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BEST PRACTICES FOR CO-TEACHING LITERACY IN THE SECONDARY LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

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BEST PRACTICES FOR CO-TEACHING

LITERACY IN THE SECONDARY LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

by

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Chapter One: Introduction

Co-teaching is defined as a partnership between a general education teacher and special education teacher with the goal of providing instruction to a diverse group of learners both with and without disabilities (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). Co-teaching has been part of my professional experience since my second year of teaching. My experiences have led me to believe that, when implemented with planning and student outcomes in mind, it is a very powerful model. These experiences have also influenced my decision to further my education and professional growth in the area of literacy education. These two interest areas have greatly influenced the research that has guided this paper.

In this chapter I will discuss my background and my journey with co-teaching. I will also introduce my research question and explain how this question and research will provide me with both professional and practical guidance. This then lends itself to some of the struggles that my teaching partner and I have experienced over the years in the co-teaching environment.

One question that I have been curious about for the past several years is: *which models of co-teaching and literacy in the language arts classroom are the most effective at the secondary level?* This overarching question also leads to other, more specific questions. These include: What are the best practices for co-teaching in general? Which components of literacy instruction should be included? What components of co-teaching help to make the model most successful? What are the best practices of English language arts instruction that should be included? Is it okay for me to pull students who are struggling out of the larger group? I have conducted some research and reading on my own. However, I have not come to definitive answers, but the above questions have led me to this capstone research.

Background

When I was first hired as a secondary special education teacher in the summer of 2011, I was not entirely sure what to expect. I had just completed my first year with elementary students with behavioral and emotional disabilities. When I was told that I would be co-teaching with an English teacher, I was both excited and wary. Would this teacher welcome me into her classroom? Would she see me as a paraprofessional instead of a licensed teacher? What did she know about adapting things for students with special needs? Fortunately, I should not have worried.

For the past four years, I have been working as a special education teacher at a high school. My Bachelor's of Arts in English-Creative Writing as well as a background in English Language Learning were deciding factors in my being hired. Since arriving at this school, I have had the opportunity to co-teach in a ninth grade general education language arts class with an amazing co-teacher. During the first year, co-teaching involved learning the basics of the curriculum and ensuring that all students who required adaptations and accommodations were provided them. Because I had not yet mastered the content, my co-teacher and I developed a model that involved me reteaching and reviewing the content on a daily basis. This allowed me to become more familiar with the content as well as the students. I also took charge of the re-teaching because I felt more comfortable after having it modeled by my teaching partner. The following year I felt more confident with my knowledge of the curriculum and my own skills as a teacher. Our partnership has grown into a much more equitable team-teaching situation; in our current model (one teach-one assist) we both introduce new material while the other teacher circulates around the room and vice versa. This has allowed us to meet individually with students to discuss their

writing and give more attention to those who struggle. My co-teaching partner and I have been able to meet at least weekly to go over our plans and to make any adjustments based on student need—something that I found to be an integral piece to our partnership. We have also been able to adapt assignments together in order to ensure that all students have the access to the curriculum at the level that is most appropriate for them. Overall, it has been one of the most rewarding parts of my teaching career so far.

The model that my co-teacher and I currently use involves both of us introducing content and reviewing material. We share the workload. Each of us grades assignments, meets with students, and prepares for the classes during a common prep time. When one of us is presenting new concepts or content, the other is generally circulating the room and checking in with students. We both also collaborate on making adaptations and accommodations for students with disabilities or other students who are struggling. We try to share the load and ensure that our students are receiving what they need. Currently, this is an ideal partnership.

I have learned a great deal from my teaching partner, she has been supportive, flexible, and kind. We discovered that our partnership was highly beneficial to our students with and without disabilities. Through our own progress monitoring, we have seen gains in the majority of our students. However, much of our success and feedback has been strictly anecdotal—from students or parents. We both are constantly reviewing and revising what we present in order to meet the needs of students each class. These needs are most often related to literacy—especially comprehension and written expression. This work has impacted my professional development a great deal.

My own educational journey has led me to focus on literacy education, and teaching students to become strong, thoughtful readers is a highlight of my job. However, I often feel that there is a disconnect between language arts curriculum and literacy instruction. I have struggled between knowing that all students need explicit literacy instruction and still having to follow the curriculum of the program at my school. I see that we spend time reading a novel with students, but never really teach them how to understand what they are reading or to think deeply about the content. This is something that continues to wear on my conscience as a teacher. Fortunately, through Professional Learning Community (PLC) work, I have been able to discuss the need to engage in explicit literacy instruction within all content areas—including language arts. My work with literacy education has pushed me to further reading into the area of literacy. Authors that have particularly influenced my own practice include Kelly Gallagher (2004) and Doug Buehl (2008). These are authors that I continuously revisit and who support my practice both individually and in the co-teaching model. However, despite the ideal partnership and supportive work environment, co-teaching is not without challenges.

Co-teaching Struggles

Co-teaching is both a rewarding and highly complex teaching model. At times, we face challenges such as class size (sometimes up to thirty-six students), ratio (more than half of the class with special education needs), and planning time. Often co-teachers are simply assigned to each other. This was the case for me. Fortunately, I was able to develop a positive relationship and develop goals and strategies that we both felt benefited the students.

When transitioning to the high school level, students may struggle with the amount of material and the reading load that is expected of them. It is sometimes difficult to create an atmosphere where all students are able to feel successful and have their voices heard. We often struggle with students who have felt disenfranchised for years about their education and tend to be behavioral problems while other students who would like to engage and learn feeling frustrated because they cannot get the attention that they would like or deserve. Students who struggle with behaviors are often scheduled into our class; these students do not have special education services. It may be assumed that having two teachers should help to make it less stressful than it would be for a single teacher. At times, we have had more students with Individualized Education Plans, 504 plans, and English Language Learner needs than students without any needs. This has created an atmosphere that can be especially difficult to manage. Through collaboration with other co-teaching teams, we have discovered that they often have similar situations and challenges. This involvement has led to my engagement in curriculum development and leadership within my building.

Sharing the Research

As a member of our district's 7-12 Curriculum Review Committee, I am fortunate enough to be able to advocate for student and teacher needs. I have been given the unique opportunity to have perspectives from both the special education and general education lenses. In order to best advocate, it is important for me to have a better understanding of which aspects of the co-teaching model are most successful and beneficial for all students. Certain models are better suited to different levels and needs of students, as well as age groups.

In this chapter, I have outlined my own personal experiences with co-teaching. Additionally, I have introduced my research question and how the research will impact both my own practice and my ability to share it with others in my professional setting. In the next chapter, I will review current literature and research pertaining to secondary co-teaching in the language arts classroom. I will give a brief review of different types of models that have been explored, which have been successful and share any specific data related to student success. I will further explore this by discussing the initial reason for introducing co-teaching into the general education setting.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine *which co-teaching and literacy practices are most effective in the secondary language arts classroom*—specifically for grades nine and 10. This chapter will discuss the history of co-teaching and different models of co-teaching. Additionally, it will discuss inclusive practices that stemmed from the amended Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004, and mandates put forth from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2002) and, most recently, Response to Intervention (RTI). This chapter will review the advantages and disadvantages of this service delivery method and how to make these partnerships the most effective. Finally, the best practices in literacy instruction that will best compliment the co-teaching model will be explored.

In today's diverse classrooms, there are a variety of ways to meet the unique needs of students. One such model is co-teaching, which provides support and specialized services to individual students in the general education environment. Though collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers has been an integral part of special education since the 1980's, more inclusive practices have been growing over the years (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, and Shamberger, 2010).

Co-teaching: Where did it come from?

Many laws and mandates have influenced special education over the years. The *Education of the Handicapped Act*, P.L. 91-230 was passed by congress in 1970 in order to address the needs of students with disabilities. In 1975, the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act,* PL 94-142 was passed. This law offered a free and appropriate education for all students with disabilities from ages three to twenty-one. It also focused on special

education services that would be required to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Friend, Cook, and Hurley-Chamberlain (2010) cite Dunn (1968) and Leafstedt et al., (2007) by pointing out that, a decade earlier, concerns were being raised by educational leaders about the effectiveness of special education services in the pullout or resource environment. Parents were also pushing for more inclusionary practices for their children with disabilities. Furthermore, Friend, Cook, and Hurley-Chamberlain (2010) discuss how the 1980's and 1990's were a time of change in relation to federal and state mandates that addressed education for students with disabilities. Outcomes for students with disabilities had been found to be unsatisfactory. Legislation pushed for increased expectations related to academics. They further suggest that a major concern was related to the lack of progress for students in special education classrooms when compared to their same grade peers who do not receive specialized services.

One of the most significant laws to have been passed was IDEA, which called for increased inclusive practices for students with disabilities. Additionally, it allows states to be sued for not providing the appropriate continuum of services called for in the law. Over the years, IDEA has been reauthorized and updated. Essentially, it called for transition services to be included in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Additionally, it added disability categories of traumatic brain injuries and autism and their eligibility criteria. A later amendment required IEPs to include a plan for students to have access to general education curriculum (http://idea.ed.gov/). IDEA encourages schools to have high expectations for all students, including those with disabilities. This means providing access to the highest quality of instruction within the least restrictive environment.

Another law that influenced the ways that students receive special education services is

NCLB (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002), which was implemented in 2001. This law

states that all students receive instruction from highly qualified teachers. Because not all

middle and high school special education teachers are considered "highly qualified" in each

individual subject area, as defined by NCLB, this has caused administrators of schools to

rethink ways to appropriately use staff and their individual areas of expertise (Conderman,

2011, p.24-25). NCLB required all students, even students with disabilities, to be held to

state standards. Overall, the intent of this law was to increase student outcomes, teacher

and school accountability and quality of education. Because all students would now be

required to meet state standards, they needed access to general education curriculum and

"highly qualified teachers". In order to meet the standards of NCLB and IDEA, schools have

tried different models and methods of educating students with disabilities—including

increased time in and access to the general education curriculum. Co-teaching is one way to

ensure that all students are receiving a high-quality education in the general education

setting.

Most recently, Response to Intervention (RTI), which sprung from updated Specific

Learning Disabilities qualification criteria (IDEA reauthorization 2006) has been

introduced in more schools and is being mandated by some states. RTI is an alternative

model to identifying students with learning disabilities. Previously, students with learning

disabilities had to meet federal criteria through a model that indicated a discrepancy

between their intellectual ability (IQ) and their academic achievement. This model often

left students who required specialized support from qualifying because they did not

demonstrate a "large enough gap or discrepancy" to meet criteria for special education

services. RTI calls for high quality, research-based instruction and data collection. This

process is focused on proactive strategies, rather than waiting for students to meet narrow

criteria (Murawski and Hughes, 2009). Often, the interventions related to RTI involve

pulling students out of their larger general education classes in order to engage in small

group instruction. Murawski and Hughes (2009) cite Dupuis et al., (2006) in pointing out

that there is still a stigma attached to students who are pulled out of their general

education setting. One way to avoid this may be through the model of co-teaching. In this

model students of all abilities and needs receive instruction from two teachers in a variety

of different models. The special educator can bring her expertise and experience and meld

with the expertise and experience of the general educator.

What is Co-teaching?

Conderman and Hedin (2014) define co-teaching as, "one approach for helping

students with disabilities access a rigorous general education curriculum in the least

restrictive environment while receiving support from two certified teachers" (p. 157). The

term "co-teaching" can be used synonymously with collaboration or team teaching.

However, co-teaching is a different model to providing services for students with special

needs. Collaboration tends to refer to the outside work that special and general educators

do in order to support students with disabilities. Team teaching is one of the models used

in the overarching model of co-teaching (Friend, 2014). Authors Hang and Rabren (2009)

define co-teaching by following components:

> (a) two certified educators, including a general education teacher and a
>
> special education teacher;
>
> (b) delivery of instruction by both teachers;

(c) a heterogeneous group of students—students with and without

disabilities;

(d) a single classroom where all students receive instruction regardless of

educational label (p. 259)

The purpose of co-teaching is to make the general education curriculum more

accessible for students with disabilities while providing specialized instruction and

strategies to support their learning. It is one way for students to receive special education

services and is one of the least restrictive ways to do so. Ideally, it is a highly symbiotic

relationship.

There are a variety of co-teaching models that are suggested to be effective. Some

researchers, authors, and teachers prefer to avoid the use of "model" and, instead, use

"approach". For the purpose of continuity, the term "model" will be used. It is suggested

that no co-teaching team use any one model at all times. The idea is that, because there are

two instructors, there is a higher level of flexibility in order to meet student needs. In the

secondary classroom, co-teaching generally involves one special education teacher and one

general education teacher working together during one class period on one core content

area: social studies, English, mathematics, or science. Friend (2014) suggests that, within

the co-teaching approach, there are several models that co-teachers may use

interchangeably based on the instructional objectives and the student needs in one

particular class.

One-teach, one-observe.

In the One-teach, One-observe model, one teacher maintains the role of lead instructor.

This is a model "in which one teacher leads large-group instruction while the other gathers

academic, behavioral, or social data on specific students or the class group" (Friend, 2014).

The observing teacher may also be gathering data on student behavior. A benefit of this

model is that the team requires little common preparation time for this. However, the

weakness of this model is that the students will most likely view the observing teacher in

an assistive role, rather than as part of a team (Fazel, 2011).

Station teaching.

The station teaching model allows for both teachers to engage students in small

group instruction. It is described as, "three nonsequential parts and students, likewise

divided into three groups, rotate from station to station, being taught by the teachers at

two stations and working independently at the third" (Friend, 2014). However, one major

benefit is that it allows students more direct and individualized time with each teacher.

Also, this type of model allows for ability level grouping which can greatly benefit

struggling students (Friend, 2014).

Parallel teaching.

Parallel teaching divides the class into halves. In this model, both teachers engage in

direct instruction. It allows the teachers to teach specific objectives or the same content.

Students do not switch between the two teachers. This model could be especially useful

when co-teaching teams would like to provide two levels of readings, but will be studying

the same topic. This model also allows for analysis of two different perspectives or

rationales (Friend 2014). The two groups combine and have a large group discussion,

Socratic seminar, or debate.

Alternative teaching.

In this method, one teacher, instructs the majority of the students while the other teaches students with disabilities or struggling students, or those who achieve at higher levels (Fazel, 2011). This model should be used occasionally when a small group of students may need special attention, or when a handful of students did poorly on an assessment and require re-teaching. Pre-teaching is also another positive use for this model. This kind of grouping may also benefit a student with significant behavioral needs by placing him or her with peers who will not respond to off-task or disruptive behavior (Friend, 2014).

Teaming.

Friend (2014) and Fazel (2011) outline that the teaming model is when two teachers both engage in direct instruction of a whole group of students. This requires the two teachers to have a very comfortable relationship, as they are both responsible for instructing students interchangeably by taking turns as lead instructor throughout the lesson. It is suggested that this model should be used occasionally. This model has been especially beneficial in my own practice--while one teacher instructs and the other models note-taking.

One teach, one assist.

One teach, one assist is an model in which one teacher is leading the direct instruction of the students, while the other is circulating among the students offering help and direction. Friend (2014) suggests per Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007) that this is one of the most used and least effective models of co-teaching. Research suggests that this model can lead to pulling student attention away from the core content, and

developing a level of dependency on the special educator. It is recommended that this

model be used rarely or seldom. It is suggested that this method should be used as a "start

up technique" as new co-teaching partners are getting to know each other and develop

their own style of co-teaching that is most appropriate for the content area that they are

teaching.

Brown, et al. (2013) suggest that when considering which model to use, teaching

partners should consider: which objectives need to be mastered, if differentiated objectives

are occurring, and which types of grouping or environmental arrangements will be selected

for that lesson. Because co-taught classes include a heterogeneous group of students, the

needs of each student will vary. While some students may require simple accommodations,

other students may require additional opportunities for re-teaching or practice in order to

reach mastery. Behavioral needs of students should also be taken into consideration.

Reviewing informal and formal assessment data can also aid co-teaching teams when they

develop lessons and determine which model of co-teaching to implement for each

objective. Most importantly Brown suggest, "The ability to be flexible and respond to the

needs of the student and the lesson is a skill that is acquired through practice and is

essential to the impact of this delivery model" (p. 88).

Research on the Effectiveness of Co-teaching

Though co-teaching has become a more popular service delivery model for students

with mild to moderate disabilities, the research addressing its effectiveness is limited.

Despite this, the research that is available has found that it does positively impact student

outcomes for those with disabilities. Friend et al. (2009) found that students with learning

disabilities in co-taught classes performed better related to attendance and report card

grades. However, overall achievement on high-stakes tests demonstrated no significant gains. This was found for students both with and without disabilities. McLaughlin, Rea, and Walther-Thomas (2002) and Idol (2006). Additionally, when comparing students within a resource classroom to students in co-taught courses, and general education classes without co-teaching Murawski (2006) found "no significant differences across settings, commenting that the failure to find increased achievement in co-taught classes may have been the result of lack of training and thus, uneven implementation."

Parker (2010) studied the impact of co-teaching within the 10th grade general education classroom—specifically impacts on general education students. The researcher used standardized test scores in the areas of reading and mathematics to determine whether there was direct impact on general education students. This study found that there was a disproportionate amount of students who were considered underachieving or below proficiency as related to test scores in language arts classes. The author suggested that the design of co-teaching is to provide support and accommodations with students with disabilities. Through using the co-taught model to assist low performing general education students the lack of heterogeneity "could be a significant factor in overall student achievement. Student leaders would be wise to ensure that the general education students in co-taught classes are heterogeneous in their academic abilities" (p. 102). The study determined that the overall achievement of general education students is not likely to be negatively impacted by the co-teaching model.

Murawski and Swanson (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of the data collected on co-teaching effectiveness. They pointed out the difficulty with gathering accurate data as it has been mostly anecdotal. There is also a lack of consistency between use of different co-

teaching models as well as between content areas. However, the researchers found that co-teaching was slightly or moderately effective for impacting student outcomes. These outcomes include behavior (social skills, referrals), academic achievement, peer acceptance, attendance, and the attitudes of those involved.

The limited amount of data supporting the efficacy of co-teaching is most likely impacted by the lack of consistency across classrooms, schools, subject areas, and teachers. Because of this lack of consistency, there continues to be a gap in the research identifying co-teaching as an effective model for students with learning disabilities. However, the research that has been cited has found that, when compared to resource or "pull out" classrooms, students perform at higher levels in the co-taught environment.

Best Practices in Co-teaching

Because there are a variety of models to co-teaching, it is often unclear which model is the most effective or which will best fit the curriculum that the team is teaching. Researchers have taken a closer look at which co-teaching teams are the most successful and how they can ensure that they are meeting the needs of all students in their environments.

Authors Magiera and Simmons developed the *Magiera-Simmons Quality Indicator Model of Co-Teaching* based on themes of effective co-teaching teams highlighted several studies conducted by Friend and Cook, 2003; Dieker, 2001; Rice and Zigmond, 2000; Wallace, et al., 2002. The indicators that were selected to measure successful co-teaching instruction at the secondary level included: shared responsibility for presentation of instruction, following accommodations for students with disabilities, both teachers providing substantial instruction to all students, and the process of learning is emphasized

in addition to the particular content. These indicators support the idea that the co-teaching

partnership is one that is a true partnership, where both members share responsibility for

all aspects of classroom interactions.

Walther-Thomast et al. (1996) discuss the importance of multi-level preparation

and support for effective co-teaching. Aside from having voluntary members of staff for

each co-teaching team, it is integral that there is district and school-wide planning. This

type of type of planning includes the appropriate allocation of resources and funding for

staff. Additionally, initial and ongoing professional development should be provided for

those professionals involved in co-teaching teams. Principals and other administrative staff

should be aware of the elements of co-teaching in order to share this information with

parents and community members. Teachers should be provided with common planning

time and contribute as integral members of each IEP team.

Rice et al. (2007) conducted a study to determine which skills or attributes might

assist special educators when working in a co-teaching partnership or when working as

consultants. This study also focused on how a K-12 district sustained a policy of inclusive

education for over 12 years. Researchers conducted focus groups, interviews, and

observations were conducted in order to gather data. From the collected data and feedback,

the authors of the study were able to determine that there were several major strengths

that special educators possessed when working effectively with general education teachers

in a co-teaching partnership. The case studies and interviews outlined that maintaining

professionalism through communication and sharing of expertise was one of the best ways

that supported partnerships. Additionally, ideal co-teaching partners were articulate and

were able to model instruction and meet students' needs. Additional, strengths included

accurate assessment of student progress, being able to analyze teaching and teaching styles, working with a wide range of students, and gaining knowledge of course content. The authors stressed that being reflective, flexible, and open-minded were important attributes for co-teachers to embrace in order to maintain successful partnerships.

In order for co-teaching teams to be highly effective, Dieker, (2001) maintains that roles and responsibilities of both the special educator and the general education teacher must be clearly defined. Furthermore, Walther-Thomas and Bryant (1996) state that in order for co-teachers to effectively teach they must spend time: (a) getting to know each other; (b) sharing teaching skills; and (c) co-planning instructional strategies. Supporting this, Friend et al (2010), cite data that indicates that it is imperative that teachers engaging in co-teaching come willingly and voluntarily to the partnership. Research cited from (Scruggs et al. 2007) found that the most successful teams found ways to motivate students and increased sharing of individual expertise. Additionally, when teams were not voluntarily placed, they tended to struggle with collaboration as well as have increased conflict in relation to teaching styles. Often, the special educators assumed the role of a teaching assistant rather than a part of a teaching team.

Professional development and administrative support.

Throughout much of the research on co-teaching, the importance of administrative support has been a common factor. Co-teaching teams find that, when they have the support and guidance of their administrative teams, they are able to engage in meaningful co-teaching and positively impact student outcomes. However, when administrative support and professional development are not in place, co-teaching teams often have negative experiences and feel less valued.

Magiera and Simmons (2007) recommend that co-teaching practices benefit from pairs of co-teachers that volunteer to work together. They suggest that these pairs should be given training on co-teaching and those relationships should be fostered for a long-term relationship. In order to further support their practice, co-teachers should also visit and observe other co-teaching pairs in order to exchange ideas and instructional practices. Common planning time also leads to more consistent, thoughtful, and differentiated instruction. An additional suggestion included the importance of departmental membership in the content area by the special education teacher, which provides these teachers with opportunities to share ideas and network to focus on needs of the students with disabilities in a strategic way. Friend et al (2010) also points out that, despite the ultimate understanding that co-teaching should be and can be a beneficial model for all students, it is important to realize that professionals require training and ongoing professional development in order for benefits to be fully reached.

In order for co-teaching teams to engage in meaningful and well-informed practice, it is important for them to have the support of their administrative team. Teachers should also be volunteers and be given opportunities for specific training related to co-teaching.

Secondary Literacy Instruction Best Practice

In order to increase the effectiveness of co-teaching in the secondary language arts classroom, teachers should use best practice literacy instruction. Malgren, K. and Trezek, B. (2009) discuss the importance and necessity of literacy instruction for struggling adolescent readers. They cite Scammecca et al. (2007), who determined that adolescence is not too late to provide reading and literacy intervention. Additionally, older students with disabilities are positively impacted from explicit literacy instruction—particularly at the

word and text level. Areas that assist student the most include: word study, word

meanings, and comprehension strategies. The authors concluded that secondary readers

could also benefit from instruction related to decoding, segmenting, and spelling when

provided with graphosyllabic analysis. Graphosyllabic analysis refers to direct instruction

related to breaking words apart by syllable as well as providing vocabulary instruction.

Struggling readers also benefit from explicit instruction in comprehension

monitoring strategies. In a practice brief addressing adolescent literacy by the Center on

Instruction, authors suggest that activating prior knowledge, using graphic organizers,

teaching comprehension monitoring strategies and teaching summarization skills are

effective ways to help struggling students become successful readers. Modeling good

reading habits through think-alouds is another way to help students to learn to think about

their own reading and thoughts during reading. Interventions that have demonstrated

promise in assisting struggling readers have included teaching students to recognize

different structures of texts. Students should be taught how to distinguish between

narrative and expository texts. Additionally, teaching story grammar elements helps them

to have a basis for different parts of a story.

Word study.

Direct vocabulary instruction is necessary whether it is content-specific or words

they may be particularly difficult or complex (Malgrem and Trezek, 2009; Armbruster et al.,

2001). It is suggested that specific word instruction take place. This involves definitions,

non-examples, synonyms, antonyms, and analogies. Increased vocabulary and word

understanding is an integral part to becoming a proficient reader as the connections that

students make with previous words and definitions ultimately become a part of a student's

background knowledge. Reading development is greatly benefited from words being taught in semantic clusters (Roskos and Neuman, 2014).

Author and teacher Kelly Gallagher (2004) also stresses the importance of word study in order to increase comprehension for secondary readers. The first way that he engages learners in word study is through having students memorize prefixes, suffixes, roots, and their meanings. This helps students learn to break words apart and develop and understanding of the word based on partial meanings. Additionally, Gallagher has students break words apart to see if they can locate "sound-alikes" which gives students an opportunity to discern even a partial meaning and make an educated guess. Authors Harvey "Smokey" Danielson and Steven Zemelmen cite researcher Isabel Beck (Beck et al., 2013) in their book *Subjects Matter: Exceeding standards through powerful content-area reading* (2014). Beck developed a tiered model related to vocabulary acquisition, which helps teachers choose which words students should spend the most time learning related to their importance and usage frequency in the future. Harvey and Danielson also outline a variety of vocabulary instruction lessons and models. Each of these addresses needs of the student before, during, and after reading.

Cognitive strategies for comprehension.

Alverman (2002) cited a study by Shoenback et al., (1999) that found that students who were taught comprehension strategies gained confidence in their reading abilities. Alverman expanded this by discussing the importance of engaging students in "metacognition"—essentially, teaching the students to think about their thinking as they read and react to text. Teachers encourage this by discussing with students reading goals,

fix-it strategies for understanding text, and how to extend their knowledge beyond what the text says explicitly.

To further support the idea that students are aided by learning how to monitor their thinking during reading, Malgrem and Trezek (2009) refer to findings from the National Reading Panel (NRP) and supported by Armbruster et al., 2001; Biancarosa and Snow, 2006) that suggest the strongest comprehension strategies include comprehension monitoring, the use of semantic organizers, question generating, understanding and recognizing story structure, and summarizing. These strategies are easily transferable to other texts and situations. Additionally, it benefits students to learn and understand story elements such as: character, setting, conflict, resolution, and theme. Students may also be encouraged to use a graphic organizer with the story structure throughout the reading. This helps to support the student's ability to check for understanding.

Malgrem and Trezek (2009) additionally cite Vallecorsa and deBettencourt (1997) who found that the use of graphic organizers has been beneficial in relation to students' ability to recall information. Gallagher (2004) provides a variety of graphic organizers in order to deepen students' comprehension through metaphorical thinking. He suggests that students are better able to reach deeper meaning of texts when they can understand metaphor and that through practice they can generalize this skill to other, more complex texts. These graphic organizers help to guide students to a deeper understanding through guided and scaffolded thinking with specific goals for each organizer. It is important to note that graphic organizers are only one tool to help students reach deeper understanding of text. They should be selected carefully and introduced in a meaningful way that helps students to take ownership of their own learning.

Rereading.

Roskos and Neuman (2014) support the idea that students should analyze and look more deeply at individual words, details, organization, and determine how supporting details illuminate the overall theme of a text. They cite Shanahan (2012) who refers to re-reading as "close-reading"—which should occur both during and after reading. Roskos and Neuman (2014) go to cite research supporting that re-reading increases comprehension and improves a student's ability to monitor and assess his or her own understanding when engaging in unfamiliar or new material.

Gallagher (2004) stresses the necessity of rereading texts for higher levels of understanding. He refers to this as first and second draft reading. Many complex texts are often too difficult to understand after an initial reading. He stresses the importance of reducing student anxiety by referring to the first read through as a "first draft reading". In this draft, Gallagher encourages students to get the basics from the text. These include: characters, setting, the language and how the text is laid out, as well as the major plot elements. He also stresses the importance of framing the text by building the students' background knowledge to prepare them for reading the difficult text. In the "second draft reading" students are asked to analyze what the text is really saying—make inferences and use textual evidence to support them. Through creating an atmosphere in which re-reading is expected, rewarded and valued, students are given the opportunity to generalize rereading as a necessary skill that strong readers have.

Student Engagement.

Alvermann (2002) suggests that effective literacy instruction for adolescents should especially focus on self-efficacy and student engagement. The author stresses the

importance of a student's self-concept of his or her ability as a reader as being a significant

factor that impacts how motivated he or she is to learn in any subject area. Furthermore,

adolescent literacy instruction should engage and build on student background knowledge.

Teachers should find ways to include students' cultural backgrounds, feelings, and

experiences into the literacy instruction, as well as to give students a variety of ways to

respond and engage in cooperative learning with their peers. An additional suggestion for

increased engagement for adolescent readers involves the utilization of hypermedia

projects, journal writing, and student-led discussions.

   Roskos and Neuman (2014) cite research that digital reading is an incentive for

both younger and lower achieving students. This research states that the more immediate

feedback from e-books and apps can aid in keeping students engaged and motivated

(Grinshaw, Dungworth, McKnight, and Morris, 2007; Zucker, Moody and McKenna, 2009).

With increased technology in classrooms and working with students who are "digital

natives," it has become increasingly important to engage students in tasks that are relevant

to them and their culture. This also provides opportunities for engaging students in critical

literacy activities.

   Researchers have also found the need to build relevancy through scaffolding and the

use of linked text sets (LTS). A framework for LTS includes engagement, exploration, and

expansion phases. In each of these phases, students are introduced to supplementary

materials (videos, short stories, novels, movie trailers, songs, news articles) in order to

support overall theme and essential questions for a literature unit. In each phase the

materials are utilized to engage students in meaningful conversations, deeper thinking, and

making connections to their own experiences and beliefs. The idea of LTS is to scaffold high

school students' reading of complex texts as well as to increase engagement and higher

level thinking (Elish-Piper, Wold, Schwingendorf, 2014).

Collaboration with peers is also a meaningful strategy to guide students to deeper

meaning and higher level thinking. When students are able to share ideas and check their

understanding with other students, they have increased ownership in their own learning.

Gallagher (2004) points out that it is integral that struggling readers have the opportunity

to have meaningful conversations about what they are reading with their peers. He begins

the school year by assigning various roles such as discussion leader, note-taker, and

organizer in order to focus group discussions. This is often because students have not been

explicitly taught how to engage in meaningful discussions. He also includes a variety of

group tasks that help to focus student discussion and to meet lesson objectives. Suggestions

that he includes are: double-entry journals, envelopes with guiding questions, group exams,

conversation logs, theme triangles, silent exchanges, and trouble slips.

In the co-taught classroom, two instructors can best implement the supports

outlined above. Specific word study and cognitive comprehension strategies can be

adapted to meet individual student needs or be taught as a whole class. Additionally,

through giving students opportunities to further engage in texts by collaborating with their

peers and increasing their ability to reread, they are given opportunities to think on a

higher level and reach deeper meaning of what they read.

Summary

Co-teaching is a model that has evolved over time in order to address the needs of

students with learning disabilities and meet expectations outlined by federal and state

mandates (IDEA 2004, NCLB 2001). There are a variety of models to co-teaching that can

be utilized to meet lesson objectives and student needs, as well as to build on the strengths of the individual teachers. Despite the widespread implementation, there continues to be a gap in the research proving co-teaching's effectiveness. This is most likely due to the wide range of models, students, and subject areas across which co-teaching is used. However, there are some studies that have indicated a slight increase in student outcomes. Many authors have addressed the components necessary for a successful co-teaching partnership. These components include: common planning time, clear roles and responsibilities, supportive administrative staff, professional development, shared resources, shared expectations related to student outcomes and behaviors, and voluntary partnerships.

In order to effectively support students in the secondary literacy classroom, the previously addressed research and literature indicated that secondary students benefit for explicit teaching in a variety of areas as well as opportunities to collaborate. Students especially benefit from vocabulary instruction and word work. At the secondary level this involves teaching academic vocabulary as well as teaching students word parts and their meanings. Students should also be instructed in metacognitive strategies in order to monitor their thinking before, during, and after reading. This may involve the use of graphic organizers to help scaffold students thinking, reading goals, summarizing, paragraph shrinking, understanding story structure and story grammar, and teaching fix up strategies to monitor comprehension. In the next chapter, I will describe the methods, data collection procedure, and data analysis techniques that I will use to answer my research question: *Which co-teaching and literacy practices are most effective in the secondary language arts classroom*?

Chapter Three: Methodology

This study examined the research question of *which models of co-teaching and literacy in the language arts classroom are the most effective at the secondary level*. My research will help to inform the practices of ninth and tenth grade English and special education teachers at a first ring suburban high school in the Midwest.

This research was based on anonymous questionnaires completed by two secondary language arts teachers and one special education teacher at this school who teach grades nine and ten about their co-teaching experiences. Research also included at least two recorded interviews with selected co-teachers in order paint a picture of what the co-taught classroom language arts classroom looks like for each of them. Anonymous questionnaires were completed by students within the co-taught language arts class both with and without special education services. Interviews of the school's associate principal was conducted about his understanding of co-teaching and literacy techniques, as well as expectations and outlook for the future. In order to provide statistical perspectives on the efficacy of co-teaching and various literacy strategies in the secondary language arts classroom, data was also gathered on student growth and outcomes on state reading assessments as well as a review of academic grade comparisons.

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter outlines the methodologies that were used in order to answer the research question. First, the qualitative research paradigm was described as well as well as the reasons informing my decisions to use this kind of research. Descriptions of the participants and the setting of this research are included, as well as present the three data collection methods that were utilized to find the answer to my research question. To

conclude this chapter, a description of the procedure by which the data on the co-teaching

practices and literacy instruction in this school was analyzed.

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm to address the research question involved mixed methods.

Mixed methods research involves gathering and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative

data. This type of research provides both open ended (qualitative) and closed

(quantitative) sets of data (Creswell, 2014). In the field of research and analysis, mixed

methods is a fairly new model. While John Creswell (2014) suggests that qualitative data is

the most beneficial form of data collection to answer my research question, I felt that a

review of classroom grades as well as state testing scores could add an additional

perspective and, perhaps, more concrete data.

Qualitative data was gathered by way of anonymous questionnaires and interviews.

Questionnaires were distributed to two sets of co-teaching partners as well as between 20

and 30 sophomore students enrolled in co-taught language arts. Many of these students

had a co-taught English class in 9th grade. Student respondents were both with and without

Individual Education Plans. Based on the review of the various studies and literature,

gathering quantitative data on co-teaching has many limitations. These limitations include

but are not limited to: lack of consistent use of co-teaching models between classrooms,

lack of consistent use of literacy strategies and instruction between classrooms, and lack of

consistent student needs between classrooms. Because there is so much variability

between co-taught classrooms, gathering qualitative data is difficult and often filled with

gaps. Many studies tend to end with more questions than solid data and significant data

supporting which models are best. However, gathering some state assessment data and

making comparisons between co-taught and non-co-taught courses could provide some valuable data in order to answer my research questions in a more comprehensive manner.

Setting and Participants

The setting of this study was at a high school in the Midwest with approximate enrollment of 2,200 students during the fall trimester of the 2015-2016 school year. This high school is located in a first-ring suburb and is considered urban. District-wide student ethnicity is reported as: 50% white, 21% Asian, 16% Black, 11% Hispanic, and 1% American Indian. 28% of students enrolled in the district speak languages other than English at home. Primarily, these languages include: Spanish, Karen, and Hmong. At the high school, students of various ethnicities and races make up the following percentages: 2% Two or more races, 1% American Indian, 16% Asian, 11% Black, 8% Hispanic, and 63% White. 38% of students attending this school receive free or reduced lunch. Based on state assessments in reading, 41% of students meet standards, 28% exceed standards, and 16% partially meet standards. Approximately 10% of students attending this high school have individualized education plans (IEPs).

The participants of this study consisted of two general education language arts teachers and one special education teacher who work with both ninth and tenth grade students. Additional participants were approximately 20 to 39 students within the co-taught environment. These students were tenth grade students with and without special education services. The school's associate principal was also interviewed as a part of this study in order to provide more comprehensive and well-rounded perspectives of co-teaching in this environment.

Data Collection and Rationale

Data collection technique 1: Interview.

One of the qualitative research methods that was utilized in this study will involve interviews. Structured interviews with predetermined questions were conducted with both co-teachers as well as with the associate principal in the building. These included questions addressing various aspects of co-teaching and literacy instruction. Geoffrey Mills (2013) suggests that using structured and formal interviews allows the researcher to ask consistent questions across participants. By using this method, questions were developed in such a way that elicited information that will best address the research question. John Creswell (2014) suggests that there are a variety of ways to interview participants. However, he suggests that face-to-face—one-on-one, in-person interviews provide historical information and allows the researcher control over the questions. This provided a variety of perspectives and information about co-teaching practices in the language arts classroom at this school.

Data collection technique 2: Questionnaire.

To gather further data relating to the research, anonymous questionnaires were distributed to both co-teaching partners as well to students enrolled in co-taught English in grade ten. This allowed for the collection of large amounts of data in a relatively short period of time. One concern that Creswell mentions regarding questionnaires involves the students' ability to read and write. Though this is a valid concern, working with secondary students enrolled in a general education level class ensures that the students were able to read the questions and answer in written form. In order to gather data efficiently, the questionnaire included a Likert scale. Questionnaires were distributed digitally as this

school uses one-to-one iPads and all staff have iPads as well. As Creswell suggests, the

survey also included an "other comments" section. A few additional follow up questions

were included in the questionnaire as well. Challenges with this method could involve lack

of completion or returning the questionnaire. In the case of students, some may not find the

purpose valid or engaging and they may not take the task seriously. It may benefit the

research to offer a small incentive, such as chocolate or candy after completing the

questionnaire. Questions in this questionnaire have been adapted from other research

related to similar topics (Conderman, 2011; Smith, 2012).

Data collection technique 3: State testing and grade report review.

The quantitative section of the research involved a review of state testing data from

specific students having been enrolled in classes that were both co-taught and without a

second teacher. At the secondary level, the state requires one state reading test during

tenth grade. Review of these scores was focused primarily on students who met, exceeded,

partially met, or did not meet state standards. A review of students who have been enrolled

in co-taught language arts in both ninth and tenth grades occurred. Additionally, a review

of several non-co-taught sample classes with other general education teachers in both

ninth and tenth grade was conducted. By gathering these two types of data, it was expected

to help triangulate whether or not perspectives and qualitative data match with student

outcomes through both standardized testing and report card progress.

Ethics

In order to protect the participants' rights as well as to ensure that their responses

and feedback were anonymous, several guidelines and procedures were followed. Human

Subjects Research Protocols from Hamline University were also followed. Additionally,

safeguards that the school district has in place to protect student and staff were adhered to. Therefore, a letter outlining the purpose and procedures of the study as well as an informed consent was provided to each participant in this study. Questionnaires were administered through an anonymous web service. Additionally, interviews were conducted privately. A review of state testing data and student grades was used solely for the purpose of data collection and names or other specific identifying attributes were not utilized in the data analysis. All of this data was kept in a secure filing cabinet when not in use. Interview and questionnaire data was coded. Individual student names were not gathered. One year after the completion of this research project, all collected data will be destroyed.

Summary

The primary source of data collection for this study was gathered through anonymous surveys to students and interviews with administrators and teachers. Additional statistical data was gathered from state testing scores and academic grades.

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this study was to determine *which models of co-teaching and literacy in the language arts classroom are most effective at the secondary level.* In order to answer this question, both qualitative and quantitative research was conducted at a first-ring suburban high school in the Midwest. Anonymous aggregate data was collected to compare 10th grade state reading scores between co-taught sections and non-co-taught sections of English. To gather qualitative data, interviews and anonymous surveys were conducted. Students in one co-taught section of 10th grade English completed an anonymous survey. Co-teachers completed short questionnaires and then participated in recorded interviews relating to co-teaching and literacy. Finally, one administrator was interviewed about his knowledge of and goals relating to co-teaching and how the model impacts student outcomes.

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter reviews the data collected from both qualitative and quantitative research. First, student state reading scores from co-taught sections of English classes are compared to non-co-taught sections. Next, a review of student responses from an anonymous questionnaire given in a 10th grade co-taught language arts class is discussed. An interview with an administrator regarding perceptions, support, and effectiveness of co-teaching was reviewed. Co-teacher questionnaires and interviews were also examined.

Student Outcomes

In order to gather further information on student outcomes, state reading test scores were pulled for students from two consecutive school years (Appendix F). A comparison was then made of all ninth grade English classes between co-taught sections,

non-co-taught sections, and sections where students received three trimesters (year-long instruction) of ninth grade English. In the chart below, percentages of students experiencing high, medium, or low growth since 8th grade are included. The overall results from this comparison are varied.

In three of the four co-taught sections of English 9, there is a larger percentage of students experiencing high growth than in the entire grade level combined (including six other non-co-taught sections). However, in three of the four co-taught classes, there are also a larger percentage of students achieving low growth than in all of the grade level combined. There was a lower percentage of medium growth in co-taught sections than in the class as a whole. This data suggest that there was a larger gap between high growth students and low growth students than in all of the classes combined. Within the data collected, it was determined that state reading scores are neither significantly better nor significantly worse for students who are in co-taught classes compared to those who are not.

This data was similar to other quantitative studies of co-teaching effectiveness. Friend et al. (2009) found that the co-teaching model positively impacted student attendance and academic grades. While in studies by McLaughlin, Rea, and Walther-Thomas (2002) and Idol (2006), showed that no significant gains were found on achievement in high stakes testing

Co-taught Student Perceptions

Anonymous questionnaires were distributed to a tenth grade co-taught class consisting of 34 students. Nine of these students were identified as having individualized education plans. Two of these students had 504 plans (provide accommodations in the

learning environment for students with disabilities or significant health concerns). Seventy-four percent of students completed a questionnaire. When asked if they had learned more in the co-taught class than in other classes that are not co-taught, nearly half of the student respondents indicated that they were unsure, while 10 other students responded that they agree or strongly agree that they learned more in the co-taught class.

Students were also asked to indicate areas of reading and writing where they felt that they had made the most growth over the trimester. The most common areas that were indicated as growth areas included: reading level, fluency, and comprehension. Several students also shared that they feel their vocabulary increased as part of this course. 64% of students responded that they felt they became better writers as a result of being in the co-taught class. Most common areas that were identified as becoming strong were: using evidence, organization, developing a thesis statement, and editing their work.

Several students also wrote that they felt that "all" of their writing skills increased. Student respondents identified writing as a higher growth area than reading. Over 60% of students said they strongly agreed or agreed with the idea that they got to get to know their teachers and classmates better in the co-taught section than in their other classes. The following table indicates that the majority of students strongly agreed that they felt they were better writers as a result of being in the co-taught class.

Table 1- *Student Responses Regarding Writing Skills*

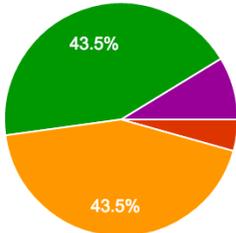**I feel that I am better as a writer as a result of being in this co-taught class.**
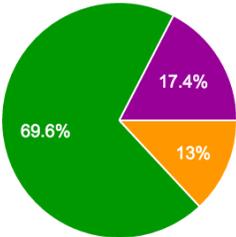
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Unsure/Undecided	3	13%
Agree	16	69.6%
Strongly Agree	4	17.4%

Table 2

Student Responses Regarding Reading Skills

I feel that my reading skills have gotten better because of being in this co-taught class.

Strongly disagree	**0**	0%
Disagree	**1**	4.3%
Unsure/Undecided	**10**	43.5%
Agree	**10**	43.5%
Strongly Agree	**2**	8.7%

As the above chart demonstrates, students agreed or were unsure about whether or not their reading skills got better as a result of the co-taught class. Another significant area of positivity included the statement, "I feel like I have received more help in this class than in other non-co-taught classes." Approximately 73% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt this statement was true. In follow up to this statement, students also responded with approximately 73% who strongly agreed or agreed to the following statement, "I felt like I got to know my teachers and classmates better in this class than in other classes."

When responding to the statement, "I participated more often in this class more often than in other non-co-taught classes," students, over 50% of students identified that they felt this was a true statement. Students wrote that aspects they liked best about the class were: the teachers, the novel *Flight* (2007) by Sherman Alexie, getting to work with their friends, getting to have discussions/work with their peers. In general, student responses were either neutral or positive. Across all statements, no more than four students responded with "strongly disagree" or "disagree".

There were several outlying suggestions from students when asking what teachers could do better. These involved comments on how they felt that the teachers should be less strict regarding behavioral expectations. Specific examples included: "please have less chaotic students and make the silent ones talk more;" "Be less strict and less us do what we want"; "Don't be too weird" and "Give me more time to complete exit slips." Only half of students who completed the survey left specific written comments.

Generally, student responses suggested that they felt having two teachers allowed for more questions to be answered. They also responded that they were able to receive more help. More students responded that they were unsure or undecided about their reading skills. About half of the respondents identified specific areas of growth including fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Some students, however, responded in written form that they felt they were already "good or very good" readers to begin with, so they did not see a major difference in reading ability.

Student survey results indicated that most students found that the co-taught environment has a positive impact on their literacy skills related to writing as well as reading. Students responded that they felt that the co-taught environment allowed for increased attention and help when needed.

Administrator Interview

The administrator interviewed as part of this study has been working in an administrative role at this school for the past six years. During his first three years at this school he worked as a Dean of Students and was the direct supervisor to the Special Education Department. He has a background in school psychology, which helped him in his

leadership role with this department. He was, and continues to be a strong proponent of co-teaching. When asked what co-teaching looked like in his building, he said that,

There are a variety of partnerships at different stages of development between both special education and general education as well as between EL (English Language) and general education. However, the ideal partnership would be one where anyone could walk into the classroom and not be able to tell who the content area teacher is and who the special education or EL teacher is. (E. Singer, personal communication, November 30, 2015)

He also suggested that there are three different levels of partnerships in this school based on the level of experience:

1. Seamless, fluid environment with both teachers instructing,

2. Content teacher primarily instructing, while the EL or Special Education teacher provides re-teaching, review, and enrichment

3. Burgeoning partnerships where each partner is working to identify their roles within the relationship

This administrator then was asked, "How do you think co-teaching in the language arts classroom can impact student literacy?" He responded,

This is assuming I knew a ton about literacy, but you can meet students where they are. You can break it up to meet each student. You can provide enrichment on both ends of the spectrum, and have differentiation time to work on literacy skills. We can meet more students' needs. Not just students with special needs. All students are enriched in that environment. (E. Singer, personal communication, November 30, 2015)

The Assistant Principal went on to discuss how he would like to see an expansion of interdisciplinary co-teaching partnerships. He also stated that ongoing professional development and common preparation time are important components when considering co-teaching partnership success. He discussed the idea of having an interdisciplinary co-teaching professional learning community focused on differentiation.

The viewpoints represented by this administrator focused on voluntary partnerships where each partner is able to take over the entire class as needed. He stressed the importance of "buy in" and recruitment in order to create successful and long-lasting co-teaching partnerships. Further, he addressed the increased ability to differentiate and meet more student needs at a variety of levels when a classroom is being run by two teachers who access their areas of expertise. Finally, he suggested that professional development for co-teachers should be ongoing.

Teacher Interview and Questionnaire

Three teachers were given a questionnaire and interviewed as part of this research. These teachers were selected because they are the only teachers in the building who currently co-teach language arts classes. There are no eleventh or twelfth grade level co-taught language arts courses offered. Two of these teachers are language arts teachers. The other is a special education teacher who has been working with the English department as a co-teacher for the past five years; this special educator works with both of the language arts teachers. She has a Bachelor's degree in both creative writing and Special Education and has worked at this school for six years. She primarily works with ninth and tenth grade students. Language arts teacher one has been teaching in the district for the past twenty years. She has worked with a variety of students and is currently curriculum leader for a

program to target at-risk students and provide them with more support at school. She has

been co-teaching with the special education teacher for the past six years. She has a

Master's degree in Education and has taught some multi-disciplinary classes in the past and

primarily teaches ninth and tenth grade students. The second language arts teacher has

been teaching at this school for three years. One of those years was in a long-term

substitute position. She primarily teaches tenth, eleventh, and twelve grade students.

Two co-teaching models were identified through the interview process as being the

most popular and viewed as the most effective. These were the team teaching model and

the alternative teaching model. Teachers found these to be the most useful because it

allowed them to both be seen as equal partners by each other as well as by the students.

Perception of instructors by the students was something that interviewees identified as

being very important when establishing a partnership and maintaining positive

relationships with students. The following table summarizes interviewee perspectives

related to co-teaching experiences.

Table 3
Teacher Perspectives Regarding Co-teaching Experiences

Positive Perspectives	Challenges
Having the support of another professional in the classroom	Lack of common planning time
Learning from the other person	Challenges when partnerships are assigned by others and not a personal and professional choice
Developing curriculum and making adaptations together	Classes with higher proportions of students with increased needs.
Positive student outcomes (comprehension, written language, grades, behavior, attendance, academic success)	Lack of ongoing professional development or support

Interviewees indicated that they addressed literacy in a variety of ways. Because there is a wide range of ability levels, teachers directly teach reading strategies. Some of these strategies include, directly teaching vocabulary and word parts, previewing the text, accessing prior knowledge, and providing multiple opportunities for re-reading, and providing reading guides when students are expected to read independently, and using think-alouds to model how good readers think about and respond to text. Some questions and responses are included below.

What does the co-teaching model look like in your own classroom, how do you incorporate it into practice?

Language Arts Teacher #1: My co-teacher and I share the teaching roles within our classroom. One teacher leads a lesson, while the other adds to the discussion, asks clarifying questions, or assists students with content understanding and behaviors (J. Johnson, personal communication, November 10, 2016).

Language arts Teacher #2: It's hard to pinpoint which model specifically, but we tend to both do the teaching. It helps that students see both of us as teachers. Instead of as one person support and one person taking the lead (B. Stahlman, personal communication, December 1, 2015).

Do you feel like there has been any model that has been the least helpful or not as helpful as others?

Language arts teacher #1: All models have a time and place, depending on the needs of the students Least helpful is probably parallel teaching (J. Johnson, personal communication, November 10, 2016).

Language arts teacher #2: In my past experience the model of pulling students out or just when one person supports it really turns into just a behavior check and other students are kind of just like, "who is this lady? (B. Stahlman, personal communication, December 1, 2015)"

Do you and your co-teacher share the teaching roles?

Language arts teacher #1: My co-teacher and I share the teaching roles within our classroom. One teacher leads a lesson while the other adds to the discussion, asks clarifying questions, or assists students with content understanding and behaviors (J. Johnson, personal communication, November 10, 2016).

Language arts teacher #2: As my co-teacher is learning the content it's a little less so, but I have confidence in the future that we will share more teaching especially as we try to integrate a little more reading skills focus (B. Stahlman, personal communication, December 1, 2015).

Language arts teacher #1: My co-teacher starts class off by getting the class settled and then reviewing daily expectations as well as future assignments. She then goes into the vocabulary lesson for the day. I tend to introduce the new material, but we both support each other and are respectful of when and how we add information to what we are talking about (J. Johnson, personal communication, November 10, 2016).

Special education teacher: It is different with either of my co-teachers. One partnership is older and more established, so I feel more comfortable with the curriculum and more able to jump in and out of the instructional process. In the other environment, I'm still learning the curriculum, so I tend to do more review and re-teaching as well as spend

more time with adaptations and differentiation (A. Robenhorst, personal reflection, November 12, 2016).

How do you and your teaching partner assess students and monitor their progress?

Language arts teacher #1: Daily assignments and activities, observation, formative and summative assessments, individual meetings with students (J. Johnson, personal communication, November 10, 2016).

Language arts teacher #2: In our class, we use daily exit slips. Students are given a guiding question for the day and asked to demonstrate their knowledge or skill at the end of class. We also have small daily formative assignments and large unit-based summative assignments. Many of these summative assessments are essays (B. Stahlman, personal communication, December 1, 2015).

Special education teacher: It depends on the class. But I really enjoy the exit slips that we do in our tenth grade class. It is a lot of daily "grading," but it is a great way to keep a pulse on the class. I feel that I have really gotten to know the students much better through the exit slips as well. In both classes we uses formative assignments and summative final projects, essays, or exams. The key for both classes is that we check in with all of the students a lot. It is nice to have two bodies for this (A. Robenhorst, personal reflection, November 12, 2016).

All three interviewees responded that they monitor student progress through formative and summative assessments. One co-teaching partnership uses daily exit slips to address a variety of skills on a day-to-day basis while assessing growth through larger summative assessments that include exams, essays, and projects. The other co-teacher indicated that she and her co-teacher use a larger variety of daily assignments and summative

assessments that include essays, projects, and exams as well. They find that having

students engage in a great deal of editing and rewriting has been one of the most beneficial

strategies when it comes to this skill area. They also do one-to-one conferencing about

written language skills. They shared that this is something that is less time-consuming with

two teachers.

All co-teachers responded that they felt that co-teaching is an effective service

delivery model. However, they stressed the need for administrative support in order to

have the appropriate ratios of students within the co-taught environment. Finally, they

discussed the need for a positive and voluntary relationship between co-teaching partners.

One co-teacher had had negative experiences in the past where her partner did not feel

comfortable with teaching an entire class; therefore the team teaching model was not

something they were able to use. This, in turn, resulted in feeling that the partnership was

imbalanced and not as supportive for all students.

Overall, the three co-teachers that were interviewed responded that they view co-

teaching as a model of teaching that can be highly effective with working with all students.

When addressing literacy, they responded that they used a variety of strategies including:

activating prior knowledge, using think-alouds, providing opportunities for re-reading or

close reading, and provided a variety of ways for students to respond and receive feedback.

When asked how they address literacy in their co-taught classroom, they shared:

Language arts Teacher #2: Definitely do a direct instruction of vocabulary including

word parts and parts of speech as well as grammar. I also like to teach metacognition

related to reading. Monitoring reading. I like to model question asking while reading. I used

to do more close reading, but time has gotten in the way of that. One thing that I have been

wanting to do pushing forward is working on small practicing. Instead of doing a close

reading of five paragraphs doing a close reading on a sentence or two so you can work on

those strategies while its not so time involving (B. Stahlman, personal communication,

December 1, 2015).

They also commented on the importance of voluntary partnerships where each partner

feels as if they are able to share equitably in all responsibilities. Language arts teacher #2

responded, "Co-teaching is something that should be seen as something to aspire to, not

something that is simply a chore. It is a valuable and enjoyable professional opportunity

that benefits all students (B. Stahlman, personal communication, December 1, 2015)."

All three teachers focused on the importance of experienced teachers working with

other experienced teachers as well as the importance of voluntary partnerships. Other

similar themes included common prep time and sharing of the instructional load.

Summary

Several common themes came to the surface through this research. Student

perceptions are positively impacted in the co-taught classroom. However, student

academic progress, when measured only through high stakes testing, appears to be highly

variable between sections (teachers). Additionally, there appears to be a "feast or famine"

discrepancy in the co-taught sections of English. This means that, in the co-taught sections,

there appears to be higher proportions of students on the "high growth" and "low growth"

ends of the spectrum. Administrative perceptions of co-teaching tend to align with the

beliefs of co-teaching partnerships in most areas. These areas include the idea that

partnerships must be entered into voluntarily and be supported by administration through

professional development and maintenance of classroom size (ratio of students with

special needs to general education students). When exploring *which models of co-teaching and literacy in the language arts classroom are most effective at the secondary level,* quantitative data gathered does not directly support the effectiveness of co-teaching, the qualitative data suggest that co-teaching is complex and requires more than one variable to measure its success. The learnings, limitations, and conclusions of this study will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine *which models of co-teaching and literacy in the language arts classroom are most effective at the secondary level.* In this chapter, I share my personal learning as a researcher and writer, and will present major findings of this research as well as its limitations and implications for teachers, administrators as well as areas for further research.

Major Learning

Literature review.

The literature review of this capstone was the most challenging and most rewarding part of the process. The implications of the various research studies helped to set up my own framework for data collection as well as to hone my own research question. Authors that I found to be the most related to my research question as well as the most compelling included Marilyn Friend (2010) whose research focuses specifically on co-teaching from the special education mindset. Much of her research and publications focuses on various models of co-teaching as well as challenges, implications and guidelines for teachers. Wendy Murawski and Lisa Dieker (2004) have also published a variety of guidelines and research studies. These publications include information for both teachers and administrators—emphasizing the importance of buy-in and support from both areas. They outline five main actions when preparing to co-teach: assessing the current environment, move in slowly, involve an administrator, get to know your partner, and create a workable schedule. Further, they point out that, "This method of instruction is likely to increase the outcomes for all students in the general education setting, while ensuring that students

with disabilities receive necessary modifications yet are provided instruction by a content

expert"(52). Both authors stress the importance of thoughtful development of co-teaching

partners, interest and buy-in from teachers, support from administrators, as well as

common planning time.

Each author spends time focusing on the importance of differentiation within the

classroom for students with a variety of strengths and needs and how co-teaching can

provide an enriched environment for all students. Friend frequently stressed the idea that

it is difficult to gather specific data because it is not being gathered in a controlled clinical

setting. Teachers' styles, curriculum, student demographics all impact the environment and

make it very difficult to gather conclusive data because of these factors. Gathering growth

data from year to year is also difficult because of these reasons even if the students have

had the same teacher over time.

Research Question and Conclusions

In order to determine *which models of co-teaching and literacy in the language arts*

classroom are most effective at the secondary level, student-based feedback, anonymous

surveys were conducted in two co-taught classes of tenth grade English and interviews

were conducted with two language arts teachers and one special education teacher who co-

teach in that environment. Additionally, an interview was conducted with one

administrator. In relation to the student feedback, here was not much variance in the

responses in regard to student perception of their own reading and written language skills.

More students responded favorably to feeling that they had become better writers than

those who believed they had increased their reading skills. A large percentage of students

responded that they felt they received more help in the co-taught class than in their other

non-co-taught classes, which demonstrates a level of support that is especially beneficial for students who require increased repetition of new materials in order to achieve mastery based on their individual education plan (IEP) adaptations and goals teachers and the administrator felt that co-teaching can be a very positive experience that lead to positive outcomes for students. The model that teachers indicated that was most effective was the team teaching model where both teachers are responsible for direct instruction of students on a daily basis. The shared role was seen as a way to create shared responsibility as well as to allow students to see both teachers in roles of authority rather than one main and one support.

Limitations

One major limitation of this study was the lack of student responses. A longer period of time for data collection would have helped to yield additional data from both ninth and tenth grade students. This study was limited because of the available sample of students at the time based on co-taught class sections being offered (there were only two tenth grade sections). Another major limitation could be my own personal bias related to the topic. As a co-teacher with a special education background, my perspectives and experiences may have impacted how I chose to collect data, the questions that were asked, and my own feelings and thoughts towards the data that was collected. Also, because both co-teachers are teachers who I work with personally, my interviews and questionnaires could have been skewed because I would be the person collating all of the data.

Future research

Because the focus will continue to be on inclusive classrooms, it will be important continue to explore the implications of co-teaching as well as to provide research-based

and data driven guidelines for all of those involved. Individually, it is important to gather student feedback as well as track student growth in a variety of ways. This is, in general, good practice (cite). However, gathering my own longitudinal data will help to support positive impacts of co-teaching as well as to help inform curriculum and instructional decisions that I may need to make.

Sharing the data

The results of this study have highlighted areas of strength within teaching partnerships as well as some areas that continue to be a challenge to both students and professionals. It is important to share the data, conclusions, and limitations with stake holders as well as decision makers within the environment where the study took place. As the push for increased inclusion for students with a variety of needs continues to grow, it is important for decisions to be made based from student and teacher feedback as well as with the outcomes of students in mind. I will share this data with the administrators as well as with the language arts curriculum review committee (of which I am a member). Additionally, results will be shared with the teachers who utilize the co-teaching model— especially those that work with the Language Arts department.

Summary

The capstone writing process has been one of the most difficult academic experiences that I have ever gone through. In many ways, it has been transformative and has helped me to discover my own limitations, strengths and areas of future growth. I chose a research question that, while very much tied to my own practice and daily teaching experiences, was not easily answered. This was discovered throughout the literature review. While there were several other studies with similar questions, the conclusions

were nearly always the same. Other studies concluded that, there is no one clear and "best"

co-teaching model. However, based on student feedback in this study, it can be concluded

that the co-taught literacy environment is a positive one. Though, there are many variables

that impact the outcomes of students, including: student population, teacher background,

teacher experience, behavioral expectations, instructional materials, class size, and the

relationship between the teaching partners. These should also be considered when

determining the effectiveness of teaching models. Co-teaching can be a powerful tool to use

in order to help all students increase their literacy skills and to ensure that students with

disabilities are being provided support in the least restrictive environment possible.

Appendix A

Co-Teacher Questionnaire

What grade do you teach?

What is/are your licensure area(s)?

Within your co-teaching team, which teacher are you?
_____ General Education Teacher   _____Special Education Teacher

What model do you follow most as a co-teacher?

One teach—one assist   Station Teaching   Parallel Teaching
Alternative teaching   Team Teaching

What does this model look like in your own classroom, how do you incorporate it into your practice?

Do you feel that you and your co-teacher share the delivery of instruction in an equitable way? Please explain.

What is your relationship like with your co-teaching partner?

What do you think it means to be a co-teacher?

How do you and your co-teaching partner teach literacy?

Appendix B

Language arts Co-Teacher Interview Questions
Additional questions may be added dependent on answers given based on the following

questions.

1. Which models or models of co-teaching do you think you and your co-teacher utilize

   the most often?

   a. Are there any that you find to be the most helpful?

   b. Least helpful?

   What does this model look like within your classroom?

2. Do you and your co-teacher share the teaching roles within your classroom? Please

   explain.

3. How many years have you been co-teaching?

4. What is your relationship like with your co-teaching partner?

5. What do you wish you would have known before you began co-teaching?

6. What kinds of professional development have you received to help support your co-

   teaching?

7. What kinds of professional development have you received to address your

   students' literacy needs in your class?

8. How do you address literacy within your co-taught classroom? For example, do you

   directly teach vocabulary, comprehension-monitoring strategies, close reading or

   re-reading, do you increase engagement through collaboration?

9. How do you and your teaching partner assess students and monitor their progress?

10. Do you see co-teaching as an effective service delivery model? Why or why not?

Administrative Interview Questions

1. What does co-teaching look like in your building?

2. What would like co-teaching to look like in your building?

3. Do you feel that co-teaching is an effective service delivery model?

4. What is your vision for co-teaching in this building?

5. How are co-teaching partners selected in this building?

    a. Would you like to see it be done differently? If yes, how so?

6. How do you think co-teaching in the language arts classroom can impact student literacy?

7. Are you aware of the different models or models under the co-teaching umbrella?

8. What would changes would you like to see regarding co-teaching in this building?

9. Do you think that co-teaching partnerships get enough common planning time? Professional development around co-teaching?

10. What would a successful co-teaching partnership look like to you?

Student Co-Teaching Questionnaire

I feel like I have received more help in this class than in other non-co-taught classes

SA   A   U   D   SD

I learned more in this co-taught class than in my other classes that are not co-taught.
SA   A   U   D   SD

I enjoyed coming to this class more than my other non-co-taught classes.
SA   A   U   D   SD

I feel that my reading skills have gotten better because of being in this co-taught class.
SA   A   U   D   SD
What are some things related to your reading skills that you think have gotten better?

I feel that I am a better write as a result of being in this co-taught class?
SA   A   U   D   SD
Which parts of writing do you feel you are better at?

Behavioral expectations in this class were clearer than in my other non-co-taught classes.
SA   A   U   D   SD

Assignment and instructional expectations in this class were clearer than in my other non-co-taught classes.
SA   A   U   D   SD

Did you feel that you could ask more questions in this class than in a typical class?
I could ask more questions in this class than in a typical class?
SA   A   U   D   SD

I collaborated (worked with) other students more often in this class than in other non-co-taught classes.
SA   A   U   D   SD

I had more fun in this class than in my other non-co-taught classes.
SA   A   U   D   SD

What was the most fun?

I felt like I got to know my teachers and classmates better in this class than in other classes.

SA   A   U   D   SD

I participated more in this class more often than in other non-co-taught classes.
SA   A   U   D   SD

My favorite part of this class was:

If I had one suggestion to give my teachers about this class it would be:

Appendix E

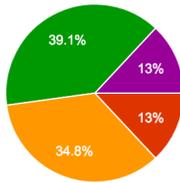## Additional Student Response Table

I felt like I got to know my teachers and classmates better in this class than in other classes.
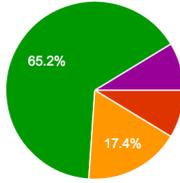
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Disagree	2	8.7%
Unsure/Undecided	4	17.4%
Agree	15	65.2%
Strongly Agree	2	8.7%

I participated more in this class more often than in other non-co-taught classes.

Strongly disagree	0	0%
Disagree	3	13%
Unsure/Undecided	8	34.8%
Agree	9	39.1%
Strongly Agree	3	13%

State Testing Growth by Class Section

Section	High Growth	Low Growth	Medium Growth
Blank	21.05%	31.58%	47.37%
0001-01CT	36.36%	36.36%	27.27%
0001-02	41.38%	13.79%	44.83%
0001-03	38.46%	15.38%	46.15%
0001-04	50.00%	20.00%	30.00%
0001-05	27.27%	36.36%	36.36%
0001-06	11.11%	44.44%	44.44%
0001-07CT	66.67%	8.33%	25.00%
0001-08	35.71%	28.57%	35.71%
0001-09	42.86%	28.57%	28.57%
0001CO-01	22.22%	33.33%	44.44%
0001CO-02	25.00%	12.50%	62.50%
0001CO-03	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%
0002-01	20.00%	0.00%	80.00%
0002-02	55.56%	44.44%	0.00%
0002-03CT	26.67%	40.00%	33.33%
0002-04	50.00%	10.00%	40.00%
0002-05	50.00%	16.67%	33.33%
0002-06CT	50.00%	35.71%	14.29%
0002-07	16.67%	41.67%	41.67%
0002-08	38.10%	33.33%	28.57%
0002-09	62.50%	25.00%	12.50%
0002CO-01	60.00%	0.00%	40.00%
0002CO-02	10.00%	30.00%	60.00%
0002CO-03	0.00%	60.00%	40.00%
TOTAL	**35.96%**	**27.68%**	**36.36%**

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