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Teacher Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Inclusion in Elementary Classroom Settings

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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MA, Troy University, 2006

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Inclusion classrooms were introduced in the United States in 1990 when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act required that special education students be instructed in a general education setting. Ensuing changes in instructional formats have caused role confusion for special and general education teachers, resulted in mixed attitudes toward teacher responsibilities, and lowered teachers' sense of efficacy about being able to teach their students. Guided by Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory, this bounded case study design in a rural elementary school in a southeastern state was used to understand the perceptions of general and special educators regarding their work in inclusive coteaching environments and how their perceptions influenced teaching methods and student learning in the inclusion classroom. Data collection consisted of interviews and observations with a purposeful sample of 8 general and 3 special education teachers, grades 3-5, who had participated in coteaching during the past 2 years. Data were coded and 6 themes were found. Themes that emerged included teachers' needs for collaboration, shared responsibilities, common planning time, and professional development. Other themes involved understandings of teacher attitudes toward coteaching, the components of student success, and the basis for administrative decisions. A professional development project based on the findings was designed to address needs, attitudes, and understandings of special and general education teachers in inclusive classroom settings. This project may foster positive social change by providing a vehicle to assist general education and special education teachers so that they can work together with confidence and cooperation to enhance learning for all students, regardless of their abilities.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Throughout regular classrooms across the United States, students with special needs are included for everyday instruction. Since the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975 and revision to the legislation in 2004 (IDEA, U.S. Department of Education, 2004), special education students must be instructed in classrooms with students without disabilities (Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010). The IDEA legislation assists students with exceptional needs by providing for a proper education at no cost and providing services that prepare students for the work force and autonomous living based on their individual needs (Casale-Giannola, 2012). Under IDEA, students with disabilities (SWD) receive individualized plans of instruction (IEPs), which include parental participation during the inclusion process when decisions are made about how students who have special needs will be educated in general educational classroom settings (Grenier, 2010). Increasing enrollment of SWD also means an increase of SWD expected to show academic progress. If SWD do not demonstrate academic growth, districts across the country will face penalties from the U.S. government (Kaufman & Blewett, 2012).

IDEA and the resulting changes regarding instructional formats have caused role confusion for special and general education teachers. This confusion can lead to an uncertainty of responsibilities in the coteaching setting and can ultimately be a factor in teachers' feelings of low self-efficacy (Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette, & Benson, 2010). Role confusion stems from current coteaching structures, which typically involve a general teacher and a special education teacher as coteachers without guidelines for how their relationship is to be developed or determined. In an ideal setting, both teachers

instruct students as an educational team. In reality, in the inclusion classroom one teacher, usually the grade-level teacher, presents lessons; the special education teacher acts much like an assistant, without the influence a teacher would have in the classroom (Scheeler, Congdon, & Stansbery, 2010). This skewed interpretation of teachers' roles causes difficulty and can make both teachers, and especially the special education teacher, experience frustration with not meeting students' educational requirements. It also confuses feelings about the responsibilities of each teacher in the inclusion classroom.

The triumphs and losses in inclusion classrooms can depend on the dispositions and knowledge base of both teachers (Ross-Hill, 2009). Professional development that embraces the needs of both special and general education educators may be a solution that changes teacher knowledge and attitudes toward inclusion. It could also help teachers understand their roles in an inclusion setting, as well as how to negotiate this new terrain of collaboration. Training in relationship development rather than content mastery may bring this issue to light and help teachers develop the ability to discuss and improve their working relationships. Knowing how to coteach, share responsibility and power, and blend the skills of both teachers does not happen automatically. Yet, even though the two teachers may have different perspectives and backgrounds, the blending of perspectives, backgrounds, and personalities can lead to student success.

Downing and Peckham-Hardin (2007) conducted a study that showed a willingness on the part of 61% of classroom teachers to work in an inclusion classroom, but the teachers campaigned for appropriate preparation and resources to know how to work with students who had severe or moderate disabilities. General educators require

necessary skills to instruct in their subject area, and they also need to acquire knowledge about special education requirements if they are expected to instruct students inside inclusion classrooms. Classroom teachers feel inadequate when they teach students with special needs (Loiacono & Valenti, 2010); however, forming a partnership with the special educator could help general educators learn the required skills. Professional development workshops that involve teachers of special and general education and focus on inclusion can help educators in both fields feel even more successful in their classrooms. Studies show that workshops centered on professional development in the area of teaching students with learning disabilities can help educators feel more capable of teaching students with disabilities (Kosko & Wilkins, 2009).

Definition of the Problem at the Local Level

As a result of IDEA, teaching students with disabilities in inclusion settings has grown in U.S. schools (Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010). The targeted school for this study was aligned with IDEA requirements for inclusion instruction of students with disabilities (SWD). This rural elementary school, which is set in the Southeastern United States, had a total enrollment of 635 students in 2010-2011. Of this population, 12.4% of students were SWD receiving special education services (Governor's Office of Student Achievement [GAOSA], 2011). Inclusion takes place in most classrooms throughout the school and is implemented through the coteaching design, which provides accommodations for SWD to be successful in a general education setting. The design includes two teachers who are certified—one classroom teacher and one trained in special education—who become a team for planning, implementing, and assessing students in the same classroom (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008).

The first component of this study focused on what educators feel about this arrangement and their perceptions of their effectiveness in assisting students with disabilities (SWD) in an inclusion classroom. This study's second component focused on perceptions of educators who teach in the inclusive setting as a team and the way teachers negotiate their relationship when teaching in the same classroom. It especially noted which factors facilitate the relationship and which ones create barriers.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2012) stated that more than 59% of students with disabilities between the ages of 6 and 21 spent an overwhelming percentage of their school day (80%) in a regular or mainstream classroom setting in the 2009-2010 school year. As more schools begin to encourage inclusion classroom settings, school districts will be challenged to provide quality coteaching arrangements (Nichols, Dowdy, & Nichols, 2010). This setting requires teachers to offer some type of inclusion instruction, such as a coteaching model, and to work as a team in their classrooms (Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010).

Although this relationship is mandated, the problem is that teachers in inclusive classroom settings often experience role confusion because they do not fully understand the coteaching design or how to implement it on their own. Special education teachers often express frustration with feeling like teachers' aides, and because special education is highly regulated, classroom teachers may be unclear about working with special education teachers in their classes (Swartz, 2003). This role confusion leads to low teacher efficacy (Viel-Ruma et al., 2010). Teacher efficacy is a teacher's belief about how she or he can affect the education and behavior of students (Woolfson & Brady, 2009). This study addressed the problem of role confusion between the special education

and general education teacher, as well as low teacher efficacy in the coteaching situation. This researcher explored how regular and special educators felt about teaching in inclusive classroom settings and whether these feelings influenced their teaching methods.

Rationale

Increasing enrollment of SWD also means an increase of SWD who are expected to show academic progress. If districts across the United States do not demonstrate growth in academic areas for these learners, they will face penalties from the government (Kaufman & Blewett, 2012).

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Enrollment of SWD in a rural Georgia school district has increased since 2008 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). According to Moores (2011), all students were mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) to show 100% proficiency in academic subjects by the year 2014. In an effort to meet these expectations, this school district practiced coteaching instruction in its inclusion classrooms. However, across the district, regular and special educators had mixed feelings toward inclusion and coteaching (Ross-Hill, 2009). Many educators asked questions about the responsibilities of those who taught in inclusion classrooms and expressed feelings of concern for what was best for all students (Pugach & Winn, 2011).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine classroom and special education teachers' perceptions of coteaching and working in an inclusive setting. It is critical to understand teacher perceptions about inclusion because these perceptions influence the quality of instruction, teacher efficacy in the inclusive setting, and attitudes

toward students in the classroom (Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011). In understanding teachers' perceptions, schools can better provide teachers with opportunities to understand coteaching and support them when they implement inclusive teaching practices (Damore & Murray, 2009). Understanding teachers' perceptions can also help those who seek to address personnel shortages in the special education field. Humphrey and Hourcade (2009) stated that many special education teachers face the challenge of becoming well versed in all subject areas because of the diverse nature of student caseloads and educational needs. Over the past few years, 13.2% of special educators have left their certified jobs (Viel-Ruma et al., 2010). Of these educators, a large number have abandoned the field of education entirely, and more than half have transferred to general education positions. There are several reasons why teachers have left their special education teaching positions. Role confusion is the main factor responsible for special educators departing their field (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001).

Classroom education teachers share the responsibility of SWD with special education teachers. This shared responsibility has raised questions about who is in charge of specific components of instruction in an inclusion classroom. Many teachers have questioned how effective the inclusion model actually is. Teacher attitude and perceived efficacy in teaching SWD are important variables influencing student performance. When teachers develop a positive mindset toward inclusion, students have a better attitude about learning. In addition, teachers who expect their students to perform well in turn encourage their students to hold high standards for themselves (Larwin, 2010).

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

For over four decades, legislation has been passed that has changed how schools educate students with disabilities. Throughout the years, these changes have been a concern for government and educational leaders, as well as other advocates of special needs students. Inclusion classrooms were created with the idea that this kind of learning would provide a stimulating environment for students with special needs (Ross-Hill, 2009). According to Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis (2008), inclusion assumes that students should be regarded for what makes them unique, and that all students bring value to a school setting. Inclusive classrooms allow students to work together in ways that will mirror their life later in a community. Inclusion can encourage growth and allow students to develop social skills and the ability to collaborate with others different from themselves (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007).

Inclusion classrooms have presented challenges for general and special education teachers. Successful inclusion classrooms depend upon positive attitudes of both mainstream and special education teachers. These attitudes are important because general education teachers have more contact and influence on the success of SWD and inclusive programs. Sari, Celikoz, and Secer (2009) stated that teachers' perspectives and beliefs about teaching in an inclusive setting can be affected by a teacher's age, the kind of handicap the child has, and the amount of special education support that the school administration provides. In addition, the kind of training at the school and the teacher's level of knowledge affect a teacher's attitude. Researchers contended that if teachers' efficacy regarding coteaching can be supported and developed, efforts towards inclusive teaching could succeed (Sari et al., 2009).

One way that teachers' efficacy can be enhanced is through teacher training before the coteaching classroom begins (Sari et al., 2009). This training should be conducted for all personnel in connection with inclusive settings. Teachers must be knowledgeable about curriculum and educational goals in order for inclusion classrooms to be successful (Ross-Hill, 2009). Once teachers learn how to implement lessons they can manage in these settings, their efficacy can improve, and their attitudes toward inclusion may change. Information and skills regarding inclusion promote confidence in teaching. Once teachers understand these principles, they will be more open to accepting SWD into their classroom (Sari et al., 2009). In addition, if general education teachers can learn through their partnerships with special education teachers, then the learning process can continue.

Definitions

The definitions below are included to facilitate the understanding of the study:

Coteaching: A classroom setting in which two teachers are assigned to teach together. The teachers may divide the teaching by working with different students in the same setting, by working with blended groups, or by joining students with different learning needs and abilities (Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The updated federal law that mandates that children with disabilities be educated in a public school setting that adequately addresses their learning needs, or that includes students without disabilities, if possible (IDEA, 2004).

Individual Education Plan (IEP): A plan that focuses on how to improve a student's work by addressing what the student is doing well rather than what the student

cannot do. The plan provides goals, evaluations, and present levels of functioning for the student and stipulates how the child will be educated (Weishaar, 2010, p. 207).

Inclusion: An educational model in which students with varying levels of disabilities attend their neighborhood school, where they are educated with general education students in the same classrooms (Loiacono & Valenti, 2010).

Least restrictive environment (LRE): A legal requirement that students with disabilities must be taught in the general education classroom with students without disabilities, provided their IEP and academic goals are achievable in that setting (IDEA, 2004).

Self-efficacy: A belief or sense that a person can have an influence within the environment. For a teacher, this would be a sense of being able to have an effect on students and create a positive learning environment for them. This ability to exert influence can also help a teacher persist despite adversity or a difficult classroom environment (Bandura, 2006).

Significance

This study contributes to the knowledge base of education, specifically inclusion classroom procedures, by providing data related to perceptions and viewpoints of general and special education teachers in a coteaching, inclusive classroom. This study specifically contributes to best practices in elementary inclusion classrooms by addressing the self-efficacy of both types of teachers in inclusive classrooms. Understanding teacher attitudes toward inclusion may facilitate the development of strategies for administrators and for those who provide in-service support for the teachers on how to work together.

This study positively contributes to social change. With an improved understanding of the coteaching environment and teachers' attitudes and perceptions, school administrators can be more aware of issues related to coteaching and offer support to teachers with the expertise necessary to create an effective and inclusive learning environment. Such an environment ensures that students, regardless of their abilities, will learn in classroom settings with teachers who are confident that they can teach all students successfully. The findings provide principals and other educational leaders with information to support appropriate educational programs that promote inclusive practices.

Guiding/Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions of general and special educators regarding their work in inclusive, coteaching environments and how their perceptions influenced teaching methods in the inclusion classroom. Four research questions guided the study:

1. What are general educators' perceptions of their instructional efficacy with students with disabilities in the inclusion setting?
2. What are the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations of general educators regarding a coteaching setting with a special education teacher?
3. What are special educators' perceptions of their instructional efficacy with SWD in the inclusion setting?
4. What are the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations of special educators regarding a coteaching setting with a general education teacher?

Review of the Literature

This section presents a foundation for the study with a review of past research.

This literature review includes five areas: (a) history, (b) theoretical framework of Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory, (c) teacher attitudes concerning inclusion, (d) teacher preparation programs, and (e) coteaching. The review describes Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory with regard to student and teacher autonomy and success in the classroom. The review includes teacher attitudes, teacher preparation programs, and coteaching to reflect key elements of inclusive classroom settings. This chapter also includes efficacy to address the way teachers feel about themselves in relation to teaching in inclusion settings. According to Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, an individual's belief system, including thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations, determines a person's outcomes. These outcomes establish and strengthen an individual's sense of self-efficacy. This review of literature focuses on background research for general and special education teachers in inclusion classrooms.

I used multiple databases to find articles relating to this study, including ProQuest Central, ERIC, PsycINFO, and Education Research Complete. The key search terms used were *inclusion*, *coteaching*, *perceptions of inclusion*, *self-efficacy*, and *IDEA*. The material for this research came chiefly from peer-reviewed journals and textbooks. The purpose of this study was to examine general and special educators' perceptions of working in inclusive classrooms in order to understand how these perceptions influence teaching methods in the inclusive classroom.

History

Public Law 94-142 gave children with disabilities access to a "free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment" (IDEA, 1975, p. X). Since the passage of this law, the number of students with disabilities who are educated in general

education classrooms has increased in school districts across the United States. The U.S. Department of Education (2005) reported an increase of close to 50% of students with disabilities who received education in general education classrooms, up from 3.5 million students in 1993. 43.4% of the students in mainstream classes had modified educational plans or individual educational plans (IEPs) (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

The increase of students with disabilities in general education classrooms has added more responsibility to both general and special educators. This shared responsibility has led to more inclusive classroom settings throughout the United States. According to Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009), inclusion is the teaching of students with disabilities and students without disabilities in classrooms that are equipped with the resources to provide equitable educational opportunities. Inclusion teaching also includes modifications to materials or the curriculum, school buildings with access for all students, and differentiated instruction and assessment provided by teachers who are prepared to work in inclusive settings. Inclusion also requires teachers to create various methods of engagement in the classroom to enhance learning (Gore, 2010). Teachers in these inclusive settings have developed a mixture of attitudes toward inclusion. These attitudes are not uniformly positive, and the relationships between coteachers in the coteaching classroom are varied and complex with different arrangements in different schools (Fakolade, Samuel Olufemi, & Tella, 2009).

Earlier researchers called inclusion an attitude—a value and belief system (Villa & Thousand, 1995). Evaluations from the past 50 years of general education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion revealed that classroom teachers may not always be positive

when working with students with special needs (Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010). The attitudes, as well as the abilities of the general education teacher, usually indicate the need for smaller class sizes, more personnel assistance in the classroom, and more support from teacher preparation programs (Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010).

Theoretical Framework of Self-Determination

The theoretical framework of the study was self-determination theory (SDT). The theory, created by Deci and Ryan (2000), focuses on individual motivation. The framework provides a way to understand how a classroom can affect student motivation and outcomes. According to self-determination theory, individuals notice that they are the cause of their actions and behaviors, rather than being controlled by outside agents; as a result, individuals experience greater motivation and success. Niemiec and Ryan (2009) reported that improving "intrinsic motivation and autonomous types of extrinsic motivation relate positively to important academic outcomes" (p. 141).

Competence, autonomy, and relatedness are three psychological needs that form the basic criteria regarding what determines self-motivation, according to Deci and Ryan (2000). A person's need for autonomous decisions and actions is sometimes called self-determination. Individuals, teachers and students alike, need to feel that they are in control of their lives. Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory is similar to Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory. According to Bandura, an individual's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations, or belief system can influence an outcome. Both theories embrace autonomy. People usually feel this need for autonomy in settings where they can make decisions and not feel controlled by others (Darner, 2009). Teachers historically have made professional decisions alone regarding their classrooms. Teachers have taken

individual responsibility for what happens in their classroom and how they interact and make choices regarding their students (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2010).

This way of thinking can help teachers motivate their students in an inclusion setting. Students involved in a classroom that motivates them to make decisions on their own feel more engaged toward their schoolwork (Ciani, Ferguson, Bergin, & Hilpert, 2010). Students in these kinds of classes are more disposed to pursue ideas outside of class when teachers give them choices and autonomy in the classroom. Therefore, when teachers facilitate students' sense of autonomy, they also help motivate them to improve their skills (Ciani et al., 2000). Teachers who encourage students to make their own decisions, who acknowledge students' differing perspectives, and who help students provide rationales whenever possible (Reeve & Jang, 2006) create an autonomous classroom environment that motivates and engages students.

Teacher Attitudes toward Inclusion

The way students behave and perform in the classroom is a reflection of their attitudes (Kim, 2011). This underlying, and sometimes unstated attitude, can affect how the individual interacts in a group setting. Students' attitudes may be influenced or created by experiences they have had with teachers (Kim, 2011). In this respect, a teacher's character traits or attitude about their students' work or their ability to work may influence the students themselves, which may influence their learning outcomes. Teacher attitudes have been specifically targeted, especially in inclusive settings, because of the link to student behavior and achievement. These attitudes are multifaceted and vary from one teacher to another, nationally and globally. Frankel (2004) asserted that teachers

show biases against students with disabilities from a lack of trust in their own abilities to be effective when teaching students with disabilities in their classroom.

Teachers' attitudes about working with students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom are complex (Berry, 2010). Teachers with a positive view often have confidence in their teaching ability and their effectiveness with students with disabilities who need a modified curriculum and special understanding. Teachers who hold a less favorable attitude have a tendency to feel that inclusion makes too many demands, and that students with disabilities should be taught separately, where they can receive individual instruction (Berry, 2010).

Classroom teachers are expected to be instructionally effective for all types of students in their classroom, regardless of the type of student and despite an increase of diversity in the classroom, including an increase of students with special needs (Berry, 2010). Titone (2005) suggested that teachers who are effective in inclusive classrooms are willing to teach students with disabilities and help all students become responsible for their own learning. Teachers with positive attitudes toward working with students in their classrooms take responsibility to help all students, and in turn help all students learn to take ownership of their learning (Berry, 2010).

As a way to understand teachers' attitudes toward inclusive classrooms, Berry (2010) examined how pre-service and new teachers perceived working with students with disabilities in their classrooms. Berry found that pre-service teachers believed in treating students fairly, whereas new teachers were more pragmatic. Berry recommended educational opportunities to address teachers' concerns and ideas of fairness to develop more positive attitudes toward inclusion.

Fuchs (2010) also interviewed and observed elementary school teachers who taught in a regular classroom, especially as they taught students with disabilities in the mainstreamed, general classroom. She examined general educators' beliefs and attitudes about current mainstreaming practices. Fuchs found that general educators' perceptions about their teaching responsibilities were influenced by their expectations, past responsibilities, and administrators' practices regarding special education. Participating teachers felt that the expectations and responsibilities of inclusion were unreasonable, and that there was a lack of support from administration in several areas regarding their roles in special education services (Fuchs, 2010). In another study, Waldron, McLeskey, and Redd (2011) revealed that principals can be important in helping teachers feel effective when working in inclusive settings. According to Waldron et al., principals who supported mainstream teachers and offered ways in which they could improve helped them work better with students.

Other researchers found positive attitudes toward inclusion. In a study conducted by Ross-Hill (2009), regular education teachers stated that they had more confidence when given professional development training to work with students with disabilities. Elementary and secondary teachers who had received specialized training accepted students with special needs into their regular classrooms more readily. Ross-Hill concluded that their study would contribute to social change by offering hope to students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Pre-service and teacher preparation programs are designed to give teachers the skills, knowledge, and confidence to work effectively in the classroom. These programs

provide experiences that enhance teacher efficacy and familiarization with integrated classrooms. Most teachers probably form their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about working with students with disabilities when they are in their pre-service program (Hsien, 2007). It has also been shown that collective leadership produces high levels of academic optimism when leaders create professional development opportunities for teachers (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Collective leadership provides instruction and influence for pre-service teachers and other teachers in inclusive settings (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Research has shown that teachers who experience pre-service preparation programs that include education for instruction of SWD develop better teacher efficacy in their classrooms (Woolfolk-Hoy & Spero, 2005).

Gao and Mager (2011) showed that a focus on diversity, such as one used in a private university, could help give novice teachers a positive view toward inclusion. It could also give students with disabilities a sense that their teachers can be effective when teaching them in the general education classroom. Gao and Mager investigated pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward diversity and how these attitudes affected the efficacy of students while studying in the program. The program placed an emphasis on the value of diversity in schools to prepare pre-service teachers for their future work in inclusion classrooms. The authors found that pre-service teachers' beliefs and perceptions about inclusion, their sense of efficacy, and their attitudes toward school diversity were positively associated. Their study showed that pre-service teachers who demonstrated a belief in their abilities were more likely to serve students with disabilities effectively. Similarly, Bandura (1993) noted that teachers who felt that they were effective put more effort into adjusting instruction for their students. Students who felt that they were highly

effective were motivated to find solutions to challenges in the classroom (Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010).

Coteaching Model

One teaching approach in inclusive settings is to use coteachers. One teacher is trained for general education, and the second teacher has a background in special education. Coteaching is a design that "provides a richly differentiated learning environment" (Tannock, 2009, p. 173), so that general education students as well as students with special needs can benefit alike. Coteaching benefits both students and teachers; the benefits develop as coteaching relationships grow (Nichols, Dowdy, & Nichols, 2010).

According to Murawski and Lochner (2011), coteaching comprises three elements: planning together, teaching together, and doing assessments. The teachers' joint planning time allows the special education teacher to add expertise in differentiation, adapting lessons, and giving positive support to the students. When teachers develop their lessons through co-planning, they can give students with disabilities the opportunities to be successful in learning general education content. Co-instructing actually takes place in the classroom during instruction. Teachers who coteach well are those who engage students actively and communicate during instruction. The last component, co-assessing, requires general and special educators to use their expertise in assessment to evaluate what students actually know. Once the students are assessed, teachers are better able to provide various methods of assessment to meet student needs (Murawski & Lochner, 2011).

These relationships evolve in stages, and it takes effort on the part of both the special and general educators to make sure that relationships between the two flourish. Teachers who practice the coteaching model enter into a partnership. The partnership is between one special education and one mainstream teacher. The two teachers together are responsible for working with all students inside the class. This responsibility is supposed to be shared, and both teachers are to be given equal responsibility and authority; however, the reality is that this equality rarely occurs (Nichols et al., 2010). Most of the time, the grade-level or general education teachers assume that they are the ones to lead the class because the teaching is done in their classroom; the special education teacher is seen as an assistant or the one who manages small group activities. Many educators feel that proper staff development would better prepare teachers to help them understand the coteaching model (Nichols et al., 2010). Professional learning communities (PLCs) are examples of how staff can be supported and given opportunities to learn from each other while on the job. Staff that participate in professional learning communities can gain new skills in areas that not only are relevant for them individually but are also aligned to the school's priorities. School-wide professional development allows staff to see how their work contributes to teaching and learning (Coulbeck, 2009). This type of staff development could help both special and general education teachers understand the coteaching model.

Coteaching is one method of a classroom setup to provide support for students with disabilities in mainstream classes. It is one option for the way students with disabilities can be educated in a mainstream setting in a less restrictive environment than the one in which they were previously taught. It works best and is most effective for

SWD when teachers are collaborative and consultative (Carter, Prater, Jackson, & Marchant, 2009). General and special education teachers who collaborate and plan jointly can improve learning in their shared classroom by discussing issues that are relevant to their students (Howes, Davies, & Fox, 2009). These teachers show a mutual respect for each other, take on equal roles in the classroom, work together to develop mutual goals, share responsibility for outcomes, use common resources, and communicate effectively for the sake of the students (Conderman, 2011). When this cooperation is present, all students in the collaborative inclusion classroom can benefit (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007).

Current research has focused on the need for school improvement strategies that target inclusion practices. As such, this study has explored educators' ideas about the inclusive classroom and coteaching and how this setting affects their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations. General and special education teachers were both included in the study. In examining the perceptions and attitudes of these educators, I have been able to add to the knowledge base for creating an effective learning environment in inclusive settings.

Implications

One reason that inclusion classrooms were developed was to meet the requirements of the least restrictive environment (LRE) law (Bauer & Kroeger, 2004). The settings in these inclusion classrooms vary from district to district. Some settings are successful, but others are not (Nichols et al., 2010). The researchers found that there was more than one reason why they were not successful, but in most instances, it was because of unclear direction of who was in charge of what. Teachers of both special and general

education felt confused and unprepared to teach all students in an inclusive setting (Nichols et al., 2010).

The research findings could have a positive social influence on educators and all others who are involved in educating students with special needs. The findings could help direct educational leaders toward decisions on the best professional development for teachers of inclusion. Educators must continue to evaluate the ways in which schools address the opportunities for social development and personal growth of the SWD if they want to develop a successful inclusive school (Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2012). Responses from special and general education teachers revealed the coteaching concerns and desires among administrators and other professionals. It is hoped that these responses will provide a new understanding and awareness of ways teachers perceive inclusion, so that they can have more successful coteaching experiences in the future.

This study helped to determine what professional development training could be utilized to facilitate positive teaching situations, team work, and favorable outcomes for the students. The results of this study could also be disseminated to local universities to inform their pre-service practices, which prepare teachers for working together. Further outcomes may be developed depending on the outcomes of the research, including suggestions for curriculum development and ongoing in-service support and training.

Summary

This section discussed a qualitative study that examined teachers' perceptions of inclusion in the elementary classroom. Examination of these perceptions can enable schools and educators to review the data and implement changes in classrooms. Results

from the study have the potential to change educators' perspectives of inclusion in the classroom. A more detailed understanding of teacher perceptions of inclusion is presented in this study. These understandings and issues lend themselves toward further inquiry by way of a project study.

Section 2, which follows, will explore the methodology behind the research. Included in this section are the description of the study and the rationale for choosing the qualitative case study design. It also includes an explanation of how and why I chose the participants for the study and collected and analyzed data throughout the study. In addition, this section includes a discussion of credibility and ethical issues related to this research.

Section 2: The Methodology

This section describes the qualitative case study design used in this research. Qualitative researchers strive for understanding and meaning. They realize that in order to obtain a thorough understanding of the topic, they must conduct personal interviews with informants in the field of study and investigate for in-depth meaning. Gathering data and exploring human behavior directly give real meaning to a researcher's experience while conducting the study (Hatch, 2002). I chose to conduct a case study to gain a deep understanding of coteachers' perceptions of inclusion classes at one particular setting.

The setting chosen for this study currently follows the coteaching model in its inclusion classrooms. Among the 635 students who attended the school setting in 2010-2011, 12.4% received modified services in an inclusion classroom. Due to the large percentage of students in such settings, teacher perceptions of inclusion were a significant issue that needed to be explored. Creswell (2008) explained that case study methodology allows for an in-depth investigation of a defined, limited, or bound setting using comprehensive and exhaustive data collection procedures. Section 2 of the present study describes the process for collecting data, including the targeted population, setting, sample, research design, and instrumentation. I collected observations, individual interviews, and written artifacts to triangulate data. The aim of this case study was to understand general and special educators' perceptions of inclusion and how their attitudes influence teaching.

Research Design and Approach

My research used a case study to understand the relationship between coteachers in inclusion classrooms in a rural Georgia school. The purpose of the study was to probe deeply into special and general education teachers' thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and attitudes toward teaching in an inclusive classroom setting. Participants selected through purposeful sampling were required to meet specified criteria to be a part of the study. Creswell (2008) stated that a researcher should select participants who will provide key information for the study. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to find knowledgeable participants who can provide information relevant to the study (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). This study focused on inclusion; therefore, criteria included being a teacher who currently teaches in an inclusion classroom in the district.

The selection process involved a group of special and general education teachers who had 3-18 years of experience teaching and currently cotaught in inclusive settings. Teachers who had not taught in this type of classroom were not included in the study because they were not knowledgeable of the phenomenon being studied.

Although many disciplines use a case study design, researchers also employ other approaches when they conduct qualitative research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Other methods commonly used in this type of research are ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory (Lodico et al., 2010). Ethnographic research is used to describe a specific culture's beliefs, values, and attitudes in order to create a cultural portrait of that group. This design was not appropriate for my study because I was not examining a specific culture (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Phenomenological researchers look closely at individuals' experience of a specific issue, but in this type of study the

researcher focuses more on the essence of the experience. Therefore, phenomenological research was not the best design for my study (Lodico et al., 2010). Another possible design I considered was grounded theory research, which involves data collection over an extended time period to understand a process and to develop a theory from the data. Thus, this design was not suitable for my study because I was comparing multiple perspectives instead of understanding a process (Creswell, 2008).

Even though these designs were all suitable for qualitative research, a case study design was the most suitable for two reasons. The first reason was because the goal of my study was to understand teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of working in an inclusion classroom setting. The second reason is that my study focused on a particular group, and I was searching for insight from teachers involved in inclusion classrooms, so I felt a case study design was the most appropriate design (Lodico et al., 2010).

Case studies allow researchers to acquire a deep understanding of situations from participants at the site (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). I accomplished this goal through observing general and special education teachers in inclusion classroom settings.

Participants

The aim of this qualitative case study was to understand general and special education teachers' thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations regarding inclusion and their attitudes toward coteaching in inclusion classrooms. It is important to observe participants in their natural setting to obtain valuable insight into what the researcher is investigating (Lodico et al., 2010). The maximum number of eligible participants that could be interviewed from this school site was 14 (ten general education teachers and four special education teachers). All 14 participants were invited to participate and

provide consent (Appendix C) to be a part of the study. Eleven participants provided consent to participate in the study. All participants had experience working in inclusive classroom settings and had obtained degrees ranging from bachelor's to master's degrees. The combination of these factors was evidence that participants had specific and extensive knowledge of the research topic.

I interviewed and observed 11 eligible participants for the study. Purposeful sampling is best used when participants are members of a subgroup that has defining characteristics (Lodico et al., 2010). The characteristics of this study's participants were that they all taught in a rural elementary school in Southwest Georgia and had extensive knowledge of the research topic. Criteria to participate in the study included third to fifth grade teachers who taught and collaborated with a coteacher in an inclusive class at least a few hours each day. Participants in the study also provided instruction to students with similar ethnic and economic backgrounds and taught in the same elementary school.

According to Patton (2002), no set of rules dictates what number of participants should be interviewed in qualitative study. The aim of this research was to understand the topic from a specific, knowledgeable number of teachers; therefore, data were collected from a select number of teachers. Qualitative studies usually create a focus using a small, carefully selected group of participants or cases (Creswell, 2008). The sample size for this qualitative study included 11 participants (eight general education teachers and three special education teachers). These teachers instruct students in an inclusive classroom in an elementary school located in rural Georgia. This sample size deepened the inquiry of the study by including teachers in both regular and specialized areas who had worked collaboratively in a school district that implements the coteaching model in inclusion

classrooms. Teaching experience for this sample ranged from 3 to 18 years. Student demographics for these teachers included 65% Caucasian students, 25% African American students, 7% Hispanic students, 1% Asian students, and 2% students from other ethnic backgrounds. I selected participants according to their years of experience in inclusive settings, the makeup of their classroom, and their willingness to be a part of the study.

Ethical Protection for Participants

Prior to beginning the study, I presented a research proposal to Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). After Walden's IRB granted permission (approval # 06-09-14-0158206) to conduct the study, I met with the site school administrator and county superintendent to request authorization to carry out the proposed study. Once I had received permission, I contacted participants through electronic mail and described the details of the study. I requested that the teachers provide informed consent to participate in the research. I explained their rights and informed participants that their work in the study was voluntary, and their information would be confidential. I also informed them that their participation would not be compensated, and withdrawal could take place at any time. Collecting data was the next step in the process after obtaining permission.

Role of the Researcher

Establishing a researcher-participant relationship was not difficult because a general working relationship had already been established. This relationship helped me develop the respect of participants through mutual interactions as we discussed teaching practices in an inclusion classroom setting. These interactions helped develop trust and

allowed the participants to talk openly about their perceptions of inclusion. I am a teacher of an inclusion classroom at the research site, but I did not have a supervisory role for any of the teachers who participated in the study. Although five teachers of special education and 15 regular education teachers work in inclusion classrooms at the site, I did not include myself or my coteacher in the study because it was imperative to maintain a positive working relationship during the study. Because I did not include myself or my coteacher, there were 14 participants invited to be a part of this study to allow for saturation of data on the topic of coteachers' sense of effectiveness in the inclusion setting.

Researcher bias could have been an issue if general or special education teachers were not willing or able to share their true thoughts and feelings about inclusion classrooms. According to Merriam (2009), this type of relationship is challenging; it is sometimes difficult to merge participation and observation and then properly convey the results. To address potential bias, I remained impartial when asking questions; I also separated study-related activities from work-related ones. When communicating about study-related activities, I did not communicate any personal views and made sure participants' views were based only on their thoughts and opinions. To ensure my impartiality and neutrality, a peer reviewer familiar with inclusion and local issues acted as an auditor and reviewed the data. I emphasized that all discussions and interviews would remain confidential. As a safeguard, I obtained a confidentiality agreement.

Data Collection

I conducted interviews and observations of participants in order to understand their perceptions of working in an inclusion classroom. The observations took place in

inclusion classrooms over a time period of 4 weeks. The purpose of the interviews was to inquire about teachers' thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations about inclusion and their attitudes toward coteaching in inclusion classrooms. I conducted interviews outside of instructional time in the school's conference room or teachers' lounge. I also observed each of the teachers for a 30-minute period in their classrooms. During the observations, I took notes on how the coteachers interacted based on the theoretical framework of Deci and Ryan (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). This framework includes criteria such as relatedness, feelings, sense of efficacy, and behavior. I used the same criteria to develop the interview questions. These notes helped me identify specific elements of inclusion and determine the mood that pervaded the research setting. Using multiple compatible data types helped me to triangulate data. Triangulation is a process that allows researchers to compare data collected from different sources (Lodico et al., 2010). The interviews, observations, and document reviews gave me three sources for showing validation and trustworthiness.

Interviews

I collected data from personal interviews from one elementary school over a 4-week period. Doran (2008) stated that interviews are one method to determine the effectiveness of instructional methods used with students in a coteaching setting. Interviews in qualitative research also provide the participants an opportunity to describe their feelings about the topic being explored (Glesne, 2011). The interviews in this study were audiotaped and consisted of open-ended questions about teaching in an inclusive setting. Before interviews and taping took place, I obtained permission to tape the interviews and assured the participants that information obtained in these interviews and observations would remain confidential. I asked open-ended questions to give

participants the opportunity to answer them in their own way without feeling required to answer according to a plan or in one particular way. The interviews allowed me to ask in-depth and follow-up questions to understand the ways the teachers worked together, their attitudes about coteaching, and their perceptions of inclusion. Interviews also provided an opportunity to have a one-on-one conversation with each participating teacher.

I created an interview format guide before the interview session to serve as a tool to keep the interview focused on the desired subject. It also consisted of a specific list of interview questions formulated for the project study (Appendix A). I created this interview guide to answer the research questions and developed interview questions from the literature review and conceptual framework for the study. Interview questions addressed participants' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in an inclusion setting, along with their attitudes and beliefs about inclusion. Interviews took place after school hours in a setting away from the teachers' classrooms, in the school conference room or media center book room, so that participants' confidentiality could be safeguarded. I took hand-written notes and recorded the interviews to allow for typed transcriptions of the narrative.

Observations

Data were also collected from observations (Appendix D) of teachers in an inclusive classroom setting. Observations let researchers see participants in their natural setting and provide a broad viewpoint that can only be achieved through the observer's eyes. Observations also permit a researcher to collect data that is natural and reflects a reality of the situation as the participants see it (Lodico et al., 2010). During these observations, I took part as a nonparticipant spectator. Playing this role allowed me to

observe and not be an active participant in lessons or activities (Creswell, 2008). In addition, observing teachers in their classrooms also gave me an opportunity to take notes about what I saw and heard throughout the session. Observations provided me with a first-hand opportunity to document notes of conversations and interactions between the special and general education teacher. In this way, I could understand the individual roles of the teachers, gauge how effective they felt in their role, and determine their attitudes toward coteaching. Observations took place in inclusive classrooms for a 30-minute time period. The convenience of both parties' schedules determined the specific time. Once observations were complete, I read through my notes and added reflections and insights formed through the observations.

Observations were a way that I could clarify what a participant had said during an interview and also triangulate the answer to a question. I took notes on discrepancies that I saw between the interviews and practice and asked follow-up questions for clarification. This method facilitated a profound appreciation for the situation from a participant's viewpoint.

For this study, along with triangulation of the data, I maintained an audit trail that described the data collection and coding process of themes, along with the decision-making process throughout the study. I used an audit trail to maintain journal entries during the study, which also included information about the data and how they were specifically collected. The other journal entries included how I determined themes and categories. In addition, I continued documentation throughout my interview process in a journal of reflection. This journal contained notes that documented my thoughts and feelings about the interviews and my classroom observations.

Data Analysis

Components in qualitative research do not always have a preferred method. One such component is data analysis (Merriam, 2009). The data analysis method analyzes data at the same time it is being collected. When a considerable quantity of information from interviews, observations, and document reviews is collected in qualitative research, it is crucial to organize the data as they are collected (Creswell, 2008). Qualitative researchers use various kinds of techniques when they organize, classify, and find themes in their data (Glesne, 2011). Some researchers may use coding, computer programs, or types of displays to better understand their data. It is important for the chosen technique to help the researcher make connections to the data that are meaningful (Glesne, 2011). In this study, I analyzed the data by using transcription, identification of themes, and open coding. I chose these analytical methods to increase the knowledge of data significance and answer-proposed research questions.

In this study, I anticipated initial themes from the literature. I structured the interview questions according to the anticipated themes or content areas to facilitate seeing the patterns of teachers' perceptions. I asked the same open-ended questions of each participant based around the themes of thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations in teaching in an inclusion classroom. After the participant interviews, I made a follow-up appointment for member checking to go through the transcript and my analysis of their answers. In this way, I was sure to have their input. To further understand and monitor themes or patterns about the teachers' attitudes of inclusion, I transcribed taped interviews immediately following each interview. I read each line in the interviews to search for specific words that described the meaning of text segment

(Creswell, 2008). This procedure helped in the open coding that I used during the data analysis. This process helped me break the data apart and identify, or code, similarities in the data and see themes that emerged from the interviews, observations, and documents (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During the time I spent in developing and refining codes, I used broader categories to help recognize emerging themes and direct additional analysis.

When I observed, I looked for data that fell into the identified themes and made notes of other likely themes that would emerge from the data. In order to recognize recurring themes, I analyzed and coded observation field notes. I assigned categories to common themes as I found them in the notes, compared these categories to common themes found in the interviews, and grouped commonalities together by color code.

After I collected the data, I began a coding notebook to record the evolving structure of the data based on the interviews, observations, or document review (Glesne, 2011). It was important to begin coding the data in a notebook immediately to keep the review of it fresh. In doing so, I was able to follow up in areas where I had questions, saw discrepancies, or for other reasons felt the need to gain more data.

Once data and analysis collection took place, I conducted member checking to review my findings and ensure that all transcriptions were accurate. I asked the participants to review findings of their own data. Creswell (2008) stated that member checking determines accuracy of the results through reviewing a final report with participants. Feedback from participants helped to evaluate information collected through interviews and also ensured that their information was what they planned to share. Also, as the participants went through their interviews or saw my perceptions of the

observations, they had further comments and clarifications to make. I gave the participants 72 hours to complete the reviewing process and return the transcripts.

After I completed the data analysis, I answered the research questions based on the analysis results. I then prepared a theme-based narrative to share the findings. I used this themed data to describe the setting, participants, and activities of teachers in inclusive classroom settings in a rural Georgia school district.

Data Presentation

I used a narrative approach to document the beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of general and special education teachers who instruct students in inclusive classrooms. Most authors write qualitative research in an enjoyable, narrative style (Lodico et al., 2010). I reported the data, which was captured from interviews and observations of both types of teachers when instructing students in an inclusive classroom setting, to the administration in the rural Georgia school setting. It described teachers' instructional decisions and experiences concerning inclusion, along with their feelings and attitudes about coteaching. It also answered the questions about general educators' perceptions of their instructional efficacy with SWD in the inclusion setting. It described the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations of general educators regarding coteaching settings with a special education teacher. Further, it explained special educators' perceptions of their instructional efficacy with SWD in the inclusion setting, as well as their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations regarding a coteaching setting with general education teachers. A narrative description provides readers with insights from the description of special and general education teachers' thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations within a coteaching setting (Mensah, 2009).

I displayed the results of the study in a narrative format to summarize and better explain the findings. I have included quotes from participants, including their comparisons and analogies, as well as my own interpretations. The narrative creates a collected representation of the participants' statements, combined from their interviews regarding their perceptions and feelings towards inclusion after I coded them by themes.

In studying educational research problems, researchers more fully understand individual experiences when they apply a narrative format. This specific format gave me an opportunity to present my findings in a detailed, storytelling approach. This kind of research gives the participants a feeling of importance because their stories are acknowledged and shared (Lodico et al., 2010).

Accuracy and Credibility

According to Merriam (2009), researchers are encouraged to apply triangulation from multiple kinds of data to validate the findings and help the reliability of the study. To ensure that the data were credible, I triangulated the information and emerging categories as I coded the data. Triangulation evidence arrived from observational field notes and participant interviews in inclusion classrooms. During triangulation, I sought themes by examining word repetition, key words, and constant comparison for similarities and differences, as well as by the natural coding that takes place from the consistent use of questions among the participants (Golafshani, 2003). Triangulation established the validity of the findings in this particular study because data from observations supported what participants said in their interviews and allowed for the richness of the themes in the data to emerge.

To establish dependability and reliability, I also verified data through member checking and peer review. Participants reviewed their own findings of the data through member checking and reported any discrepancies. There was a discrepancy in Participant B's interview response concerning the term "flawless", and I corrected and changed it in the findings. Member checking allowed the informer to operate as an inspector during the process of analysis and ensured the outside validity of lush, broad, thorough descriptions of the data (Creswell, 2003).

For my peer review, I asked a colleague to conduct an audit of the data and determine if the results had been sensibly evaluated. The peer reviewer conducted the audit data and agreed with the results of the evaluation. Peer reviews limit researcher bias because they allow for multiple opinion sharing about the data and findings of the study (Creswell, 2008).

Discrepant Cases

As I coded the data, I searched for discrepant data that emerged between the interviews and observations. There could have been discrepancies among the interview responses and observations among the various participants. Another source of discrepancies could have been between what was said in the interview and what I read in the school documents. For instance, the interview with Participant B revealed that she felt that an inclusion classroom should look flawless. By using the term flawless, she meant that an observer should not identify who the general or special educator was in the classroom. This teacher has experienced a coteaching setting with both a teacher who shared the classroom responsibilities and with one who would only work at a table with her special education students.

Whenever I saw incongruent information, I was sure to ask about it when the participants reviewed their data in the member checking process. I asked questions that expanded my understanding or aided in clarification of the issue (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). It was important to include the data from the interviews and observations in the findings because they increased validity of the study (Merriam, 2009).

Findings

The research findings for this study were based on understanding participants' experiences and feelings about inclusion classrooms. One purpose of this study was to find out about the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of both special and general educators regarding their instructional efficacy with students with disabilities in the inclusion setting. In addition, I conducted the research to learn the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations of both special and general educators regarding coteaching settings.

Information gathered from interviews, field notes, and observations provided the answers to the research questions. I coded and organized these data to answer the research questions through the framework (see Appendix E for the alignment grid). I transcribed the interviews to obtain text that could be analyzed. To ensure reliable and accurate outcomes, I coded the interview transcripts, checked field notes against observation notes, checked with the participants about the accuracy of the transcripts, and conducted an audit with the aid of a peer reviewer, who is a teacher employed at the study site.

In the following subsection, I describe answers to the research questions in detail. Research Questions 1 and 3 have their own heading, as do Research Questions 2 and 4. Detailed responses follow that answer the questions, as well as a section on the themes

that emerged from the responses. Research questions revealed three themes in each set, which I presented in order from most evident to least evident.

Research Questions 1 and 3

The first and third research questions include the following: What are general educators' perceptions of their instructional efficacy with students with disabilities in the inclusion setting? And what are special educators' perceptions of their instructional efficacy with students with disabilities in the inclusion setting? After the coding of interview transcripts, answers to these questions revealed three patterns or themes:

1. Teacher collaboration and responsibilities
2. Teacher attitudes
3. Focus on student success and needs

General and special educators stated both positive and negative perceptions of instructional efficacy. Themes common to both types of educators are described in detail below with supporting statements from the interviews. The results of the observations and field notes are included as well.

Theme 1: Teacher Collaboration and Responsibilities

I developed themes from interviews and observations.

Interviews. All of the participants responded that in some aspect, the inclusion classrooms are a shared responsibility between a classroom and special education teacher. Participants stated the idea that there should not be a noticeable difference between the two teachers because they both share the classroom and the students. Participant B, a general education teacher, responded with, "I think a true inclusion classroom should look flawless. Anyone who is observing should not be able to tell the difference between

the regular and general education teacher." General educator Participant C stated, "The administration often reminds us that the primary and inclusion teacher are responsible for pulling special education students up to grade level, and sometimes I felt that the coteacher did not take enough responsibility for the class."

Participants also revealed that collaboration is part of the shared responsibilities between general and special education teachers. Collaboration is imperative when planning lessons for a successful inclusion class. "Both teachers should know the material and be prepared to teach the class as if they were teaching independently," stated Participant C. Participant F, another general educator, noted, "My teaching is affected by how the general and special education teacher collaborate." Evident in this theme is that sharing instructional responsibilities and collaboration are effective practices in inclusion settings.

Observations. During observations, I viewed a variety of inclusion teaching models, which included teachers teaching as a team, in small groups, and in the pullout model. I observed teachers teaching with small groups or in teams in most settings. In all classrooms, the two teachers worked as a team to provide instruction for all students. In six out of nine classrooms, students were actively engaged in small group instruction. Each teacher led a lesson with four to five students actively engaged while the other students worked independently at their seats. In two classrooms, both teachers shared the instructional responsibilities of a reading lesson. One classroom had a teacher with one small group of students pulled outside in the hallway to provide further instruction on a skill not previously met during the week. This small group of students included both general education students and those with disabilities.

During all nine observations, I observed shared teaching responsibilities between special and general educators. Six of the classrooms featured small groups arranged throughout the room. These groups consisted of heterogeneously mixed students led by either a special or general education teacher. All students received the same instructional methods during small group instruction. In the other three classrooms, I was able to observe team teaching. Team teachers who followed this type of instruction in the classroom both taught the lessons effectively; one teacher lectured while the other teacher operated technology and spoke about the presentation. Even in the one class that followed the pullout model, I observed both teachers participating in a quick assessment to see who needed extra support in a reading skill. Once the assessment was completed, they divided the class into two groups. One teacher worked with a group inside the classroom, and the other teacher worked with another group in the hallway.

Theme 2: Teacher Attitudes

In the environment of accountability and skepticism about student outcomes, positive attitudes are important. Increasing positive attitudes toward the educational field is as essential as training in that field or topic (Dogan, 2004). During my interviews and observations, it was easy to recognize positive and negative attitudes in inclusion classrooms.

Interviews. Teacher attitudes towards inclusion were a common theme found during interviews. Special education teachers were more concerned about teacher attitudes than other teachers. Teachers of general education often felt that they were doing all that they could do to accommodate the special education teacher, but special education teachers communicated that they did not always feel that to be true. In some

classrooms, the special education teacher had a separate table with supplies and materials readily available, but in other classrooms, the special education teacher sat on the floor with students. Some special education teachers expressed concern over needing to have an area in the regular classroom to feel successful with students. Participant A, a special education teacher, stated, "I love my role in the student's educational process; however, I feel that my role is greatly influenced by the attitudes and willingness of the general education teacher to work with special education students, as well as with myself."

Even though general education teachers were not as concerned about teacher attitudes, they picked up on the attitudes of their coteachers, who were teachers of SWD. Some general education teachers felt that their students in the inclusion classroom noticed these attitudes. General education Participant D remarked that the special education teacher's attitude made her feel that she [the special education teacher] didn't want to be in her classroom. The general education teacher felt that the students picked up on the attitude; therefore, they treated her as a paraprofessional instead of a teacher. All participants felt that if the teacher had a positive attitude, students were more motivated and more likely to want to learn.

Observations. It was easy to discern the teachers' attitudes during the time I spent observing inclusion classrooms. In four of the classrooms, I observed lessons where both educators shared instruction time teaching all students. I was not able to determine which teacher led the lesson because both teachers were so actively involved in teaching. They both moved around the classroom and asked students questions related to the lesson. It was not evident which students belonged in a special or general education environment in these settings.

In all other observations except one, both teachers taught the students in small groups. It was not as easy to determine attitudes between the teachers in this setting, but the atmosphere in the classroom was relaxed, and all students participated enthusiastically in the lessons. From watching the small groups, it was evident that the teachers were agreeable to the content being taught and had previously planned their lessons together. The one classroom in which attitude was not as evident was the one with the pullout model. In this classroom, the special educator had one small group working outside in the hallway. I was not able to determine if this was a normal procedure, or if it was just a time that the students needed to be pulled out for a quieter setting. The classroom was louder than the other classrooms observed, and there was more movement inside it.

Theme 3: Focus on Student Success and Needs

Student success and needs are the main focus of all participants in this study. All 12 participants responded in some way that their daily focus is to meet students' needs and help them be more successful.

Interviews. During interviews, participants always came back to the response that their role is to meet students' needs in the best way possible. Participant I stated, "Teachers enter the field of education because they have a desire to help students." Participant A said, "Creating relationships with my students is a powerful tool and helps my students become more successful." Participants shared responses suggesting that the better they got to know their students, the more they could be helpful as educators. The teachers felt that the biggest problem in developing the relationships and being as effective as they would like to be was the constraint of time. Participant B added, "My

coteaching experience was not successful, and I believe that the educational growth of the children was not evident." All responses showed that participants were genuinely concerned about students' needs and strove to meet those needs on a daily basis.

Observations. During observations, it was evident that teachers worked hard to serve the needs of students in the classroom. Teachers from both educational fields were actively involved with all students. I observed one conversation between teachers when one special education student, who had mastered the skill in the current group, needed to be moved to another group. In another classroom, I observed as the teachers assessed and formed small groups built on the outcomes of the assessments. These groups were not based on whether the student was SWD or not; they were based on the outcomes of the assessments and needs of each student. The teachers formed four groups in this classroom, and two of the groups contained a mixture of three SWD and three general education students.

Research Questions 2 and 4

Research Questions 2 and 4 were as follows: What are the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations of general educators regarding a coteaching setting with a special education teacher? And what are the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations of special educators regarding a coteaching setting with a general education teacher? In these questions, coding from interviews contributed to the emerging themes. Upon analysis of the interviews, three categories of answers or themes emerged from the teachers' attitudes about a coteaching setting.

1. Common planning time
2. Professional development

3. Administrative decisions

These responses are organized by frequency in interview transcripts from a coteaching setting. I further discuss the themes below.

Theme 1: Common Planning Time

Special education teachers' need to share a common planning time with general education teachers was a concern for all participants in this study. Special education teachers serve more than one teacher, and their schedules limit a general planning time between their coteachers and them. Many teachers have to communicate their lesson plans through email. Some special education teachers are able to meet with one grade level during planning one week and another grade level the following week. Participant B responded, "My coteacher and I plan sporadically or not at all. As a classroom teacher, I need to write plans, so I can organize my thoughts and materials. Because the special education teacher participates on a limited basis in planning with me, this causes friction." Participant K, a special education teacher, also commented that planning was difficult, and she tried to plan weekly when time was available. This participant felt that planning was a major issue when working with more than one grade level. Overall, the general feeling from all participants was a desire to have more time to plan, so instruction in the classroom would be more aligned.

Theme 2: Professional Development

The second most common theme recognized during interviews was the need for professional development training that targeted inclusion classrooms. All participants had attended various workshops for coteaching settings and commented on how important these sessions were in guaranteeing adequate training and delivering the vital information

needed for the success of inclusion. Most participants felt that the workshops provided a great resource of information to bring back to the classroom, but both types of teachers felt that more specific training and information would help them become more effective.

In contrast, Participant F, a general education teacher, did not feel that professional development classes were successful. She stated, "There has been an attempt to have professional development that addresses inclusion or coteaching. Afterwards, we just come back to the classrooms and go through the motions." On the other hand, most of the other participants agreed that professional development efforts had been successful, but that teachers needed more of them to learn more about coteaching models and better ways to teach in inclusive settings.

Theme 3: Administrative Decisions

In addition to the need for common planning times and professional development, concerns around administrative decisions were also a common theme for all participants. During interviews, teachers in both fields responded that administration had control over the decisions about inclusion models in the classroom. Participants expected the administration to make most of the decisions, but they expressed their desire to be able to adjust their coteaching models at times.

Five out of twelve participants indicated that there was no flexibility in administrative decisions, but the other participants felt that flexibility was an option if needed. Participant C stated, "We have no flexibility in trying different coteaching models. We are told to implement a particular schedule." Another participant responded that she thought administration would be flexible in allowing the teacher to use a different model for inclusion. All participants agreed that administration must be in

control to run an effective school, but these teachers of inclusion wanted to have the ability to make adjustments with the children's best interests in mind.

Discussion of Themes

Even though inclusion research is abundant, and the information from that research is important for school districts that enroll a high percentage of students with disabilities, leaders in schools still find it difficult to decide on the model that works best for their institution. The data from this study examines teachers' perceptions and feelings towards teaching in an inclusive setting, so that information can inform school administrators and teachers about improvements needed in inclusion programs. The data can help this rural Georgia school district better understand teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward inclusion and how they influence teaching methods in the classroom. It will also provide direction on implementing professional development training to enhance inclusive practice for all educators. Often, those with direct knowledge of a situation are not called upon to inform the decision-making processes. By asking educators of inclusion classrooms, I found ways to improve the relationship between teachers and administration to benefit the students' experience and outcomes.

I chose implementation of a qualitative research design to help improve the understanding of these perceptions. Procedures for collecting and analyzing data through interviews, observations, and field notes were provided to assist in these outcomes. By choosing to conduct a qualitative study, I was able to gain a personal view into the classrooms and learn how teachers perceived themselves as inclusion teachers, as well as how they interacted with students with disabilities. All of the teachers were

compassionate and carried warm attitudes towards the students, providing a safe environment in which to explore and learn.

Participants in this research included special and regular education teachers who cotaught in an inclusive teaching environment. I interviewed and observed the participants in the inclusive classroom where they taught. I established accuracy and credibility through the process of triangulation of the interviews, observations, and field notes. After I collected data and identified themes, I presented findings to each participating teacher for review. I reviewed and verified participant data through member checking. Participating teachers were in agreement with the notes and themes evident from the research.

The themes I identified from the findings included teacher collaboration and responsibilities, teacher attitudes, student success and needs, common planning time, professional development, and administrative decisions. Teacher collaboration and responsibilities were a concern for both special and general educators. Coteachers expressed their desires to have specific responsibilities for each teacher. While observing these teachers, I did not see misunderstandings occur over responsibilities. Both teachers were actively engaged in all classrooms. Most classrooms were divided into small groups, and I was able to observe both educators working among heterogeneously grouped students. Classrooms that included small groups were the classrooms that ran most smoothly.

Another concern for teachers was the lack of a universal planning period for teachers of inclusion. Teachers in this school are not able to plan together on a weekly basis. Scheduling is a problem because the special education teachers serve more than

one teacher and one grade level. Coteachers often email lessons for review, so that things will run smoothly in the classroom.

The concerns these teachers express lead to the development of teacher attitudes. Teacher attitudes affect the feelings of teachers, as well as students, in the classroom. According to my participants, teacher attitudes come from teacher responsibilities and planning. As Participant G, a special education teacher, stated, "I feel like an inclusive classroom works better when the general education teacher is welcoming of new ideas and techniques used for differentiation that are given by the special education teacher." These feelings could create positive change if teachers could plan together on a weekly basis and designate specific roles in their plans.

The outcomes of this analysis give insight into teachers' perceptions of themselves and each other as teachers of inclusion. These results also revealed the need for professional development in the areas of classroom responsibilities, administrative scheduling, and coteaching models. Teachers of inclusion have the knowledge and ability to educate a wide variety of students successfully; however, for these teachers to be more successful, they must gain a better appreciation and awareness of what coteaching requires.

As an end result of my research study, I developed a professional development project. This project is described in detail throughout Section 3 of this paper. Literature that supports the project will also be reviewed and included in this section. The final part of Section 3 discusses project implications that include possible social change, along with the importance of the project in a local and larger context.

Section 3: The Project

In Section 3 of this paper, I describe the project and review the related literature. I present the project goals, rationale, implementation, evaluation, and implications for social change.

Introduction

Education stakeholders ensure that students in today's classrooms receive a fair education, regardless of their academic abilities. This fairness dates back to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 1997, which mandated that students with special needs be educated in the least restrictive learning environment. Special education and general education teachers began coteaching for their students' improvement. Coteaching is a style of teaching that works effectively in classrooms that contain students with diverse learning needs. Students with disabilities who are placed in general education classrooms can be more effectively educated when collaboration takes place between teachers (Santamaria & Thousand, 2004). Collaboration between general and special education teachers is often accomplished with the aid of in-service and special professional development training. Providing support through training can be a vital component of continuous development for teachers and students in inclusive settings (Walsh, 2012).

Teachers who participated in this qualitative project study were all coteachers of inclusion classrooms. The qualitative study was conducted at the local school to determine general and special education teachers' perceptions of their instructional efficacy with students with special needs in an inclusive classroom environment. I built the professional development plan created from this study on data collected from special

and general education teachers. Collection tools used to gather the data for this study were observations and interviews. Although teachers practiced coteaching models during observations, interviews revealed that inclusion teachers felt a lack of self-confidence in their role of coteaching. Beninghof (2014) expressed that coteachers who believe they are making learning possible for all classroom students—not just the ones they are designated to assist—are the teachers who become more confident and successful coteachers. Providing teachers with professional development training centered on coteaching strategies and models will help build confidence among them.

When determining the type of professional development needed for teachers at the study site, I considered themes identified in the study. After collecting data, I categorized the findings into themes. The initial theme was a concern from teachers about their ability to collaborate and share responsibilities. The next theme addressed teacher attitudes towards teaching in an inclusive setting. The third theme was the importance of focusing on student success and needs in an inclusion classroom. The fourth theme was a concern for common planning time for teachers of inclusion classrooms. The two main themes that emerged in the end were a need for professional development and a concern for decisions made by administration. All themes emerged from data collected from interviews and observations.

Description and Goals

A need for educating teachers in more depth about coteaching through professional development was one theme that emerged from the data. The social change plan that resulted from this study was a project based on data from the teachers to

facilitate the beneficial implementation of special education inclusion in general education classes.

Description

Enrollment of students with disabilities (SWD) at the project school has constantly increased since 2008 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). According to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), all students will show 100% proficiency in academic subjects by the year 2014 (Moores, 2011). This school district employs the practice of coteaching instruction in its inclusion classrooms to support the goal of meeting this expectation of student proficiency.

Regarding the practice of coteaching, special and general education teachers had ambivalent feelings toward teaching in an inclusion setting. These feelings resulted from questions regarding teacher responsibilities, teacher attitudes, and time constraints in planning. It is critical to understand teacher perceptions of inclusion because teachers influence the quality of instruction, teacher efficacy in the inclusive setting, and attitudes toward students in the classroom (Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011). Teachers must also fully understand coteaching and how to use the models of it in a positive manner because their knowledge influences teacher effectiveness and the academic success of every student in the inclusion classroom (Friend, 2014).

In order to understand teacher perceptions and attitudes toward inclusion, I conducted a qualitative case study. The data from this study prompted an effort to help teachers better understand their coteaching relationships; as a result, I developed a 3-day professional development training for teachers who coteach in an inclusion setting. The training focuses specifically on the areas of classroom responsibilities, administrative

scheduling, and coteaching models. The participants in the study said that they understood and were able to instruct students from all backgrounds with various learning needs efficiently; however, to be more successful, they needed a deeper understanding of coteaching. The participants also expressed a desire to participate in a professional development training program that specifically addresses coteaching responsibilities and provides models for inclusion classrooms.

One idea for professional training would be to have coteachers role-play and discuss issues when working in the same classroom. Role-playing is often used to provide insight and increase understanding of the feelings of oneself and others (Walter, 2009). Implementation may vary for each classroom and will depend on classroom structure, time limitations, and student demographics. The teachers involved in coteaching will learn different strategies to use with their coteacher so that they best fit their schedule and classroom. One of the study findings indicated that teachers needed more time and preparation for planning with their coteacher. The professional development opportunity will help them to understand not only the models of coteaching but also how to plan more effectively. These opportunities will boost the confidence of inclusion teachers in their coteaching relationships, which will increase teacher efficacy and promote student success inside the classroom.

Professional Development Project Goal

The goal of my project is to provide teachers with information about coteaching models and planning for inclusion classrooms. The models presented provide teachers with the necessary information to apply coteaching models in their classroom that will best fit their needs. Once teachers fully understand the various coteaching models, their

self-efficacy and attitudes toward coteaching will begin to improve, and student success will become more evident. The professional development sessions will give opportunities for teachers to discuss and solve the problems of coteaching in an inclusion setting through presentation of information from the literature, role-playing activities, and small group discussions about their specific situations.

Another goal of this training is to allow a dialogue between administrators and teachers about the need for additional time to plan for their inclusion classrooms. If teachers are to collaborate smoothly, they need more time for the process to take place. For example, a change in scheduling could allow both special and general educators an opportunity to have more planning time, which would help them feel better about their roles in the classroom.

Rationale

The rationale and content for the project are presented in the following sections.

Project Genre Rationale

The reason for conducting the study was to understand teachers' perceptions of how effective they were with students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom. The findings from the data indicated that participants felt some anxiety when they collaborated and planned lessons for inclusive classrooms. The time constraints in scheduling prevented teachers from being able to plan for the coteaching models they were expected to implement. These factors caused both special and general educators to have feelings of confusion regarding their roles in a coteaching setting. A professional development program that targets coteaching models and planning for inclusion

classrooms would allow teachers to become more successful educators and improve their attitudes toward coteaching.

Project Content Rationale

Special and general educators need a professional development program that specifically addresses coteaching models and responsibilities. This training will benefit teachers in many ways. One of the most compelling results from the study was that teachers wanted to feel more successful in the inclusion classroom. A professional development plan can target these areas by providing teachers with current knowledge of coteaching models, which would enable them to make proper instructional choices and feel more confident in their instruction in the coteaching classroom. The program would give the county a better understanding of the need for continuous training in the execution of the coteaching model for all inclusion teachers.

Review of the Literature

I completed saturation for this literature review by entering key words into Internet search engines and electronic databases located in the Walden University Library. Important key words were *inclusion*, *professional development*, *professional learning communities*, *teacher attitudes*, and *coteaching models*. The databases I used during my research included EBSCOhost, Education Research Complete, ERIC, and Proquest. I used these resources to locate current research on the genre and project matter related to my project study. After saturation, I designed a project for all teachers of inclusion.

Professional Learning Communities

One model used in the educational field to provide teachers with research-based knowledge is called a professional learning community (PLC). This model supplies educators with information from research that will directly connect to their classroom instruction, which will then generate lasting changes (Dever & Lash, 2013). Initially, PLCs were formed with a focus on increasing student outcomes, but now they are used to create caring and solid relationships among teachers (Lalor & Abawi, 2014). According to Hord (1997), PLCs can also be described as a constant practice of administrators working together with teachers and setting goals to enhance teacher effectiveness for the students' benefit. Themes identified from the data analysis of this study support the idea for developing a PLC.

The PLC could be a catalyst for change to help teachers improve instructional practices in the classroom (Harbin & Newton, 2013). Teacher participants in the study shared similar concerns about inclusion. Teachers at the study site felt concern and compassion for all students they taught in inclusion classrooms. Teachers also worried about scheduling a common planning time to focus on student needs and success. In addition, teachers shared their thoughts about teacher responsibilities and collaboration when they planned for coteaching in an inclusion classroom. These themes were based on teachers' perceptions and interactions in an inclusive setting. Developing a PLC would address the concerns regarding inclusion practice for the educators who participated in this study and increase their teacher efficacy and professional learning opportunities.

Teacher Efficacy and Collaboration

Additional training in special education promotes positive attitudes regarding inclusive practices (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001). A powerful indicator of attitudes and procedures in the classroom is teachers' beliefs concerning what part they play when teaching students with various needs. Professional development supports the formation of a teacher's positive attitude (Kosko & Wilkins, 2009). Positive attitudes and teacher efficacy were areas of concern that participants revealed through interviews and observations. Several participants felt that they were not reaching all students, which made them feel unsuccessful in the classroom. Such self-doubt decreases teacher efficacy and leads to uncertainty when planning for diverse groups of learners (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, & Hardin, 2014). Professional development would address these concerns by positively impacting teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and efficacy (Heck, Banilower, Weiss, & Rosenberg, 2008; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007).

In a related study conducted by Mintzes, Marcum, Messerschmidt-Yates, and Mark (2012), their teachers' participation in a professional learning community positively affected students. In addition, working with colleagues in the learning community created an overall sense of efficacy among the teachers. Working in the PLC enhanced teachers' self-efficacy and expectations for positive outcomes. Many teachers experienced a sense of empowerment after participating in a PLC, where they could express concerns and feel that their ideas would be listened to and implemented. Understanding the teaching material more thoroughly and working together in a collaborative environment increased their confidence.

Teacher excellence is a crucial factor that contributes to student success (Cochran-Smith, 2006). Teachers who receive professional development training are expected to use the information from the in-service to increase their effectiveness and raise student performance (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008). Research has also indicated the link between student success and teacher efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk, 2000). This connection increases even more when the professional development is focused on a specific subject matter (Powell-Moman & Brown-Schild, 2011). Student achievement at the targeted study site showed that students with disabilities (12.4% of the student population) had fallen behind their peers academically. This percentage led to an overall feeling of lower teacher efficacy because inclusion was the delivery method chosen for this school, and inclusion teachers were responsible for improving SWD test scores.

One component of student achievement is the ability of teachers to plan together collaboratively. General and special educators are expected to collaborate when a school implements full inclusion programs that meet every student's needs (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). The data from participants showed doubts about their ability to plan effectively with their coteachers and concern for their students. All teachers at the study site are required to teach the same standards and are provided with a curriculum and pacing guide. This guide determines the specific standards and expects time limitations for each student; it is designed to guarantee that the paced curriculum connects with the state standardized tests (Hill, 2013). Although administration provides teachers with the pacing guide and expects them to teach from it, teachers at the study site revealed inconsistencies between inclusion classrooms. Special educators responded during

interviews that general educators were often on different days in the pacing guide, which made it difficult for them to plan for the week. All teachers felt the need to have appropriate planning times for better collaboration.

According to Bruff (2012), faculty collaboration enables teachers to have questions answered in an understanding group. Working together encourages shared learning, invites feedback, and contributes to the organization of awareness of the students' education in various circumstances. Collaboration also drives communication among teachers with diverse fields of proficiency and includes a requirement for correspondence between every individual who participates in the coteaching setting (Murawski & Hughes, 2009). Teachers who are involved in meaningful professional development are empowered to teach because they are engaged and work together with their coteachers (Badiali & Titus, 2010).

In this project study, teachers expressed concern about their knowledge of coteaching models and felt that their school would benefit from professional training regarding coteaching in inclusive classroom settings. Providing opportunities for teachers of inclusion to participate in professional learning communities that are focused on learning, collaborating, and supporting one another will improve teacher efficacy (Gebbie, Ceglowski, Taylor, & Miels, 2011). In the end, teachers who attend professional trainings and learn how to work collaboratively with each other, along with their educational trainers, improve their teaching expertise and concentrate on what affects student achievement (Heck et al., 2007).

Professional Development Learning Opportunities

When the time comes to consider a professional development plan for inclusion, an organized group of educational possibilities should be included. These learning opportunities need to be adapted for individual schools, involve the thoughts of teachers and administrators about inclusion practices, and concentrate on learning necessities for all students (Simon & Black, 2011). To be effective, development plans should also consider individual learning styles of the teacher and the different situations in which learning occurs. Individual teacher and school characteristics greatly influence the design of professional development training for those involved in inclusive teaching procedures (Brownell et al., 2006).

Some administrators of schools believe in traditional professional development, which consists of one-time workshops, sometimes called "sit-and-gets," where an outside expert shares his or her expertise on a subject with a group of teachers (Fogarty & Pete, 2009). Teachers at the rural elementary school of study have been accustomed to this kind of professional development. This type of training may not have a lasting effect, but it remains one of the most prevalent modes of professional development (Sappington, Pacha, Baker, & Gardner, 2012). Khush (2010) disagreed with this method and stated that professional development should not be a one-time event but an ongoing, timely process.

Professional development sessions have been implemented in the past at the study site. Most of these classes were scheduled because of requirements to provide teachers with specific information. This school also requires collaboration among teachers in various fields: grade group discussions, specific subject matter meetings, off-campus

excursion management, campus committees, conferences with coworkers or consultants, and program preparations—the requirements carry on. Teachers at this study site are entirely familiar with the requirements for cooperative work to achieve excellent outcomes.

Conclusion

According to Petras, Jamil, and Mohamed (2012), professional development shows teachers how to acquire knowledge and put what they have learned into practice. Some of the most effective learning and purposeful moments for teachers occur inside an individual teacher's classroom. The teachers notice these moments through preparation and self-reflection (Desimone, 2010). Providing school-based professional development training at the study site permits explicit problem-solving meetings during self-reflection. It also allows teachers to collaborate and recognize necessary sources and approaches to use in meeting expectations for teaching all learners (Nishimura, 2014). Each problem-solving meeting concentrates on teachers' desires and staff associates' needs and helps to continue the assistance and instruction. These trainings increase teachers' understanding of inclusive practices and boost positive attitudes (Crane-Mitchell & Hedge, 2007).

These findings, which support professional learning opportunities, are a cultural change in the way educators think, teach, and discuss educational issues and are an important part of an ongoing, long-term improvement plan (Whitenack & Ellington, 2013). In order for teacher professional development training to be successful, several factors need to be considered. These factors include a provision for teachers to attend the development over an extended time; a direct link to teacher practices, modeling and problem-solving scenarios; and use of theoretical frameworks to structure the training

(Higginson & Chatfield, 2012). These changes can be accomplished by providing teachers with adequate information, services, and involvement through effective training programs (Sucuoglu, Bakkaloglu, Karasu, Demir, & Akalin, 2013).

Project Discussion

The aim of this project is to create a training that helps general and special educators better understand coteaching models and responsibilities in inclusion classrooms. The resources needed to complete the training are a room with Internet-accessible computers, a projector, and tables for group work. During the training, teachers will view a PowerPoint presentation and a video and be provided with opportunities for discussion and group activities.

Needed Resources, Existing Supports, and Potential Barriers

In order for the professional development training to take place, a time will be scheduled for the 2016-2017 school year. A time and place for the training will be presented to the principal of the school, who will give permission for the 3-day training and add the dates to the current school calendar.

Two potential barriers exist for this project. The first barrier lies in scheduling three teacher workdays to accomplish the professional development training. The other barrier is to ask educators to complete and/or participate in one or more training sessions. For this professional development to benefit student academic achievement, it is important for educators to put forth their best effort and not consider it a waste of time.

Proposal for Implementation

The professional development training is planned to take place as a 3-day session. The first day of training involves introducing the agenda and purpose of the training,

along with enduring understandings and prerequisites of the topic to be studied. During this time, participants will gain a fuller understanding of coteaching basics through group work, scenarios, and reflections as they discuss the challenges and benefits of coteaching. After the first session ends, participants will reflect on information discussed during their first training day.

During the second day of training, participants will learn and set goals for areas of improvement in coteaching. They will study coteaching designs and develop a lesson plan that best fits their situation. At the end of the second day in the professional development, participants will present the lesson plans they created and evaluate each other by the effectiveness of the design of the plan.

The third and final day of training consists of a review and reflection on coteaching practices. Each group will review and adjust the current coteaching guidelines implemented at their school. Participants will also complete a role-play scenario where the teachers take on the role of the administrator and practice scheduling for the staff. At the same time, the administrator will undergo a change in positions and take on the role of a teacher to plan lessons for an inclusion classroom. Afterwards, participants will present their scenarios and then discuss and evaluate them. Participants will also be invited to evaluate the training at the conclusion of the third day (see Appendix A).

Roles and Responsibilities

As a researcher, my role and responsibility are to develop and implement the project based on the literature review and data obtained from the research data. Once I request and receive permission to add the training to the school calendar, I will prepare the materials needed for the sessions. Next, I will secure a room with adequate Internet

access and begin the process of completing the PowerPoint presentation, which is found in Appendix A. The PowerPoint consists of an outline of the professional development training and the objectives to be completed during the 3-day period. As the leader of the training sessions, I am responsible for presenting and facilitating activities. After the sessions are completed, I will collect and analyze evaluations. Because I have the role of facilitator and presenter, I will not require assistance from other individuals.

Project Evaluation

The professional development training is a goals-based project. The first goal addresses the understanding of coteaching models and responsibilities in inclusion classrooms. The second goal gives administrators and teachers an opportunity to discuss and schedule planning time.

Participants will create a reading lesson for an inclusion classroom that aids in the assessment of the goals for the professional development training. The special education teachers will be paired with a group of two general education teachers. They will write their lessons to include a plan for both teachers in a coteaching setting. They will then evaluate the lessons at the end of the lesson presentation. All participants will assess the lessons with a rubric to determine achievement of the goals. During the conclusion of the training, participants will also fill out an outcomes-based evaluation of the professional development. This type of evaluation is a systematic approach used to decide if the objectives were achieved (McNeil, R., 2011). Because the objective of the evaluation is to measure the success of the professional learning opportunity given to participants at the study site, an outcomes-based evaluation will best fit the program. The overall goal is to determine whether the professional learning opportunity gave the teachers a better

understanding of the coteaching model and inclusion classroom. I will collect all of the evaluations at the end of the training, assemble them to identify areas that need improvement, and share them with the administration of the school.

Local and Far-Reaching Communities

This project study is designed to encourage and empower all teachers of inclusion classrooms at the local level. They will develop better insight into the coteaching model and the scheduling issues that administrators face. In a larger context, the empowerment of these educators in this professional development training can be publicized among other schools in the district. The knowledge obtained from the project could then be shared with other school systems in the surrounding areas.

The implication of this project on a larger scale is that it will positively affect teachers' performance and their sense of accomplishment in a coteaching setting. Their improvement can provide an opportunity for the training to affect other coteachers' performances in surrounding school districts. The hope is that participants will begin to see the positive results of this training and share their exciting experiences with other educators. The results would encourage other school systems to organize their own project-based studies that target their special and general educators who coteach. These programs would, in turn, provide catalysts that improve teacher attitudes toward inclusion and ultimately, students' learning.

Conclusion

This professional learning project focuses on teacher understanding and planning for coteaching in an inclusive setting. My personal goal is to supply both special and general educators with the resources necessary to help them feel more successful in their

roles as coteachers. Coteachers struggle with planning and time constraints in their current settings. The intention is for this project to provide teachers and administrators with resources that target coteaching concerns, along with models that provide instruction to address these concerns.

Section 4: Conclusion

Introduction

My reflections on this study's findings have verified the problem identified in Section 1. The problem was how special and general education teachers perceive their effectiveness in inclusive classroom settings, and how these perceptions influence their teaching methods. Some concerns that general and special education teachers reported were anticipated in the literature review, including lack of planning time and confused role responsibilities. I had originally thought that administrative support and decisions would influence teachers' effectiveness in the classroom, but this concern was only mentioned twice by participants in the study. I designed a professional development training program to provide educators and administrators with information that specifically addresses the need for more understanding of coteaching models and responsibilities.

In the last section of this study, I reflect on my professional growth. The section begins with a description of the project's strengths and limitations. This section also includes a personal reflection of my progress as a researcher, practitioner, and project designer, along with what I have learned about the process of research and development. The section concludes with suggestions for social change, along with recommendations for future research.

Project Strengths

The strengths of my project come from the data collected from interviews and observations of teachers in inclusive classrooms. The study and projected professional development program address special and general educators' concerns regarding

effectiveness when teaching in inclusive settings. Initially, my review of the literature revealed that professional development is a key to maintaining an effective coteaching program (Murawski, 2008). Teachers who participate in coteaching training show considerable improvement in their collaboration and attitudes (Tzivinikou, 2015). General and special educators who participated in this study reported similar concerns about their feelings of inadequacy and a need for more support and training. Coteachers could be given more opportunities to plan their classes and discuss their collaborations. Giving teachers the opportunity to work together outside of the classroom can lead to increased teacher efficacy (Shidler, 2009). Instructing teachers of inclusion on the practices of coteaching will help them implement such practices successfully in their own classrooms, thereby fulfilling the purpose of the professional development.

During the professional development training, participants will be given opportunities to collaborate with coteachers. All participants in the study provided detailed information regarding their concerns about coteaching. Participants reported that they formed relationships with their coteachers and the students in their classrooms. For the most part, teachers were aware of students' strengths, weaknesses, and potential; they also shared in their concerns for the academic success of the students. Teachers were willing to learn about different resources that would help strengthen their coteaching relationships. These findings will not only give general and special educators a deeper understanding of coteaching, but they will also help administrators understand their teachers' concerns about teaching in an inclusion classroom. By participating in professional development, educators and school leaders can assist in each other's professional growth.

Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations

As with most studies, I discovered some limitations during data collection and analysis. Suitable time to measure the results of the professional development training and the effect it had on teachers in their inclusion classrooms was a limitation of the study. To measure the perceptions of general and special educators in inclusive settings, school administration could implement follow-up observations or trainings. Because administrators participated in the training, they would have an understanding of its expected outcomes. According to Nierengarten (2013), administrators who have been involved in coteacher training are knowledgeable about the practice and are an important asset to its effectiveness. Administrators who observe inclusion classrooms communicate to their teachers that they share ownership and accountability for teacher investment in coteaching practices (Nierengarten & Hughes, 2010).

Based on the research questions that guided this study and participant responses, recommendations for remediation also include offering continuous or ongoing in-service training opportunities for educators who work as coteachers in inclusive classrooms. As a way to increase teachers' feelings of effectiveness in these classrooms, monthly meetings could be established for ongoing support. The meetings would include general and special educators as they collaborate and review lesson plans and student academic success. All teachers would be responsible for submitting examples of coteaching lesson plans and students' work from their inclusive classrooms. During these meetings, teachers would discuss and provide suggestions for academic and planning concerns. They would also have an allotted time to discuss student and teacher successes in their classrooms.

Scholarship

Throughout this project study, my knowledge of scholarly research has become much deeper than I could have anticipated. Creswell (2008) suggested that a good reflection of scholarship is the ability to use appropriate peer-reviewed literature. In accordance with this recommendation, my scholarship included this literature. I was able to collect information and examine the local problem objectively by connecting these issues with the primary literature review. During the development of the professional development (PD) project, a literature review provided information about PDs and the need for a coteaching plan. This literature included peer-reviewed studies published within the previous 6 years. I researched articles related to education and inclusion that focused on teachers' feelings and beliefs. I kept a journal for reflections on my reading that helped me make connections and review the current research. Once I completed my literature review, I implemented the professional development project.

This research journey has also allowed me to take the information I have learned and share it with my peers and others in the educational field. Doing so has made me realize that as a scholar, I can be a part of change and leave a mark in society. Working and collaborating with my peers during this process also increased my confidence and taught me to accept others' ideas. This project study allowed participants to work through their feelings and differences to begin planning and collaborating for the benefit of their students.

Project Development and Evaluation

Developing the project study revealed to me that organization and significance are important characteristics when identifying a specific problem. Programs should

complement participants' learning needs and include engaging activities that enhance their knowledge, skills, and understanding of the problem identified in the study (Larson, 2013). After I determined that inclusion teachers' main concerns were lack of planning time and role confusion, I created a project to provide support and correct the problem.

From the beginning of this research, I knew that I wanted to investigate inclusion and ways to help general and special educators feel successful in their classrooms. Once I verified the problem, my next step was to explore different ways to solve it. As I read current literature related to the problem, the research questions emerged for this study. The research questions needed to link to and correct the specific problem I wanted to address. After developing the guidelines and questions, I began to plan the structure of what I wanted to accomplish. The solution, which came from evidence of the findings, led to a 3-day professional development workshop designed to help teachers and administrators gain a better understanding of inclusive classrooms. I learned how challenging the development of a project could be, and I also realized that attention to detail is important for training to be successful and useful to the school.

Leadership and Change

Although I have never held a leadership position, I know the type of leader I want to be and how important it is to be an effective leader. Effective leaders are those who possess a vision and have the ability to communicate it to others (Northouse, 2007). These leaders also have the ability to convince others that the vision is real and possible. Clear visions provide pathways to make the needed changes for those visions to become reality.

Leaders should also share a common goal with their peers when supporting change. By developing a professional development training project, I furthered my knowledge of the change process. I realized that all stakeholders must be involved in the change to achieve expected outcomes. Providing professional development that would enable teachers to address challenges in the coteaching classroom was the goal for my training project. As a leader, I needed to implement the changes necessary to accomplish the overall goal, which was to provide teachers with the tools to feel more effective in inclusion classrooms.

Completing this professional development project has given me a chance to grow as an educational leader. I have gained confidence in many areas of personal and professional life. As an individual, I have grown because I have faced challenges and not given up through this process. As a professional, I have grown into an educational leader who is capable of completing complex tasks to solve educational problems.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

Before I conducted this case project study, I thought of a scholar as someone who is especially knowledgeable about specific topics. Although that is true, scholars also take their knowledge and apply it to appropriate practices and research. I have learned how to apply my knowledge in that way throughout my project.

As a scholar, I have expanded my view of learning. I now understand that scholarly work is not just a group of people who conduct research and hope to get their work published. Instead, it is a process that requires communication between scholars. I found that the learning process included thorough literature reviews, interviews, and observations to support my study. In the beginning of the study, I identified an

educational concern related to my local school district. Once I established the concern, I researched current peer-reviewed literature from the Walden library that related to the topic. I then developed research questions that targeted the educational concerns and began the process of collecting and analyzing data to support my qualitative study. This process helped me learn to conduct research, learn from participants in the study, and analyze data. I now understand the meaning of being a lifelong learner and feel capable of completing other qualitative studies.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

In a span of 13 years, I have grown from being a classroom teacher to a practitioner. I have joined various committees and have become actively engaged in the educational concerns of my school district. Throughout this time, I have learned how to conduct research and offer strategies that could help solve educational problems in the school. In the beginning, I knew that educators were concerned about the effectiveness of inclusive classrooms. With the knowledge I gained about inclusion and coteaching, I began to feel more comfortable discussing educational issues with teachers and administrators. I now feel more confident to become a leader who is more involved in school improvement.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

Throughout the creation of my professional development program, I realized how much I have grown as a professional. The decision to enter Walden's leadership program allowed me to set professional goals that I wanted to achieve during my educational career. One of the most rewarding experiences has been the development of my project. This project has taught me organizational and planning skills, along with understanding

how data analysis is used to plan professional development programs. The process of collecting data and using it to develop a program for my fellow teachers was a momentous experience.

As a project developer, I designed a program that supports teachers of inclusive classrooms. I had to take the audience into consideration when developing the program. An important aspect of a planning a program is being able to value the experiences and perspectives of adult learners. I did this by collecting data from fellow teachers and organizing a program relevant to their needs. In planning this project, I learned how to approach educational concerns within my school by using the information I learned in this study. Because of this experience, I now have an opportunity to become an educational leader in my school.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

This project has the potential to promote social change in inclusive classroom teaching practices and experiences. One way this change can take place is by empowering teachers and giving them the confidence they need to contribute to the growth of their colleagues through professional development. Participants in my professional development training project will be able to share their expertise on how they collaborate with each other in a coteaching setting. By completing this professional development training program, I have provided a strategy for teacher participation in a learning society.

As a result of this training, educators will be able to influence other teachers of inclusive classrooms through discussions in teacher meetings. These discussions can influence social change at the district level. Inclusion teachers who demonstrate a

positive attitude toward inclusion will promote best practices that will accommodate the learning of all students in inclusive settings. These practices will result in better-educated students and teachers who understand the benefits of inclusive classrooms.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

A professional development program that addresses the interests and concerns of teachers in a coteaching setting was the rationale behind this project. This training would be most appropriate during professional development at the beginning of the school year, so that the practices could be implemented at any time throughout the school year. The training could be completed in its entirety or could be broken down into sections as needed. Although the training was designed for special and general educators directly involved in coteaching, it could also meet the needs of new or pre-service teachers who could become teachers of inclusion.

The purpose of this professional development training was to promote best practices in coteaching in inclusion classrooms. Coteaching is the design that the sample of this project study has adopted for its county. Coteaching has been applied in every inclusion classroom at every grade level. The implications of this project are that teachers of coteaching classrooms will become more secure and confident in the coteacher role. In addition, educators will feel more effective in inclusive classrooms throughout the county. I anticipate that this project will have a positive influence on inclusion classrooms and spur growth in student achievement. Results from the project can then be shared with other school districts where inclusion is a topic of concern.

The goal of this project was to build teacher confidence and effectiveness in inclusion classrooms. My desire is that this study will present the information and

provide the materials needed for teachers of inclusion to feel more effective in their positions as coteachers. My expectation is that general and special educators will no longer experience role confusion; instead, they will gain a better understanding of how to collaborate as coteachers.

Future research for this project should include data from the project evaluation. This data will indicate if the trainings were effective and whether they should be used in future trainings. This type of training is comprehensive across all grade levels and classrooms. As with any project, data related to the study should be reviewed, and pertinent needs should be assessed before implementing the project.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study examined both general and special educators' attitudes towards inclusion. In Section 4, I discussed my project's strengths and limitations. I also included implications, applications, and recommendations for professional training that address the feelings of teachers in a coteaching setting. As I reflected on the sections of scholarship, how I developed the project, and the satisfaction of viewing myself as a scholar, I realized how much I have grown throughout this study, both as a scholar and a lifelong learner. I realize that my dedication to this project study has taught me how to analyze literature on a specific topic and produce a project that has an effect on social change in the educational field.

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Appendix A: The Project

The project is a professional development training program that will focus on improving the effectiveness of coteaching models and the implementation of responsibilities in inclusion classrooms. The second component of this training will be to provide administrators and educators an opportunity to plan and schedule planning times convenient for those who teach in inclusive classrooms.

Participants in the project can enroll through the Colquitt County School's Professional Development Express (PD Express) portal site and earn three Professional Learning Units (PLUs) for the purpose of learning strategies of coteaching in the classroom.

Purpose

The purpose of the professional development training is to offer specific tactics and strategies that could be utilized within a general and special education inclusion classroom. In addition, participants will learn how to schedule common planning times in order to better plan for coteaching in the classroom.

Target Audience

The target audience for this professional development training session is educators of grades 3 to 5 who teach in an inclusion setting. Administrators from the rural elementary school of study are also part of the target audience. The invitation will be extended for all teachers who teach at the school of study to take part in the training. The catalyst for change is for professional educators to meet and discuss educational concerns and how to solve them.

Goals

The goals for this training include:

- The participants will review and discuss strategies used to coteach in an inclusion setting. During this process, participants will analyze strategies to determine methods best suited for the inclusion settings at the participating school.
- The participants will also join in role-playing activities that express concerns and desires of teachers who coteach in an inclusive setting. This activity will contribute to an improved awareness of the importance of a common planning period for general and special educators. It will also help administrators to understand the concerns of teachers, especially with regard to their common planning times.

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcome for the professional development training sessions is for participants to acquire a more in-depth understanding of coteaching in an inclusive classroom. This outcome will be accomplished by reflective practice. Schön (1983) described reflective practice in two ways: Reflection-in-action is one method that is practiced; the other method is reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action's function in reflective practice helps as we finish a task. Reflection-on-action is the part that allows us to reflect on our actions in order to realize which factors that we already knew contributed to an unanticipated result. Factors that are carried out effortlessly are known as knowledge-in-action (Di Gennaro, Pace, Zollo, & Aiello, 2014). The Georgia Department of Education no longer evaluates educators only on academic growth; it now

rates them on ten standards. Some standards include professional knowledge, planning, and strategies for instruction, which create an environment that is challenging, differentiated, and positive. Other standards on which the department evaluates educators are assessment strategies and uses, along with their own professionalism and communication (Georgia Dept. of Education, 2014). By implementing a reflective practice, the members of this professional learning training will participate in self-reflection, self-assessment, scenario-based role plays, and goal setting for inclusion teaching. Participants will further focus on and determine ways to coteach successfully in an inclusive setting. In addition, the administrators will better understand the need to schedule planning periods that accommodate both general and special educators.

Timeline

The timeline for this professional development training is 3 consecutive days. The training will consist of six 1-hour sessions per day.

Participants will work in small groups during the training sessions. During this time, the groups will discuss and complete the assigned activities. Participants will be expected to work collaboratively to accomplish the tasks. At the conclusion of the 3-day training, participants will complete an evaluation document that will be used to determine areas for future correction and growth.

Three-Day Professional Development Session for Coteaching in an Inclusion Classroom
Day 1: Session: 1Introduction
9:00-12:00

Activity 1: Trainer will introduce him/herself and purpose of professional training.

Activity 2: Participants will introduce themselves and their position at the school.

Activity 3: Trainer will introduce participants to the agenda and learning goals of professional training.

- What is coteaching?
- Why do we coteach?
- Share PowerPoint that explains coteaching. See the PowerPoint at the end of schedule of training.

Resources: Computer, projector

Activity 4: Develop a shared goal for coteaching. All participating members will divide into groups to accomplish this task. Each group will complete a brainstorming activity using chart paper that can be put on the wall. Each group will develop a statement and question about coteaching to place on their chart. At this time, each group will pick a recorder to write members' responses to the statement or question on the poster. The groups will also pick a spokesperson to report the comments to the whole group. All participants will then synthesize each separate group's vision statement and compile a vision statement that reaches consensus. Once the leader has approved the statement, it will be posted in the room for the remainder of the training.

Resources: Chart paper, markers, notepads, pens

Activity 5: Determining Enduring Understandings and Prerequisites of Coteaching

Trainer will introduce the terms “enduring understandings” and “coteaching”. He or she will lead a discussion on what participants think these two terms mean and then write one definition on chart paper for each term.

- Definitions: Enduring understandings are ideas and processes that we want students to understand and keep until adulthood (Stewart, 2014).

  The definition of coteaching is when more than one educator delivers lessons to a various grouping of pupils who learn inside one classroom (Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010).
- Leave the definitions up for the duration of the training for future reference.

  Resources: Chart paper, markers

Activity 6: Determine enduring understanding of coteaching basics. Participants will accomplish this task by working together to establish enduring understandings. Before the group work begins, the trainer will present an essential question and ask the group to use it to create an enduring understanding. The example will be posted on the wall as a resource for the activity. An enduring understanding is a relationship between two concepts and a simple statement that explains what knowledge we want teachers to understand about the basics of coteaching. For example, prerequisites of coteaching will be separated and written on chart paper. Each prerequisite will have an enduring understanding statement. All participants will then synthesize each separate statement and reach a consensus for each one.

- All groups will present their enduring understandings, knowledge, and strategies for their particular coteaching prerequisite. Other participants will have time to ask and answer questions afterwards.
- With the approval from the trainer, participants will then synthesize and come to a consensus.

Resources: Chart paper, markers, pens, notepads

Three-Day Professional Development Session for
Coteaching in an Inclusion Classroom
Day 1: Session 2: Challenges and Benefits of Coteaching
1:00-4:00

Activity 1: Divide participants into study group teams.

Activity 2: Teachers are grouped into teams by subject area. After grouping, structured discussions of past coteaching experiences will begin, conducted from these questions:

- Describe your most positive teaching experience as a coteacher.
- What made it the most positive experience?
- Who was involved in this experience?
- If you could go back to that experience, what would you change, and what would you keep the same?

Team members will alternate discussions of their positive experiences in coteaching within respective teams.

Activity 3: Afterwards, each team will present two attributes from their collective past coteaching experiences. One attribute should characterize a positive coteaching experience. Documentation of the experiences will be recorded on a master list on poster paper until no new attributes are revealed.

- A class discussion will take place to identify the characteristics repeated in the discussion of successful coteaching experiences.

  Resources: Chart paper and markers

Activity 4: Review previous PowerPoint and focus on the benefits and challenges of coteaching.

Activity 5: Participants will choose from the following two scenarios of challenges in coteaching and share how they would handle the challenge.

- Scenario 1: Mr. Jones, an elementary school teacher, does not think he wants to work in a coteaching setting again. He never connected with his coteacher on a personal level and felt as though she were just a visitor in the classroom. Mr. Jones saw coteaching as a struggle because of role differences, teaching styles, and teaching philosophies. The students were also confused. The students gave him the role of teacher and treated the coteacher as a paraprofessional. The coteacher always took on the role of an observer, and Mr. Jones always felt like he was being watched. Neither teacher knew how to coteach and received minimal assistance from the administrator (Salend, Gordon, & Lopez-Vona, 2002).
- Scenario 2: Mrs. Smith, reading teacher, was excited in the beginning about coteaching with Mrs. Wood, the special educator designated to work with sixth grade. She is now disappointed. Mrs. Wood, the special educator, was offered a paid planning time during the summer months. She did not participate because she believed that family came first, and that was her focus for the summer. She did not believe in making professional commitments during the summer months. In the beginning, Mrs. Smith understood Mrs. Wood's reasons. Her feelings changed when they had their first fall meeting. Mrs. Wood shared with Mrs. Smith that she really did not like to teach reading, and she thought she would adjust and be more comfortable by taking the first semester to learn the

curriculum and help individual students after instruction. She also told Mrs. Smith that she had many other responsibilities and would not have very much time to prepare for class. Mrs. Wood clearly told Mrs. Smith that it was not her responsibility to grade student work.

Activity 6: Participants will share which scenario they chose and their solution to fix the challenge. Participants will also have time to reflect and share how they have met some of their own challenges in coteaching. Participants may also share some of the challenges they are currently facing and discuss how these challenges may be met.

Activity 7: Review: Each group will utilize chart paper and markers to write concerns and comments about coteaching that relate to all presented information. In conclusion, all participants will discuss the concerns that commonly occur in the comments.

Resources: Chart paper and markers

Activity 8: Reflection Activity: Various categories of the benefits and challenges of coteaching will be posted around the room on sentence strips. Provide utensils for participants to write reflections concerning information reviewed in this session about coteaching. As participants complete their note cards, they will place them under the category that best matches their reflection.

Resources: Sentence strips, pens, note cards, and tape

Three-Day Professional Development Session for Coteaching in an Inclusion Classroom
Day 2: Session 1
9:00-12:00

Activity 1: Trainer will review information and concerns of coteaching taken from reflections in Day 1. Each group from the first day will discuss these concerns and work together to determine goals for areas of improvement. Post goals on different colored chart paper in the room.

Resources: chart paper and markers

Activity 2: Coteaching in the Classroom: All participants will complete a self-assessment, "Are we really coteachers?" This checklist is located in Appendix B. The trainer will demonstrate how to determine the score on the assessment. Participants will then calculate their own coteaching score.

Resources: Assessment and pencils

Activity 3: Teachers will move to their appropriate location related to their score on the self-assessment. Their position will demonstrate their current feelings about their role in coteaching.

Activity 4: Identification of Coteaching Practices: All participants will be provided a copy the handout of common coteaching designs. One teach/One observe is the first design they will discuss, and the second design is One teach/One assist.

Resources: Handout

Activity 5: The trainer will then categorize participants into two groups. Participants will be in either the One teach/One observe or One teach/One assist group. During this time,

the trainer will give the participants a scenario and ask them to create a lesson plan based on their given group. The scenario is as follows:

- The trainer will provide the teachers with a copy of the current curriculum map and unit plan. A link to this guide is located at https://eboard.eboardsolutions.com/meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=1262&AID=245075&MID=15932
- This example of a curriculum map is used to evaluate an existing curriculum (Zelenitsky et al., 2014). Participants will use the ELA curriculum map and unit plan to create one lesson plan that teaches story elements of a fiction text. This plan must include and identify enduring understandings, one or more essential questions, and skills needed to identify the story elements. This lesson plan will assist in understanding the lesson objective, which is that students will be able to map story elements. The plan will also identify key concepts and vocabulary that will be the focus of the unit.
- The participants will reflect carefully on elements required to develop the lesson plan. They will also need to determine the students who will require accommodations or modifications for the content of the unit. Resources: Curriculum map, unit plans, handout, notepads, and pens/pencils

Three-Day Professional Development Session for
Coteaching in an Inclusion Classroom
Day 2: Session 2
1:00-4:00

Activity 1: Presentations**:** Participants will present their coteaching lesson plans for their given scenario.

- As participants present their lesson plans, a rubric will be completed to evaluate each lesson by the participants.

  Resources: Rubric and pens/pencils

Activity 2: Participants will be required to complete an exit ticket. The exit ticket is an index card on which participants will list one idea, strategy, or technique from the Day 2 presentation that they plan to try in their classroom.

Resources: index cards and pens

Three-Day Professional Development Session for Coteaching in an Inclusion Classroom
Day 3: Session 1
9:00-12:00

Activity 1: Participants will review and reflect on the coteaching practices they discussed on Day 2. Open up session by sharing thoughts from exit tickets of the previous day.

Activity 2: Roles and Responsibilities: Trainer will provide each table (group) with chart paper and markers. Each group will develop a written list of school-wide guidelines for overall positions and each responsibility associated with that position. These guidelines will affect general and special education teachers and their administrators. Trainer will place lists around the room, and each group will rotate and read them. For each list, participants must:

- Circle the number of items they want to keep
- Mark out the number of the items they want to delete
- Write in any changes
- Add items they want to include

Resources: Chart paper and markers

Activity 3: Reviewing and Adjusting Coteaching Guidelines: Trainer will review lists with participants and create one list of school-wide guidelines. At this time, the trainer will clarify positions and duties for administrators and all teachers of inclusion.

Activity 4: Participants will watch a video about team building. The link is: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ue3hCVHtZZY

Activity 5: Trainer will provide note cards to participants after the video and ask them to answer enduring questions:

- How can the strategies you have learned in this training help you be more successful?
- What do you plan to do differently?

Resources: computer, overhead, note cards, pens/pencils

Three-Day Professional Development Session for Coteaching in an Inclusion Classroom
Day 3: Session 2
1:00-4:00

Activity 1: Role-Play and Administrative Support: The trainer will pose the question: How will administrative support and time to establish and maintain relationships, lesson plans, assessments, and other issues be provided? Then participants will take part in the following role-play activity:

- Role-Play:Teachers will take on the role of administrators, and administrators will take on the role of teachers. The "administrators" will practice scheduling and adjust the faculty schedule so that special and general educators have common planning times. The "teachers" will develop a lesson plan for teaching all students how to multiply double digit numbers.

  Resources: notepads and pens/pencils

Activity 2: Administrators and teachers will present their assignments to the group. During the presentations, question and answer time will be provided. The goal is a collaborative effort to help both parties to understand the challenges and goals of coteaching.

Activity 3: Putting it all Together: The trainer will open up a discussion by asking, "What worked well?" and "What didn't work well in the training?" Participants in the professional learning development will share their thoughts on the training. Each participant will be required to set a goal in his or her coteaching environment.

Activity 4: Participants will complete an evaluation after they complete the professional development training. This evaluation will help to determine the success of the training, as well as provide feedback for correction and growth.

Resources: Evaluation sheet and pens/pencils

Training Resources: "Are We Really Coteachers?" Handout

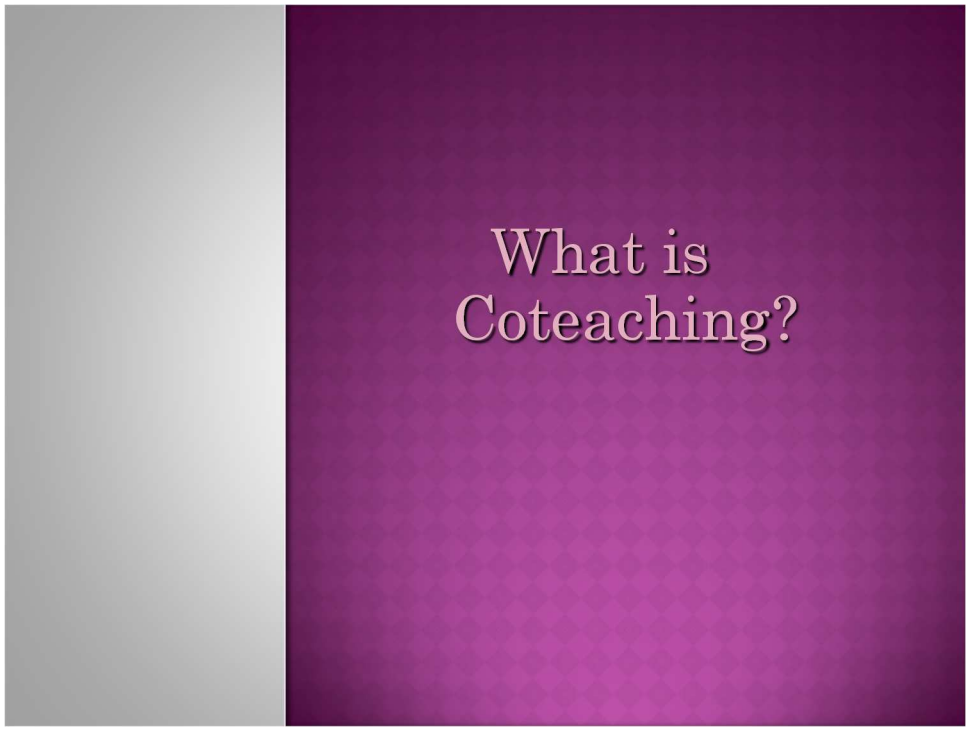
Assessment: "Are We Really Coteachers?"

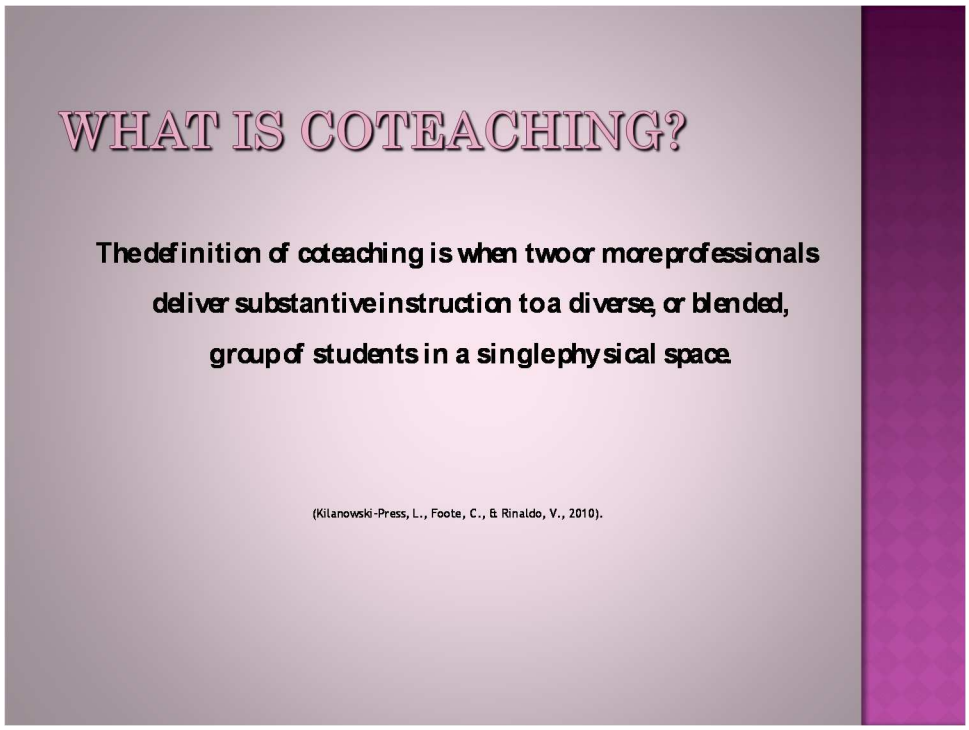
Directions: Check Yes or No for statement to determine your Collaborative & Coteaching Score.

Yes	No	In our Collaborative & Coteaching Partnership…
		1. We decide which Collaborative & Coteaching model we are going to use in a lesson based on the benefits to the students, interns, and coteachers.
		2. We share ideas, information, and materials.
		3. We identify the resources and talents of the interns and coteachers.
		4. We teach different groups of students at the same time.
		5. We are aware of what our interns/coteachers are doing even when we are not directly in one another's presence.
		6. We share responsibility for deciding what to teach.
		7. We agree on the curriculum standards that will be addressed in a lesson.
		8. We share responsibility for deciding how to teach.
		9. We share responsibility for deciding who teaches which part of a lesson.
		10. We are flexible and make changes as needed during a lesson.
		11. We identify student strengths and needs.
		12. We share responsibility for differentiating instruction.
		13. We include other people when their expertise or experience is needed.
		14. We share responsibility for how student learning is assessed.
		15. We can show that students are learning when we collaborate and coteach.
		16. We agree on discipline procedures and carry them out jointly.
		17. We give feedback to one another on what goes on in the classroom.
		18. We make improvements in our lessons based on what happens in the classroom.
		19. We communicate our concerns freely.
		20. We have a process for resolving our disagreements and use it when faced with problems and conflicts.
		21. We celebrate the process and the outcomes of collaboration and coteaching.
		22. We have fun with the students and each other when we collaborate/coteach.
		23. We have regularly scheduled times to meet and discuss our work.
		24. We use our meeting time productively.
		25. We can effectively collaborate and coteach even without time to plan.
		26. We explain the benefits of collaboration/coteaching to the students and their families.
		27. We model collaboration and teamwork for our students.
		28. Our students view both of us as their teacher.
		29. We include students in the collaboration and coteaching role.
		30. We depend on one another to follow through on tasks and responsibilities.
		31. We seek and enjoy additional training to make our collaboration better.
		32. We are mentors to others who want to collaborate/coteach.
		33. We can use a variety of collaborative & coteaching approaches (i.e., supportive, parallel, complementary, team teaching).
		34. We communicate our need for logistical support and resources to our administrators.
		Total

Reprinted from Villa, R.A., Thousand, J. S., & Nevin, A. I. (2004). A Guide to Coteaching: Practical Tips for Facilitating Student Learning. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. (See Appendix F for permission letter).

Coteaching Presentation


What is
Coteaching?


WHAT IS COTEACHING?
The definition of coteaching is when two or more professionals deliver substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space.
(Kilanowski-Press, L., Foote, C., & Rinaldo, V., 2010).

WHAT IS COTEACHING?

- An involvement of two or more professionals sharing teaching responsibilities, typically a general educator and a special educator
- Instruction is given within the same physical space
- A heterogeneous group of students is the target of instruction

WHAT IS COTEACHING?

Coteaching requires an outlook that both teachers share the classroom and students. Coteachers should always think that…

WE ARE BOTH TEACHERS IN THIS CLASSROOM

5

COTEACHING DESIGNS

Supportive Teaching /One Teach, One Observe	A lead teacher provides instruction and the other teacher watches and assists.
Parallel Teaching	Unlike groups of students receive the same information from two different teachers.
Supplemental Teaching	One teacher provides instruction and the other teacher inserts additional information as needed.
Team Teaching	Planning and lessons are shared by both teachers in a supportive way.

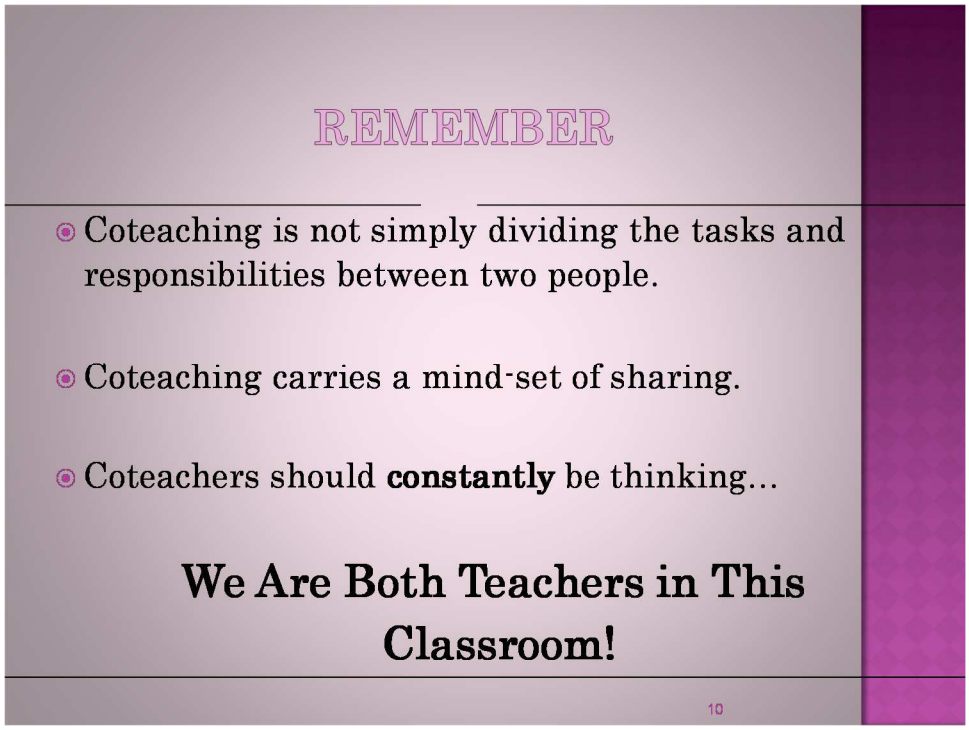
WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COTEACHING?

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

- General education and special education teacher is accessible to all pupils in the classroom.
- Self confidence is positively affected.
- Educational accomplishments improve.
- Relationships between peers improve.
- Specialized training strengthens.

BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS

- Increases job satisfaction
- Another professional can provide different viewpoints and more ideas for instruction. There is a sharing of knowledge, skills, and resources.
- Lower student-teacher ratio
- Teachers can respond effectively to varied needs of students
- Improves communication and can be motivational between special and general education teachers


REMEMBER
Coteaching is not simply dividing the tasks and responsibilities between two people.
Coteaching carries a mind-set of sharing.
Coteachers should **constantly** be thinking…
We Are Both Teachers in This Classroom!
10

Professional Development Rubric

Date: _____

Professional Development Title:
_____

Please evaluate the following statements on a range from 1 to 4:
1 = Disagree
2= On the Fence
3= Agree
4= Absolutely Agree

1. The purpose and schedule of this training were plainly communicated. _____

2. The purpose of this training was significant to my educational learning. _____

3. The activities of this training assisted me in meeting the established objectives. _____

4. The activities of this training related to my learning style. _____

5. The trainer taught the established objectives. _____

6. I will utilize specific information taught in the training. _____

Please answer to the best of your ability:

1. What was the most helpful component of this professional development training?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. How would you improve this type of professional development training?

_____
_____
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Appendix B: Interview Guide

Study: Teacher Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Inclusion in Elementary Classroom Settings

Teacher:	Date:
Grade:	Subject:
Location:	Interviewer:
Interviewee:	Interviewer Position:

Questions:

Questions 1, 2, and 3 Answer Teachers' Roles in Inclusive Settings:

1. How many years have you been teaching in an inclusive setting?

2. What is your role in teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive setting?

3. How are roles determined in this setting?

Answers to Research Questions 1 and 3:

4. How would you describe an inclusive teaching situation? How does teaching in an inclusive setting affect your teaching? (Feelings, Thoughts)

5. Tell me about your role as a teacher in an inclusive setting. (Thoughts)

    Follow-up question: How do you feel about your role?

    Follow-up question: Do you feel that you are effective in this role? Why or why not? (Thoughts, Feelings)

    Follow-up question: Have your feelings about your role changed throughout your teaching career? (Feelings)

6. Based on your training and experience, how comfortable do you feel teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive setting? (Feelings, Thoughts)

    Follow-up question: What makes you feel this way? (Feelings)

7. How does a teacher's motivation to succeed reflect in the way he or she teaches in an inclusive setting? (Motivation, Thoughts)

Answers to Research Questions 2 and 4:

8. What types of inclusion models have you used since your participation in teaching in inclusion classrooms? (Behavior)

Follow-up question: What model are you currently using? (Behavior)

Follow-up question: Briefly describe how you share responsibilities in the classroom. (Motivation, Behavior)

9. What inclusion models have you seen at your school or at other schools?

Follow-up question: Are there features of these models that you like? (If so, please explain why/how).

Follow-up question: What ability do you have to change or adjust the model that your school uses? (Thoughts, Motivation)

10. What professional development training have you received or are currently receiving regarding students with disabilities, teaching inclusion, or coteaching? (Thoughts)

Follow-up question: In what ways has this training helped you regarding inclusion, students with disabilities, or coteaching? (Thoughts, Feelings)

11. What kind of training would be beneficial for you as a teacher of inclusion? (Motivation, Thoughts, Feelings)

12. How do you include SWD in your lessons? (Behavior)

13. In what ways do you believe that inclusive education benefits both general and special education students and the teachers involved? (Feelings, Thoughts)

14. How do you plan or collaborate with your team teacher? How do you feel about the planning process? (Behavior, Feelings)

Appendix C: Letter of Informed Consent

Teacher Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Inclusion in Elementary Classroom Settings

Dear Colleague,

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Teacher Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Inclusion in Elementary Classroom Settings.* You were chosen for the study because you are a certified general or special education teacher with experience in an inclusive classroom setting at your elementary school. You would be one of up to 14 teachers participating in the study. This form is part of a process known as informed consent and allows you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part. This study is being conducted by a researcher named Delicia Peacock, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You may know the researcher as a teacher in your school system, but this study is separate from that role. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before you agree to be part of the interview.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to examine general and special education teachers' perceptions about inclusion and how these perceptions influence teaching methods in inclusive classroom settings.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Read and understand this consent form.
- Participate in an individual interview designed to last for a 30- to 45-minute time period at a later date.
- *Upon participant's permission, the interview may be audiotaped.*
- Participate in a 30-minute observation at a later date.
- Participate in member checking for review and discussion of findings with the researcher.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate in the study will be respected. No one at the elementary school will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. Similarly, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you decide that you will participate in this research project. If you decide to participate in the study now, you may withdraw at any time during or after the study. If you participate, I will ask you to review the transcript of your interview and discuss the findings of the study with me. This process will take approximately 30 minutes.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There are no risks associated with your participation in this study. Possible benefits for the participants of this study are an immediate awareness of their perceptions of inclusion and the influence they may have on their teaching methods.

Payment:
There is no compensation for participants.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept anonymous and confidential. In any report of this study that might be published, the researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes that will make it possible to identify you. The data collected will be kept in a secure, locked location. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years as required by the university. Only the researcher will have access to the records. I will provide you with a copy of your signed informed consent form for your records.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. If you have any questions later, you may contact the researcher. The researcher conducting this study is Delicia Peacock. The researcher may be contacted at delicia.peacock@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Director of the Research Center at Walden University. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information, and I feel that I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. I have asked questions if necessary and received answers. I consent to participate in this study.
Printed Name of Participant

_____

Date of Consent

_____

Participant's Signature

_____

Researcher's Signature_____

Appendix D: Observation Guide

Coteaching Observation Checklist

General Education Teacher _____ Grade Level:

Special Education Teacher _____ Date:

Subject(s) Observed _____ Time:

Observer _____

Description of Class and Class Activity:

Rating Scale: **NO**= Not Observed **SE**= Somewhat Evident **CE**= Clearly Evident

	NO	SE	CE	Comment(s)
Lessons are differentiated in content, process, product, and/or learning environment.				
Teachers use “we” and “us”, or equality is otherwise evident.				
Both teachers are actively involved during instruction and activities.				
Students are engaged and participating in learning.				
Both teachers work with all students.				
Both teachers are observed to share equally in classroom and instructional responsibilities.				
Routines and formal procedures are evident and used by teachers and students.				
Level of collaborative and effective teacher communication and interaction are evident.				
Coteaching instructional arrangements are observed. ☐ One Teach/One Observe ☐ One Teach/One Drift/Support/Assist ☐ Parallel Teaching ☐ Station Teaching ☐ Team Teaching ☐ Alternative Teaching ☐ Other:				
Student Instructional grouping pattern or patterns observed. ☐ Whole group instruction ☐ Small group instruction ☐ Flexible grouping ☐ Collaborative Groups ☐ Individual seat work ☐ Other:				

Appendix E: Alignment Grid

Classroom Layout

Research Question	Analysis	Interview Question/Observation Guide	Teacher Interviewed or Observed
What are general educators' perceptions of their instructional efficacy for teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion setting?	Feelings, Thoughts	How would you describe an inclusive teaching situation? How does teaching in an inclusive setting affect your teaching?	General Education teacher
	Thoughts	Tell me about your role as a teacher in an inclusive setting.	
	Thoughts	Follow-up question: How do you feel about your role?	
	Thoughts, Feelings	Follow-up question: Do you feel that you are effective in this role? Why or why not?	
	Feelings	Follow-up question: Have your feelings changed throughout your teaching career?	
	Feelings, Thoughts	Based on your training and experience, how comfortable do you feel teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive setting?	
	Feelings	Follow-up question: What makes you feel this way?	

	Motivation, Thoughts Behavior, Feelings	How does a teacher's motivation reflect in the way he or she teaches in an inclusive setting? Level of collaborative and effective teacher communication/ interaction evident.	
What are the thoughts, feelings, behavior, and motivation of general educators regarding a coteaching setting with a special education teacher?	Behavior Behavior Thoughts, Motivation	What types of inclusion models have you used since your participation in teaching in inclusion classrooms? Follow-up question: What model are you currently using? Have you seen different inclusion models at your school or at other schools? Follow-up question: What ability do you have to change or adjust the model used at your school? What professional development training have you received or are currently receiving regarding students with disabilities, teaching inclusion, or coteaching? Follow-up question: In what ways has this training helped you regarding inclusion, students with disabilities, or coteaching?	General education teacher

	Thoughts, Feelings	What kind of training would be beneficial for you as a teacher of inclusion?	
		How do you include SWD in your lessons?	
	Motivation, Thoughts, Feelings	In what ways do you believe that inclusive education benefits both general and special education students and the teachers involved?	
	Behavior	How do you plan or collaborate with your team teacher? How do you feel about the planning process?	
		Lessons are differentiated in content, process, product, and/or learning environment.	
	Feelings, Thoughts	Teachers use “we” and/or “us”, or equality is otherwise evident.	
		Both teachers are actively involved during instruction and activities.	
	Behavior, Feelings	Students are engaged and participate in learning.	
		Both teachers work with all students.	
	Thoughts	Both teachers are observed to share equally in classroom and instructional responsibilities.	

	Behavior	It is evident that teachers and students use routines and formal procedures.	
	Behavior, Motivation	Coteaching instructional arrangements are observed. • One Teach/One Observe • One Teach/One Drift/Support/Assist • Parallel Teaching • Station Teaching • Team Teaching • Alternative Teaching • Other:	
	Behavior	• Student Instructional grouping pattern or patterns observed • Whole group instruction • Small group instruction • Flexible grouping • Collaborative Groups • Individual seat work • Other	
What are special educators' perceptions of their instructional efficacy with SWD in the inclusion setting?	Feelings, Thoughts	How would you describe an inclusive teaching situation? How does teaching in an inclusive setting affect your teaching?	Special education teacher
	Thoughts	Tell me about your role as a teacher in an inclusive setting. Follow-up question: How do you feel about your role? Follow-up question: Do you feel that you are	

		effective in this role? Why or why not?	
	Thoughts, Feelings	Follow-up question: Have your feelings changed throughout your teaching career?	
	Feelings	Based on your training and experience, how comfortable do you feel teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive setting?	
	Feelings, Thoughts	Follow-up question: What makes you feel this way?	
	Feelings	How does a teacher's motivation reflect in the way he or she teaches in an inclusive setting?	
	Motivation, Thoughts	Level of collaborative and effective teacher communication/ interaction is evident.	
	Behavior, Feelings		
What are the thoughts, feelings, behavior, and motivation of special educators regarding a coteaching setting with a general education teacher?	Behavior	What types of inclusion models have you used since your participation in teaching in inclusion classrooms?	Special education teacher
		Follow-up question: What model are you currently using?	
	Behavior	Have you seen different inclusion models at your school or at other schools?	
		Follow-up question: What ability do you have to change or adjust the model that your school uses?	
		What professional development training have	

	Thoughts	you received or are currently receiving regarding students with disabilities, teaching inclusion, or coteaching? Follow-up question: In what ways has this training helped you regarding inclusion, students with disabilities, or coteaching? What kind of training would be beneficial for you as a teacher of inclusion? How do you include SWD in your lessons?	
	Thoughts Thoughts, Feelings Motivation, Thoughts, and Feelings Behavior Feelings, Thoughts Behavior, Feelings	In what ways do you believe that inclusive education benefits both general and special education students and the teachers involved? How do you plan or collaborate with your team teacher? How do you feel about the planning process? • Teachers use "we" and/or "us," or equality is otherwise evident. • Both teachers are actively involved during instruction and activities. • Students are engaged and participate in learning.	

	Behavior	• Both teachers work with all students.	
	Behavior, Motivation	• Both teachers are observed to share equally in classroom and instructional responsibilities.	
	Behavior	• It is evident that teachers and students use routines and formal procedures.	
	Behavior	• Coteaching instructional arrangements are observed. • One Teach/One Observe • One Teach/One Drift/Support/Assist • Parallel Teaching • Station Teaching • Team Teaching • Alternative Teaching • Other	
	Behavior	• Student Instructional grouping pattern or patterns observed • Whole group instruction • Small group instruction • Flexible grouping • Collaborative Groups • Individual seat work • Other	

Appendix F: Permission Letter

Permission Letter for Delicia Peacock
Teacher Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Inclusion in Elementary Classroom Settings

June 18, 2015

Delicia,
You are certainly most welcome to copy and use the material in the handout (i.e., the coteaching survey) in your research. Good luck, and please share your results with us.

Rich
ravillabayridge@cs.com