matter where the studies were performed, educators had the same morals in wanting to better educate students with unique needs. While writing this capstone project, I found the opportunity to share my educational beliefs, show what I am passionate about, synthesize my thoughts on co-teaching research, and create a professional development that I am happy to share with my colleagues. I have learned a lot along the way and I look forward to new learning experiences as I dive deeper into co-teaching practices in the upcoming school year.

In this chapter, I will reflect on the notable research and key learnings of my capstone project, the limitations of the project, future projects, and how this project benefits the teaching profession.

### **Notable Research and Key Learnings**

There were many great resources and studies that I found to be beneficial for co-teaching in a multitude of ways. Since the goal of my professional development was to implement co-teaching in the general education classrooms around my elementary school, I think the most notable research was on implementation strategies, and the benefits co-teaching has on both educators and students.

In my research, I found it is evident that many different factors need to be addressed before co-teaching lessons to a group of students. Many researchers stated the importance of building a great working relationship with your co-teacher. Murawaski (2008) emphasized this when they stated that co-teaching can be comparable to marriage. Murawaski highlighted the significance of communicating effectively and working together to create a productive environment. Along with communication, Scruggs & Mastropieri (2017) noted the importance of co-planning. These researchers stated the importance of planning together whenever possible even if it is through technology, like Google Docs.

Once educators have a great system in place, they can implement co-teaching in the classroom and educators can take on different roles. Cook & Friend (1995) created six strategies that co-teachers can use to meet the needs of their students. In addition, co-teachers can adjust these strategies as they see fit to benefit the students. Friend and Bursuck (2009) produced a graphic showing what each strategy looks like in a shared space. I reference this in my professional development, and the resource is given to audience members to assist them in understanding the various strategies.

Along with the strategies, I believe that research demonstrates the benefits that co-teaching has on teachers is an extremely important part of my professional development. According to Chanmugam & Gerlach (2013), co-teaching increases professional satisfaction because of the support educators receive from their co-teacher. Similarly, Mastropieri et al. (2005) stated that when educators have similar values with their co-teacher it lessens stress. Educators are able to share their successes, failures, and duties. These researchers show the importance that co-teaching has on educators which is an essential part of my capstone project.

As an educator, I know the importance of implementing strategies that will best benefit the students. Co-teaching is one of those strategies. Hang & Rabran (2009) found that special education students not only increased their math and reading abilities but they also experienced an increase in their confidence and sense of community due to co-teaching.

Similarly, Abdullah (2009) found that multilingual learners present in mainstream co-taught classrooms were fully immersed in the content. Multilingual learners thrive in a co-taught classroom because they have two educators to assist them and their classmates to demonstrate the English language. In addition, this study found that general education students benefit from having multilingual students present in the classroom at all times to expose them to various cultures. The sense of belonging and community is strong in co-taught classrooms.

Lastly, Mofield (2020) showed that advanced learners benefit from co-taught classrooms because there is increased differentiation. Having two experts in one

classroom allows students to participate more, work one on one with a teacher, and have higher engagement.

This research was essential in my understanding of co-teaching. I truly believe that co-teaching is the key to success in a classroom full of students with unique needs. Having two educators is beneficial for students and educators because of the shared expertise and support systems.

### **Limitations of the Project**

Transitioning from a pull-out method to a cohesive co-teaching model takes time, effort, and patience. Educators need to build a strong foundation with their co-teachers and a shared passion for co-teaching. In reality, not every educator may be willing to do that. For many educators, change can be difficult. Using the pull-out method is the only way some teachers have witnessed students with unique needs receive service, and they may not see the value in co-teaching.

As a fifth-grade teacher, I do not have the power to enforce the change. Educators who co-teach in my school would be on a volunteer basis. There is no policy that requires educators to co-teach with specialist teachers. Due to this, the first professional development is so important because it is essential to show the value of co-teaching on many different levels,

Not only do educators need to be willing to put time and effort into the co-teaching model, administrators need to support the co-teaching model as well. Administrators need to adjust schedules so that educators can plan and co-teach in a shared space. Giving co-teachers time in their day to co-plan together is vital to the success of co-teaching.



## **Future Projects**

This project allows educators to take some chances in the co-teaching model. Even though there are suggested strategies on how to conduct co-teaching in a shared space, each co-taught lesson will be unique to the two educators working together. I believe that an extension of this project would be to document successes by having educators record their co-taught lessons. By doing this, educators can share what has been going well in their classrooms and give a visual to the rest of the school. There will be great value in this and it will hopefully lead to increased participation in the future.

In addition to watching videos of colleagues co-teaching, educators can come in and watch a lesson. In the education field, it is common for educators to observe each other. Teachers often appreciate the opportunity to observe one another to see what change can be made in their own spaces to gain success. This will give observers the chance to interact with the co-teachers and students where they can ask questions in real-time. Similarly, this will increase buy-in for the co-teaching model.

Lastly, a supplement to this project would be data documentation. Documenting the growth of students will be essential in the buy-in and continuation of the co-teaching model. Once administration and educators of all grade levels see success through data, there will be a greater appreciation for co-teaching.

All of these future possibilities for the project will communicate the success of co-teaching in multiple ways. Educators will share triumphs, families will discuss the benefits of having two educators in one space, and communication about co-teaching will be extended throughout the school and district.

## **Enrichment to the Profession**

Research shows that there is great success with the co-teaching strategy. Proficiency levels improve with special education students, multilingual learners, and gifted and talented students. This strategy is essential for increased proficiency levels in both reading and math because there are two educators in one space. Students receive more specialized instruction and more face time with teachers.

In addition to the benefits that co-teaching has on students, co-teaching has incredible advantages for educators. Co-teaching gives educators the opportunity to share students, tasks, and responsibilities. The duties of being a teacher are not being held on the shoulders of one educator, they are shared among two or more educators.

In addition to sharing responsibilities, educators who participate in co-teaching acquire an incredible support system. It is no secret that education is a demanding profession; participating in the co-teaching model gives educators a partner to work through challenges with and celebrate successes.

Overall, co-teaching enriches the profession of education for both educators and students. Students' needs are being met with the accessibility of two educators in one shared space. Co-teachers can count on one another to share all that comes with being a teacher.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I highlighted research that I found essential in my literature review. This research was crucial in my understanding of the importance of co-teaching and truly led to the creation of my capstone project because I think it is important that educators understand the benefits of co-teaching and how to implement it into their

everyday routines. In addition, I examined the limitations of the project and the potential for future uses related to my research topic. Lastly, I communicated how my professional development sessions enhance the teaching profession.

Furthermore, I am hopeful that communicating my positive findings of this project will encourage my administration to implement co-teaching as a common practice in my elementary school. Additionally, I intend to demonstrate the successes of co-teaching to my administration by showing a variety of test results showing an increase of students' proficiency levels.

I am thankful I am able to share what I have learned from research with educators in the teaching profession. I am hopeful that the more educators understand co-teaching, the more they will be willing to try to implement it in their own classrooms. This will lead to great success in the classroom for both students and educators, which is the driving force behind this project.

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