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Inclusion Teachers' Perspectives on Coteaching

Allison Nunes
Walden University

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College of Education

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Allison Nunes

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

Allison Nunes

MA, Jersey City University, 2003

BA, Jersey City University, 1995

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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August 2018

Abstract

The coteaching classroom has grown with the influx of special needs students in general education classrooms. New state and federal laws mandated the need for collaboration when instructing special education students, and middle school teachers in a Northern New Jersey school district are experiencing challenges with the implementation of coteaching in inclusion classrooms. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teachers' perceptions of collaboration challenges that resulted from coteaching in the classroom. The key research question of this study involved general and special education teachers' lived experiences in relation to the inclusion classroom and their attitudes and beliefs that influenced them in the classroom. This study was guided by Vygotsky's zone of proximal development theory, which addressed the importance of socialization and the development of relationships among all learners. Purposeful sampling was used to select 7 general education and 7 special education teachers who had coteaching experience. Data were collected through semistructured interviews and field notes. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results showed a need for additional professional development focused on the areas of teamwork, trust, and cooperative planning. Based on the findings, a 3-day professional development was created to increase teachers' growth and self-efficacy of the implementation of successful collaboration in the inclusion classroom. This professional development may bring about positive social change by providing coteaching teams with the guidance needed to implement the coteaching framework with fidelity.

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Dedication

I dedicate this project study to Derrick, and my two children, Jordan and Courtney. With their love and encouragement, I was able to complete this journey. Derrick, thank you for patience and your sense of humor when I needed to laugh. Jordan and Courtney, thank you for understanding when I needed quiet time to work and your continued support and patience.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

The coteaching classroom has grown with the influx of special needs students in general education classrooms (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). With an increase in the number of inclusion classrooms, challenges often arise for teachers with the implementation of the coteaching model. These include common planning time, classroom management, defining teacher roles, and teachers' perceptions on collaboration. According to Santagata and Guarino (2012), in the United States, teaching has traditionally been viewed as a profession whose members are trained to work independently behind closed doors. To alleviate some of the challenges that may arise with the implementation of the coteaching model, local school districts are creating professional learning communities that allow teachers to collaborate and share their experiences while learning from each other. The creation of professional learning communities is done through professional development provided by the district and the local middle school. According to several middle school general education teachers at the study school, they were unfamiliar with how to collaborate with the special education teacher to meet the needs of special education students prior to their employment in the school district (A. Nunes, personal communication, March 21, 2014).

The traditional way of educating students with special needs involved placing them in separate classrooms away from their peers. As far back as the 1970s, legislative changes were being made to place special needs students with their peers in the least restrictive environment (LRE). According to Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2013), the LRE

allows students with special needs to be instructed with their nondisabled peers while still experiencing success. It is now standard for students with special needs to participate in the general education curriculum within the regular classroom setting (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2013). In addition, if a student is not experiencing academic success in the LRE, it may not be the correct placement for the student, and a more restrictive environment may need to be considered (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2013).

In accordance with the State Department of Education (2013), in 1989-1990, only 22% of students with disabilities were being instructed in the LRE. By 2007-2008, the number had increased to 62% (State Department of Education, 2013). In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (as cited in McLeskey & Waldron, 2011) stated that over the previous 20 years, there had been a substantial increase in the number of students with learning disabilities who were instructed in the inclusion program for most of the day. This increase in the use of the inclusion classroom demonstrated that the coteaching model had become the preferred method for students with special needs.

The Local Problem

Middle school teachers in Northern New Jersey are experiencing challenges with the implementation of coteaching in inclusion classrooms resulting in communication breakdowns regarding common planning time, classroom management, defining teacher roles, and teachers' perceptions on collaboration (A. Nunes, personal communication, March 21, 2014). New Jersey middle school teachers may feel that they need more training regarding how to collaborate with each other in a coteaching classroom environment (A. Nunes, personal communication, March 21, 2014). The implementation

of coteaching is in response to new state and federal laws justifying the need for such collaboration when instructing special education students. According to Brinkman and Twiford (2012), coteaching is defined as

> the partnering of a general education teacher and a special education teacher or another specialist for the purpose of jointly delivering instruction to a diverse group of students, including those with disabilities or other special needs, in a general education setting and in a way that flexibly and deliberately meets their learning needs. (p. 3)

In a local middle school, there were seven inclusion instructional homerooms. Ninety-two percent of the school's students were economically disadvantaged and received free or reduced-price lunch according to state standards and resources (State Department of Education, 2013), and special education students comprised approximately one-fourth of the student population (State Department of Education, 2013). The local district under study experienced a multiple-year trend of a high rate of special needs students who were placed in general education classes for less than 40% of the school day (State Department of Education, 2014).

In addition, the district had a high number of students in separate special education placements when compared to other districts in the state (State Department of Education, 2014). The district under study was one of the 75 districts identified as noncompliant by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) regarding special education students not being situated in the LRE. According to Browning and Kearney (2014), "New Jersey ranks first in the nation when it comes to placing special needs

students in self-contained classrooms for the majority of the day in public and private special education schools" (p. 1). The federal lawsuit settlement with NJDOE requires that special education students be assigned to a regular classroom, with the special and regular education teachers working collaboratively to meet the needs of all students. According to Sandler (2014), countless children with disabilities are inappropriately segregated into special education classrooms and deprived of their right to an inclusion education. The detriment caused by this segregation demonstrates the need for more inclusion classrooms and for general and special education teachers to collaborate in the coteaching model.

Rationale

The school district under study experienced challenges in meeting federal and state education mandates regarding special education students (A. Nunes, personal communication, March 21, 2014). According to a special education teacher at the school under study, there was a lack of communication and a lack of planning time among teachers (A. Nunes, personal communication, March 21, 2014). Effective collaboration occurs when general and special education teachers share their knowledge and discuss the needs of their students (Obiakor, Harris, Muta, Rotator, & Algozzine, 2012). Together, they problem solve, share resources, and discuss instructional techniques. Both regular and special education teachers must meet students' developmental and educational needs in classrooms by diversifying instruction and assessments (Obiakor et al., 2012).

In the school district under study, inclusion teachers may feel that they need more training to collaborate with each other, as they have been experiencing communication

breakdowns. According to Watt, Therrien, and Kaldenberg (2013), collegial support is the key to collaboration because it creates a network connecting the regular education teacher and the special education teacher. There is also a lack of significant collaboration on the part of these teachers in planning lessons and fostering parental involvement (A. Nunes, personal communication, March 21, 2014). Ncube (2011) described how peer collaboration can be an effective teaching strategy that assists both regular and special education teachers in planning instructional strategies to satisfy the academic demands of all students. At the secondary level, the regular education teacher provides the subject expertise while the special education teacher provides support and resources for both teachers so that they can work together in scaffolding lessons to satisfy the social and emotional requirements of all students (Watt et al., 2013).

The coteaching model requires that collaboration takes place within the inclusion setting (Obiakor et al., 2012). The numbers of students who are subject to the challenges inherent in a poorly developed coteaching model have also increased (Obiakor et al., 2012). According to Simmons, Carpenter, and Dyal (2012), regular education provides initial instruction to all students at the middle school level. Recent mandates require that special education teachers serve as the consultative teachers inside the general education classroom, where special-needs as well as general education students are grouped together (Journal of Law & Education, 2015). In addition, the reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 insists that special education students be instructed in the LRE.

In the inclusion classroom, both teachers must follow curriculum standards while honoring students' individual education plans (IEPs) to ensure that all students' needs are being met (Nierengarten, 2013). It is a federal and state prerequisite, governed by IDEA, that public schools develop an IEP for every student with disabilities. IDEA necessitates that the IEP team considers the general education classroom setting prior to transferring a child to a special education class or program (Browning & Kearney, 2014).

The coteaching model design and implementation faces several challenges based on professionals' perceptions of the model. Coteaching, from its conceptualization, has faced challenges in relation to classroom partnerships and illustrates the complexity of collaboration. According to Melekoglu (2013), one of the rationales for inclusion missing the mark is the negative attitude that teachers who work in the inclusion setting may bring toward students with special needs. Another concern is the presumption that both teachers have the necessary skills to scaffold lessons and to collaborate with each other (McCray & Mchatton, 2011).

The leadership team at the middle school of study, along with the building principal, created a School Improvement Plan (SIP) 2014-2015 that included steps in which working together could be reformed. Among the provisions of the SIP was that the school's master schedule would allow for teachers to plan collaboratively using curriculum maps with sequenced student-learning objectives. Collaboration training was provided for all special education teachers, inclusion staff, and general education teachers on how to effectively employ appropriate coteaching models. Additional training was provided to address special education teachers and paraprofessionals during the summer

of 2014. Through these efforts, educators were informed to use research-based instruction to meet the needs of all students. Many students displayed academic growth on the Renaissance district assessments in 2014.

Many qualitative research studies have been conducted to explore coteaching in kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12), as well as the importance of engaging in effective communication, creating constructive dialogue, and resolving conflicts (Graziano & Navarrete, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perceptions and lived experiences of special and regular education teachers in a middle school setting in a local New Jersey school district. Inclusion teachers (both regular and special education) were interviewed with respect to teaching in the inclusion setting.

Definition of Terms

Collaboration: Collaboration consists of teachers working together, sharing common goals (Hammenken, 2007).

Coteaching: Coteaching encompasses two teachers functioning collaboratively to meet the needs of all assigned students while meeting the mandates of NCLB and IDEA (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008).

General education: The purpose of general education is to supply students with a scope of knowledge that will prepare them to live in a democratic society (Villa et al., 2008).

Inclusion: The practice that places special education students with their nondisabled peers (Friend & Shamberger, 2008).

Special education: Special education is a title used to delineate the system that must be in place in public schools to satisfy the needs of students with academic and behavioral problems (Journal of Law & Education, 2015).

Significance of the Study

The focus of this study was on middle school teachers' perceptions of collaboration challenges that result when special education students are taught alongside their peers in the general education classroom. This study may grant new insights into the challenges inherent in the inclusion model. These challenges include common planning time, classroom management, defining teacher roles, and teachers' perceptions of collaboration. These challenges and the roles of the stakeholders in elevating them were the focus of the study. It may also provide the teachers at the local middle school with new ideas on how to best satisfy the requirements of their students by collaborating with each other.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of collaboration challenges that result from coteaching in the middle school classroom. As such, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What challenges do middle school teachers face in the coteaching classroom?

2. How do middle school teachers perceive their collaborative experiences to affect them in the inclusion classroom?

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

In the literature review, I address the conceptual framework guiding this study as well as an exhaustive review of relevant literature. The primary source I used to find peer-reviewed articles for this literature review was the Walden online library. I used several search engines such as ProQuest, Sage, EBSCO host, and ERIC. In addition, I used books as sources for this study made available by the Walden library. The terms used in my search included *collaboration, coteaching, general education, inclusion,* and *special education.*

Zone of Proximal Development

The conceptual framework for this study was Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which emphasizes the need for socialization among adults. ZPD is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's theory of ZPD determined that new knowledge is constructed and provided from the sociocultural theory framework. ZPD correlates with collaborative learning because collaborative learning is two or more people who learn or attempt to learn together (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers attend collaborative training to reinforce learning in the workplace (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky determined that learning is the process of building new knowledge onto the foundation of what is already known. The full development of ZPD depends on full social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Through collaboration, teachers, as well as learners, can only acquire new

knowledge if they combine their existing knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Acquiring new knowledge can be accomplished by putting new ideas into context of current understanding by discussions between learners and teachers where what is already known can be articulated to extend the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky (1978) stated that language and culture are the foundations that enable humans to experience life, communicate with one another, and understand the world around them. Vygotsky further stated that "A special feature of human perception …is the perception of real objects… I do not see the world simply in color and shape but also a world with sense and meaning. I do not merely see something round and black with two hands; I see a clock" (p. 39). Vygotsky emphasized learning through communication and interactions with others rather than through independent work. From Vygotsky's idea on learning with others came ideas of group learning, one of which involves learning in a collaborative setting through interaction and socialization with others (Vygotsky, 1962). Traditionally, teachers made their own professional decisions regarding their classrooms. The interaction in the classroom was based on one teacher interacting and making choices for the students. The inclusion classroom requires that the regular and special education teacher coteach and collaborate on students' lessons and social needs.

This theory is useful in understanding the elaboration of relationships among adults. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist views also centered on the learning community and the way the learning community supports learning. Social constructivists view collaboration as a planning framework for teachers (Fulton, 2003). Vygotsky (1978) concluded that collaboration is a social process in which differences are

emphasized and discussed between group members. Vygotsky (1978) theorized that humans learn through social engagement with others and that socially constructed wisdom involves more competent people directing those less proficient to grasp ideas beyond their developmental level. Vygotsky (1980) stated that the foundation for collaborative learning is a social accomplishment and must not be conducted in seclusion. By the way of social interaction, individuals develop thoughts and engage in their own thinking (Vygotsky, 1980). Teacher-to-teacher collaboration is essential for coteachers to develop social relations and improve student learning (Vygotsky, 1980).

Vygotsky (1962) believed that creating an environment that used both guided and directed interactions lead to innovative ideas. Vygotsky encouraged educators to create social learning settings that maximize student learning and promote environment. Furthermore, Vygotsky stated that through this cultural lens, individuals develop learning communities, create a community of learners, support collaborative learning, and have discussion-based learning.

Vygotsky's (1978) theory was relevant to my study because it focuses on collaborative learning, which is encouraged in the local school district. Vygotsky's views of learning from each other and building on prior knowledge by communicating and interacting with each other is essential to creating learning communities. Further, Vygotsky advised moving away from the traditional method of one teacher interacting with the students in the classroom in favor of the inclusion setting, which encourages regular and special education teachers to collaborate and share prior knowledge to best meet the needs of all their students.

History of Special Education

It has been more than 40 years since federal lawmakers mandated legislation requiring special education services directly involving students with disabilities with the passing of P.L. 94-142 in 1975 (Gold & Heraldo, 2012). This law called for the development of the categorical identification of students with disabilities; subsequently, the IEP was designed to focus on the educational, social, and emotional needs of students with disabilities (Gold & Heraldo, 2012).

The Special Education Law of 1988 made inclusion the law of the land (Timberlake, 2016). The intent of this law was to grant all students an opportunity to an equitable education (Timberlake, 2016). In equitable education, special education students are required to be educated in the regular education classroom, which allowed them to be educated together with their equals (Timberlake, 2016). Some characteristics of inclusion vary from school to school throughout the nation (Timberlake, 2016). The general concept of inclusion is that the mainstreamed special education student would be better educated among their general education peers, using various types of therapy and teaching methods provided by the collaboration undertaking of the general and special education teachers (Timberlake, 2016).

Individuals with Disabilities Act. Shortly after the Special Education, IDEA was enacted in 2004. IDEA safeguarded children with disabilities and their parents by ensuring them services unique to their instructional and emotional needs (Zirkel, 2013). States and public agencies provide support for individuals with disabilities in the form of early intervention and special education, among others. In addition, under IDEA, special

education students also receive related services such as physical therapy and counseling in the LRE (Taylor, 2011). IDEA governs public agencies that provide disability support, assuring that services are provided to eligible infants through adolescence. This law entitled every child to a free appropriate public education (FAPE), which is documented in an IEP (Zirkel, 2013). This legislation was essential in addressing the needs of individual children with disabilities in public schools as well as enumerating the educational responsibilities of general and special education teachers, school administrators, and parents. IDEA required that students with special needs receive accommodations that enable them to have the same classroom experience as regular education students (Taylor, 2011). The law provided federal funds to public schools if specific requirements were met (Taylor, 2011). IDEA and later amendments to the law assure that students with special needs receive the maximum benefit in both the general and special education classrooms in public schools (Taylor, 2011).

Under IDEA, students are classified based on completion of an evaluation process provided by their school district. They also must meet certain criteria. The criteria are evaluated by using an appropriate diagnostic tool to determine if a child has a disability (Taylor, 2011). The areas of disabilities can be cognitive, physical, social or emotional, and adaptive development (Taylor, 2011). Under IDEA, the evaluation process must be completed before a student is deemed eligible to receive services (Taylor, 2011). Once parental consent to begin the evaluation process is received, the multidisciplinary evaluation team follows guidelines before placing the child in their LRE (Taylor, 2011). An annual reevaluation of provided services will take place under the IDEA guidelines

(Taylor, 2011). IDEA relates to my study because it sets the standards for how children are classified as being eligible to receive special education services and how the classification process works.

No Child Left Behind. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (Pl 107-110) influenced general education and efforts to end the achievement gap among regular and special education students (Steffan, 2004). NCLB held educators accountable, ensuring that all students are 100% proficient in core subject areas except social studies by 2014 (NCLB, 2001). An annual evaluation required by NCLB would be accomplished through assessments costing millions of dollars allotted to NCLB to ensure its implementation (NCLB, 2001).

Educators across the United States converged to create assessment tests that every student was required to take beginning in 2003 (NCLB, 2001). The purpose of these tests was to hold educators accountable for student achievement, making it necessary for all students to make annual progress (NCLB, 2001). The tests resulted in excessive stress on educators because of the unexpected changes that were required under this law (Steffan, 2004). The law demanded that every teacher teaching in core subjects be certified as highly qualified (NCLB, 2001). Not only are teachers required to attain a teaching certificate and a bachelor's degree under NCLB, it is imperative for them to pass a test demonstrating that they have mastered the area in which they are certified to teach (NCLB, 2001). Lastly, the law required that highly qualified teachers participate in professional development with the aim of schools and teachers maintaining records of their participation (NCLB, 2001).

The NCLB and IDEA legislations changed the way in which school districts viewed and treated students with special needs. Giannola (2011) stated, "These two federal laws have brought more special education students into the general education classroom and held regular education teachers accountable for their performance" (p. 21). Both the reauthorization of NCLB and IDEA federal legislations in 2006 focused on promoting higher academic outcomes for students (Cornelius, 2013). However, both the IDEA and the NCLB had limitations in addressing the extent of the needs of students with disabilities.

Every Student Succeeds Act. To shift the power away from the federal government and back to the state and local school districts, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed December, 2015 (Ferguson & Macqueen, 2014). ESSA ends NCLB waivers for states and local school districts. This new legislation replaces NCLB and places educational accountability on stakeholders, such as educators and parents, who are using evidence-based practices to determine which schools need improvement (Ferguson & Macqueen, 2014). The main fear among federal legislators is that historically ignored groups, such as special education students, may have been forgotten about by states and lessened the expectation for student performance (Ferguson & Macqueen, 2014).

For the past 30 years, special educators in the United States built an abundance of educational agendas to address the educational requirements of their students (Danforth & Naraian, 2015). In the United States, special education scholars launched the regular education initiative (REI) debate (Danforth & Naraian, 2015). The main concern of the

debate focused on educating students with and without disabilities in the same classrooms (Danforth & Naraian, 2015). REI debate participants made it clear that inclusion was created by special educators who had concerns in decreasing the segregation and separation of students with disabilities (Danforth & Naraian, 2015).

 Inclusion practices. Inclusion was developed through research to educate special education students intellectually and practically (Danforth & Naraian, 2015). Inclusion was created to address every single student's educational demands (Morrison, 2014). Inclusion education is founded on human rights and social justice, and it is a philosophy as well as a principle (Lindeman & Magiera, 2014). Inclusion education included everyone involved with a child's formative education process to provide a quality education (Morrison, 2014). A quality education for all students, regardless of their diagnosis or special education classification, provides an unbiased opportunity to be integrated in a typical learning setting or program of choice (Morrison, 2014). Irrespective of a student's abilities and disabilities, schools should cater to all students and not confine them to an area within the school (Danforth & Naraian, 2015).

 Inclusion leads to the creation of an education framework that respects everyone (Morrison, 2014). According to Vanhalst (2015), there are several frameworks that have established the need to belong as a fundamental and universal human need. In inclusion education, students with special needs are learning with their normal peers in the regular education classroom (Lindeman & Magiera, 2014). The philosophy behind inclusion is "equity in education," which implies all children have the benefit to be educated correctly (Gaad & Almotairi, 2013). Inclusion moves from the segregation of educating students

based on learning challenges or behaviors to what is best for each student and is centered

on the needs of each student (Tkachyk, 2013). Inclusion in a general education

classroom provides students with a range of abilities and disabilities with appropriate in-

class support (Gaad & Almotairi, 2013). Keeping in mind what is best for each student

and realizing that one size does not fit all is the main premise behind creating an

inclusion classroom (Tkachyk, 2013).

Inclusion at the School Level

Special education students must be educated alongside their general education

peers, which leaves states and local school districts in a transition period to adjust, retool,

and revise their accountability performance standards (Ferguson & Macqueen, 2014).

Central office and school administrators are required to implement the new guidelines

mandated under federal and state legislation to support teachers in the inclusion

classroom. Additional students with special needs are being included in the regular

education classroom (Zirkel, 2013). Administrators are increasingly using coteaching as

an inclusion practice to provide successful teaching in classrooms to facilitate learning of

students with disabilities (Embury & Kroeger, 2012).

Mackenzie (2011) stressed that school district policies toward inclusion are rarely

examined despite the long-standing failure in their implementation in many public school

districts. Hoing and Venkateswaran (2012) stated that school district executives play a

role in the execution of state and federal educational reform policies such as inclusion

classrooms. However, school district executives sometimes fail to provide support and

resources for such policy implementations (Hoing & Venkateswaran, 2012). School

districts cannot assume that administrators, faculty, staff, parents, or students fully understand what coteaching is and how it will look in the classroom (Murawski, 2016). Schoolwide or districtwide, individuals who have expertise in coteaching should provide clear examples by modeling a successful classroom environment (Murawski, 2016).

Students' and teachers' perceptions of inclusion. Inclusion places all students in academically heterogeneous classrooms instead of isolating students with special needs (Patel & Kramer, 2013). Inclusion requires that various specialists, such as reading specialists and intervention specialists, work simultaneously with the general education teacher because students are academically heterogeneously grouped (Patel & Kramer, 2013). King-Sears (2014) indicated that for more than 80% of students, coteaching is the most-used model followed by one teach, one drift. According to the U.S. Department of Education, about 61% of special education students are educated in the LRE (the regular education classroom) beyond 80% of their educational time (as cited in King-Sears, 2014). Placing special education students within a regular education classroom with no suitable guidance, resources, or support can lead to academic failure (Murawski, 2004).

Coteaching. Coteaching is most often applied according to regular and special education teachers at the secondary level (Murawski, 2004). Coteaching is an approach that can satisfy the wants of struggling students with and without disabilities in a secondary-level class (Murawski, 2004). The coteaching classroom can include students with learning disabilities (LD), mild disabilities, other health impairments, traumatic brain injury, and students who receive speech and language services, in addition to regular education students (King-Sears, 2014). At the secondary level, cotaught

instruction is essential because special education students must meet the same state high school graduation standards as their peers (King-Sears, 2014). At the secondary level, a lack of success pertaining to special education students, due to miscommunication between educators, exists (Murawski, 2004). At the secondary level, assignments are increasingly difficult, and the focus is primarily on content mastery rather than meeting the diverse needs of the learner (Murawski, 2004).

Special education students in the regular education classroom often do not receive accommodations based on their IEP (King-Sears, 2014). Students also felt it was difficult to receive assistance from the general or the special education teacher (King-Sears, 2014). O'Rourke and Houghton (2008) claimed that students with mild disabilities stated that they received few instructional changes from either coteacher but enjoyed working with their peers. Embury and Kroeger (2012) interviewed middle school students who described two different cotaught classes that they attended and found that each class used different coteaching strategies. One class used an array of coteaching models; whereas in the other class, the general education teacher delivered the lesson at the same time as the special education teacher, which was a reinforcement of the lesson role (Embury & Kroeger, 2012). A positive attitude towards inclusion tends to result in accommodations to fit each individual student (Forlin & Chambers, 2011).

Teachers' perceptions pertaining to the school environment have an impact on the teachers' well-being (Rytivaara, 2012a). The assumption of being a teacher is that one has a class of students; however, this is not the case in coteaching where a class and instructional responsibilities are shared, leaving the teachers to question their professional

identity and overcome the change (Rytivaara, 2012a). Recent research on a teacher's attitude towards inclusion revealed that many general education teachers do not believe they were sufficiently prepared to satisfy the requirements of special education students (Williamson & McLeskey, 2011). The lack of support and accompanying stress are the reasons teachers are often negative towards inclusion education (Brackenreed, 2011). Interaction with students is one of the primary burdens that teachers experience (Rytivaara, 2012a).

Coteaching is an approach that supports integration of students with special needs in the general education classroom (Embury & Kroeger, 2012). According to Chanmugam and Gerlach, (2013), coteaching occurs when two teachers of identical status collaborate to form a learning environment with common planning, instruction, and student assessment. "Teachers must now co-plan, co-instruct, and co-assess" (Murawski, 2016, p. 30). Collaboration could be for a few hours or for the entire day of activities (Tremblay, 2013). Coteaching considers the personal values of teachers and brings attention to presumptions about special education students that are not so obvious (Chanmugam, 2013). The overall goal of coteaching is to make thoughtful implementation of practical strategies as a means of making coteaching less challenging (Murawski, 2016). Coteaching has developed into a very acceptable model in the field of education when it comes to educating students with special needs (Forbes & Billet, 2012). According to Embury and Kroeger (2012), coteaching is the majority universal service approach model for students with disabilities who receive lessons in the

general education classroom. In the inclusion classroom, two teachers share a classroom; this is not the traditional structure of teaching.

Since coteaching asserts to be the established favored model for the delivery of instruction to special education students, its effectiveness is relevant (Conderman, 2011). There are many benefits to coteaching, with the expertise of teachers utilizing appropriate instructional strategies in the classroom to meet the educational needs of students. As a means of experiencing an effective coteaching model, plans must exist and be balanced, setting a few goals and persistence in follow-through for the teachers who are working together (Fullan, 2013). With both teachers interacting throughout the lesson, the opportunity for student interaction increases (Fullan, 2013). They both must be committed, caring individuals who work together to resolve conflict while creating new solutions and strategies (Fullan, 2013).

Pugach and Winn (2011) indicated that coteaching often includes novice special educators who may have different teaching styles from each other, which can impact effective coteaching. Gurgur and Uzuner (2010) argued that there is a global movement towards inclusion and preparing prospective general and special education teachers as the coteaching classroom has developed into a priority with college preparation programs. Many college preparation programs continue to expose their students to segregated classrooms of students with special needs (Kroeger, Embury, & Cooper, 2012). New teachers often lack exposure to the coteaching classroom while enrolled in college preparation programs, which can impede later collaboration among professionals (Kroeger et al., 2012). Pugach and Winn (2011) declared that a lack of exposure to

coteaching could influence how new teachers experience their initial work in schools. Moreover, they must also be familiar with using IEPs and able to modify instruction as well as provide accommodations as needed (Pugach & Winn, 2011). Pre-service teachers who were familiar with district policies concerning coteaching displayed better management of special education students upon entering the classroom than pre-service teachers who were not familiar with district policies (Forlin & Chambers, 2011).

Pros and cons of coteaching in the inclusion classroom. There are several disadvantages to coteaching. For example, Melekoglu (2013) asserted that recent studies on inclusion showed a lack of support services and an ineffectiveness of general education teachers, which are areas that need development to improve the inclusion model. A second disadvantage is the lack of constructing and scheduling the appropriate number of students with IEPs and students without IEPs (Murawski, 2016). A third disadvantage is assigning teachers three or more coteaching partners throughout the school day and having them coteaching multiple grade levels (Murawski, 2016). A fourth disadvantage is building administrators who create coteaching partnerships that simply do not work (Murawski, 2016). Lastly, coteachers are assigned to an administrator with no personal experience of coteaching (Murawski, 2016). Each of these disadvantages hinders the success of the collaborative coteaching model.

Coteaching offers teachers the opportunity to collaborate to meet the various requirements of all students (Moorehead & Grillo, 2013). An improved instructional environment is created when both the regular and special education teacher create a partnership that utilizes each other's strengths (Moorehead & Grillo, 2013). This newly

created partnership provides the support needed for students with disabilities and insures student knowledge within the core content areas (Moorehead & Grillo, 2013). With the special education teacher focusing on scaffolding and providing support, the general education teacher can focus on content, as well as a few specialized adaptations toward meeting the specific requirements of both regular and special education students (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Wilson (2012) declared that another advantage is that, through planning together, both teachers enhanced each other's strengths and provided students with increased learning through reflection. Teachers can then reflect with one another, gain a better understanding, and discuss the choices made during situations and events resulting in increased student learning (Embury & Kroeger, 2012). Embury and Kroeger further stated that coteaching is an approach for instructing all lessons to meet the needs of all learners. It is a successful, demonstrated practice applied in inclusion classrooms.

Coteaching is important in education because it is imperative in the inclusion classroom. Since coteaching is the newest required model in the district, the inclusion classroom requires that coteachers collaborate and bring their best practices to the classroom. When coteaching is successful, both teachers and students benefit.

Identifying teacher roles. Identifying teacher roles in the inclusion classroom begins with closely looking at the meaning of coteaching: "two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in physical space" (King-Sears, 2014, p. 652). This explanation indicates that when each coteacher shares their unique knowledge during classroom instruction, the students are exposed to

an instructional delivery that they would not otherwise receive with only one teacher in the traditional classroom setting. "Coteaching is when two or more educators co-plan, co-instruct, and co-asses a group of students with diverse meets in the same general education classroom" (Murawski, 2004, p. 105). In a summary of 146 studies, the teacher providing instruction is most often the general educator while the special educator is providing student support and suggestions to the general education teacher (King-Sears, 2014). Instead of the roles of two certified teachers, the expectation is that the general education teacher provides subject matter while the special education teacher contributes expertise on differentiated instruction. Determining equal roles and responsibilities between coteachers must exist for both teachers to blend their expertise (King-Sears, 2014). There are several inconsistencies between coteachers in the implementation of coteachers' roles according to previous research (Stefanidis & Strogilos, 2015). These inconsistencies are apparent in planning, evaluation, delivery of instruction, and classroom behavior management (Stefanidis & Strogilos, 2015). Identifying teacher roles is essential to my study because it highlights the requirement that both teachers communicate to discuss what roles they play in the inclusion classroom. Since both regular and special education students may require additional support, it is imperative that the teacher roles be decided based on the lesson being taught and the coteaching model being used.

Models of coteaching. The new design of coteaching utilizes special design instruction. It is designed to integrate six approaches into classroom instruction (Friend, 2016). These approaches are also the six models of coteaching (King-Sears, 2014).

Special design lessons are not the equivalent to differentiation instruction, which now is just deemed as good teaching (Friend, 2016). Special design instruction is not the use of accommodations such as calculators and story starters that special education students would receive to facilitate learning (Friend, 2016), but ensuring that all students meet their goals. They are used to distinguish between solo and co-taught classes (King-Sears, 2014). These models are used to guide teachers with instructional design and delivery (King-Sears, 2014). Below are some examples:

● One Teach, One Observe: One coteacher guides the class while the other coteacher observes students.

● One Teach, One Drift: One coteacher guides the class while the other coteacher circulates and supports him or her.

● Station Teaching: One group of students works independently at a station while two other groups of students are with each coteacher.

● Parallel Teaching: The students are divided into two groups and each coteacher teaches one group.

● Alternative Teaching: The students are divided into groups such that one coteacher will instruct the larger group while the other coteacher provides the same lesson to a smaller group.

● Team Teaching: Both coteachers provide the lesson to the class (King-Sears, 2014).

Four out of the six models require that each coteacher have distinctive instructional roles (King-Sears, 2014). Teachers can assume the primary role or switch roles depending on

the students' needs and requests (King-Sears, 2014). Through these approaches (models), coteachers are redefining their professional relationships. The coteachers learn from each other and bring important knowledge to the classroom (Friend, 2016). They work equally to bring variations and strategies to deliver the requirements of special education students. Coteachers make certain that special education learners develop strategies to learn the grade-level core curriculum, with the intention of using these strategies throughout their lives (Friend, 2016).

Inclusion and teacher collaboration and classroom management. Coteachers have several roles in the inclusion classroom such as (a) disciplinarian to large class: in this role, both teachers discuss challenging behaviors and provide discipline to the entire class; (b) disciplinarian to individuals: in this role, both teachers discuss individual behavior challenges by providing discipline whether privately or openly; (c) classroom manager: in this role, both teachers are responsible for attendance and student grades; (d) gatekeeper or authority: in this role, both teachers monitor their students' bathroom privileges along with entry and exit in the classroom; and (e) confidant and friend: in this role, both teachers are responsible for building confidence and providing friendship to their students regarding their personal issues (Bouck, 2007). In managing classroom behavior and instruction, both regular and special education teachers learn to negotiate a physical space of the classroom in a manner that is beneficial to the largest number of students. Classroom management and discipline occurs when the teacher addresses the students with behavioral challenges (Bouck, 2007). Classroom management is best accomplished when both classroom teachers share the same philosophy of expected

classroom behavior and management (Bouck, 2007). Classroom management is not divided, but each teacher handles discipline with all students (Bouck, 2007). The special education teacher is more likely to handle discipline of special education students (Bouck, 2007). Dividing the space will lead to less disruptive behavior as both teachers share the responsibility of communicating and addressing disruptions during the lesson (Bouck, 2007).

Classroom management strategies can be either proactive or reactive (Rytivaara, 2012b). Proactive strategies can lessen challenges in the classroom and are an additional clear-cut method to classroom management (Rytivaara, 2012b). Classroom management strategies can range from positive reinforcement where students are rewarded for displaying positive classroom behavior to negative reinforcement where students can be reprimanded or scolded for misbehaving (Rytivaara, 2012b). The inclusion education framework challenges the way that classroom management is analyzed. This is done by viewing the misbehaving student as an entire person who comes with diverse knowledge. The framework of inclusion education also includes establishing a teacher-student rapport, or *pedagogical alliance*, that promotes the welfare of the student (Rytivaara, 2012b).

Classroom management can become complex especially in today's heterogeneous classrooms and is the responsibility of the teachers to have classroom control (Rytivaara, 2012b). Having coteachers in the inclusion classroom who are extremely knowledgeable, allows them to address student' behavioral issues and to implement strategies that can promote a successful learning environment (Johnson & Brumback, 2013). Inviting

teachers to observe successful coteaching can improve the inclusion program by correcting student actions and educational achievement (Johnson & Brumback, 2013).

"Classroom management is the most significant aspect of teaching" (Konti, 2011, p. 4093). Class management is most efficient when appropriate classroom management is used (Konti, 2011). Classroom management is defined as "not only the physical arrangement of the class, efficient use of sources and generating a class where there is no problem and making the students participate all the teaching activities" (Konti, 2011, p. 4094). Teaching is more effective with classroom management in place (Konti, 2011). Classroom management is collectively carried out by two teachers working mutually with a mixed set of students, also known as heterogeneous grouping; this group is not limited to strictly regular or special education students (Rytivaara, 2012b). The teacher is responsible for modeling the desired behavior. During the class period, the teacher is accountable for a specific topic and no matter how effective the teacher is at that topic, the teacher cannot make the students learn, and if classroom management is lacking, the teacher cannot be successful (Konti, 2011).

Inclusion and teacher collaboration. When students with special needs are placed in the general education classroom, it requires the mutual knowledge of the regular and special education teacher (Bronson & Dentith, 2014). With the expectation of collaboration among teachers in the coteaching classroom, the federal government mandated that special educators be highly qualified in content areas in public schools (Kroeger et al., 2012). According to Munson, Martz, and Shimek (2013), collaboration occurs when both teachers work together as equal partners in equally valuable rapport.

Teamwork involves sharing duties, resources, and responsibility for educating at the same time as carrying out common goals (Munson et al., 2013). Communication is an essential part of any collaborative partnership (Brown & Howerter, 2013). Coteaching groups must purposefully plan to talk with each other regarding their viewpoint, values, shared roles and responsibilities, as well as their outlook concerning the educational success of the students in their classrooms (Brown & Howerter, 2013).

Teaching is no longer about one student doing well; it is now about collaborating, warranting a shift in professional learning to ensure that all students achieve (Gleason & Gerzon, 2014). In fact, collaboration occurs on the condition that teachers receive both classroom and practical experience (Meyer & Bradley, 2013). Through collaboration, teachers work together to recognize and elevate reoccurring inadequacies (Stewart, 2014). Recent research concluded that for effective collaboration to occur, it is imperative that there is greater and more effective communication and the sharing of instructional techniques (Friedland, McMillen, & Del Pardo Hill, 2011). This results in increased feeling of efficacy and increased motivation to foster learning in the classroom. Collaboration encourages empowerment among all participants, as all work is equally valued (Bucher, 2012). Focusing on collaboration in the inclusion setting in my study is essential because it necessitates that both teachers assigned to a classroom and subject area work together to benefit the entire inclusion class. Collaboration requires continued professional learning and communication of instructional techniques

Pros and cons of teacher collaboration. Collaboration is defined as an approach of communication, and at the same time it incorporates talking, scheduling, collective and

innovative decision-making, and follow-up with a minimum of coequals skilled with

various knowledge, in which the objective of the communication is to give suitable

services for students (Stefanidis & Strogilos, 2015). A collaborative relationship can be

destined for failure if one person is too dominant or is leading in a way that is different

from the other partner (Murawski, 2004). According to Murawski, there are three major

stages of true coteaching. There is the planning stage, which is where a teacher's area of

expertise and diverse skills can be helpful. The planning stage is where coteachers

determine differentiated instructional techniques and designs that will be most beneficial

for a heterogeneous class (Murawski, 2004). Planning is also the stage that determines

what academic standard will be met during the lesson (Murawski, 2004). The next stage

is instruction of pupils. In this stage, instruction is delivered to the same students by both

educators in the same room for an equal amount of time. (Murawski, 2004). Murawski

states that teaching is described in general as the most rewarding component of

coteaching. Lastly, there is the assessment stage. In this stage, it can be determined what

instructional changes need to be made, and it identifies what the students have learned

from the instruction that was previously taught (Murawski, 2004). This stage, according

to Murawski, is a perfect area for collaboration between the special and regular education

teacher to discuss and address areas of concern such as individual accommodations and

what areas of instruction may need revision (Murawski, 2004). The overall goal in

utilizing these three stages of coteaching is to ensure that students at the secondary level

become productive citizens of society by being prepared and responsible (Murawski,

2004).

There are many factors that can inhibit successful collaboration between qualified teachers: for example, lack of familiarity, distrust between other professionals' ability and know-how, and lack of insight of roles can all hinder collaboration (Robben et al., 2012). To achieve successful collaboration, factors that hinder collaboration must be minimized, allowing more time for collaboration (Murphrey, Miller, & Harlin, 2011). In their qualitative study, Murphrey et al. identified 19 factors, set into six distinct groups: environment, membership distinctiveness, process/structure, communication, goal, and supplies (Murphrey et al., 2011). These identified categories are recognized in the study as important to successful collaboration in human service, government, and other nonprofit agencies (Murphrey et al., 2011).

Unexpected illness, time constraints, death, and the unwillingness to relinquish control are other challenges that can affect collaboration (Wilson, 2012). Kroeger et al.'s (2012) research found that having all participants involved in the development of curriculum, program planning, assessments, and new strategies improves educational practice, resulting in improved teacher preparation. Creating a community of collaboration can become complex because there are so many variables and outcomes that are rarely predictable (Kroeger et al., 2012). As teachers assist one another with improving lessons, examining student effort, and exploring different kinds of data on student work, they gain a deeper understanding of student performance (Sparks, 2013). Munson et al. (2013) maintained that organizational change, improved communication, commitment, and action among teachers encourage effective collaboration.

To have effective collaboration, the nature of teaching must change, and a competent program evaluation must be in place along with effective communication strategies (Kroeger et al., 2012). Murphrey et al. (2011) identified the following characteristics that influence collaboration: setting, membership, distinctiveness, process, structure, communication, goals, and supplies. These categories are important because they are validated by several studies that indicate that they are essential to successful collaboration (Murphrey et al., 2011). The research by Kroeger et. (2012) found that by creating a community, adults learned that they could sustain, nourish, and create something with limited resources. Collaboration encourages teachers to work together rather than in isolation. It increases their professional knowledge and provides an opportunity for professional dialogue (Meyer & Bradley, 2013). Robben et al. (2012) asserted that when the occasion arises for two or more professionals to learn techniques from each other, the quality of care increases, as well as improved collaboration between the teachers (Robben et al., 2012). Robben et al. (2012) further asserted that effective collaboration can enhance job satisfaction. Teachers sharing resources and experiences with the openness to learn together are elements to successful collaboration and can transform the classroom (Meyer & Bradley, 2013). Both general and special education teachers are collectively accountable for developing methods of educating and addressing student learning. Successful collaboration increases active listening and understanding while allowing teachers to respect each other (Meyer & Bradley, 2013).

Effective collaboration occurs when both the regular and special education teacher share and support each other's ideas. They work as a team, sharing best

practices, and communicating when issues arise so they can be addressed. Consistency along with clear guidelines that are agreed upon with and understanding that both teachers mentor and strengthen their relationship as a team are effective ways to develop collaboration. Effective collaboration is important because it depends on both teachers working as a team providing support to one another in addition to have all the support structures in place. Furthermore, without collaboration, coteaching in the inclusion classroom is not successful. Because of the necessity of coteaching in the inclusion classroom, it is imperative that school administrators and educators know how to successfully collaborate to address the needs of both general and special education students.

Implications

The practice of inclusion classrooms in public schools requires that teachers work together. This project study seeks to examine the perceptions of coteachers in a middle school setting in a Northern New Jersey School District. The knowledge gained from this study has implications pertaining to professional development for all teachers teaching at the local middle school. These teachers will be exposed to both special and regular education students in an inclusion classroom, and thus it is important for them to understand how best to implement coteaching methods. This study has implications for positive social change because with increased understanding of the challenges of coteaching, better practices may be developed to eliminate or alleviate those challenges. This would have the potential to increase regular and special education students' academic outcomes, as well as teachers' efficacy

Summary

Inclusion requires that two teachers work together to meet the needs of both general and special education students in the same classroom. Coteachers can make a significant difference in the way a special education student is educated (Williamson & McLeskey, 2011). The coteacher's perception of special education students can have an impact on how that student is taught in an inclusion classroom (Williamson & McLeskey, 2011). Such perceptions need to be known to address challenges in the inclusion classroom. Addressing coteaching challenges can enhance collaboration and, as a result, improve instruction and support for all students in the classroom. In Section 1, the review of literature included an overview of Vygotsky's theory of ZPD, the laws and mandates pertaining to special education and inclusion, and barriers that can hinder effective inclusion. The literature review examined teacher collaboration, coteaching and the challenges confronting new teachers who are placed in the inclusion setting.

In Section 2, the qualitative research design used in the study will be introduced as well as the potential participants, the method utilized in the collection of data, and the procedures for data analysis. Section 3 will include a thorough description of the intended project study. Section 4 will focus on the strengths and weaknesses of this study and include a personal reflection of the doctoral study process.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the numerous challenges that inclusion teachers face as well as their perceptions of the inclusion setting. Case study research is a "form of qualitative research that endeavors to discover meaning to investigate processes, and to gain insight into an in-depth understanding of an individual, group or situation" (Lodico & Spaulding, 2010, p. 269). I investigated the lived experiences of seven general education teachers and seven special education teachers in a middle school located in a Northern New Jersey school district. The perceptions of inclusion, and a teacher's identity, as a regular or special education teacher, can affect their ability to implement inclusionary instructional practices.

Research Design and Approach

The research design was chosen prior to the collection of data. There are three research approaches a researcher must consider prior to selecting a research design: quantitative, mixed methods, and qualitative (Yilmaz, 2013). Patton (2015) offered advice to novice researchers undertaking a dissertation for them to ensure that the approach they decide to use is appropriate based on the research question(s) and aim of the study. Quantitative research is beneficial for researchers seeking to measure variables and test hypothesis; however, quantitative research is difficult for researchers who wish to explore perceptions, experiences, thoughts, and beliefs (Braun & Clarke, 2013). After taking into consideration the aim of the study and the guiding research questions, I found that quantitative research was not an appropriate selection. Mixed-methods research is

used when a researcher wants to use both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in his or her research (Caruth, 2013). The quantitative research approach was considered but I decided not to use it because it would also not be an appropriate selection for the study.

After considering the research questions and aims of the study, the qualitative approach was chosen. Qualitative researchers explore the experiences and narrative accounts of the participants to understand the study's phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). There are several key points that qualitative research holds that separate it from other research approaches. Qualitative researchers recognize that there is no universal truth beyond the experience of the subjective, or the personal perception and experience of the phenomenon (Drisko, 2016). Qualitative research is a naturalistic approach whereby researchers examine and study participant's first-person reports and narratives (Drisko, 2016). The narratives are often gathered through interviews, observations, archival documents, and field notes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Qualitative research consists of numerous data sources and theoretical constructs creating rigor and an abundance of complex information of the phenomena being studied (Yin, 2014).

The focus of the study was to explore the challenges that inclusion teachers face along with their perceptions of the inclusion setting. I employed the case study design for the study, where the case was defined as inclusion teachers within the designated school system. Glesne (2011) stated that the case can be defined from the scale of one person to a village and can be defined circumstantially from an occurrence of an event to a set of procedures implemented. Case study researchers investigate a modern-day phenomenon,

the case, in a real-world context where the boundaries between the case and real-world context are not clearly drawn (Yin, 2014). The challenges that inclusion teachers face, and their perceptions of the inclusion setting, are both modern-day phenomena embedded within a real-world context where the boundaries between the two are not clearly defined. I bound the case to include teachers (special education, general education, grade levels). Boundaries are used by the researcher to determine what will or will not be studied (Glesne, 2011). Case study research can have either a single case or multiple cases to investigate, depending on the aim of the study and the research questions (Stake, 1995). I used a single case study design for the study.

It is useful for the researcher to consider several qualitative designs that could be employed when designing qualitative studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The designs I considered included grounded theory, ethnography, and narrative inquiry. Grounded theory design is employed by researchers who wish to create a theory that explains a phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Researchers who employ grounded theory explore abstract analytical schema that is grounded in the data (Percy & Kostere, 2015). The design is an inductive process where the answers to the research question arise from the data and the data are gathered from individual participants about their thoughts, emotions, and perceptions about their experiences (Charmaz, 2014). Data were gathered and analyzed in a series of rounds called constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Each round of analysis informs the continued data gathering, with this process continuing until a theory that explains the phenomenon under study is created (Charmaz, 2014). As

the goal of this study was not to create a theory, but rather to explore the lived experiences of the participants, a grounded theory design was not chosen.

Morse (2016) commented that ethnography gave the foundation to several research designs, such as grounded theory and narrative inquiry, due to the extent of prolonged engagement an ethnographic researcher has with the community he or she seeks to understand. Pelto (2016) stated that ethnographic research can be dated back as early as 1835, and it gave way to the foundation of qualitative inquiry as an approach to explore, examine, and understand the impact of culture on people's behaviors, thoughts, and actions. Ethnographic researchers are primarily focused on the use of interviews and observations over an extended period for qualitative data (Morse, 2016). Ethnographic researchers seek to describe the various facets of a culture and understand how that culture impacts behavior to explore the interworking of these groups (Percy & Kostere, 2015). Because of the nature and aim of this study, I found that this research design would be an inappropriate selection for this study.

In narrative inquiry, participants retell a story of either their experience or their entire life (Byrne, 2015). Narrative researchers seek to understand the intricacies of the human experience through examining narratives that reflect the complex way that language makes meaning evident to participants (Petrone, 2017). Participants take part in interviews with a narrative researcher whereby the researcher probes him or her to share a story about their experiences (Hunt, 2014). This narrative account will be analyzed to examine how the participant has created meaning out of his or her experience (Petrone,

2017). After reviewing the study's purpose and the guiding research questions, I decided that this research design was not an appropriate choice for my study.

Participants

Criteria and Justification

The individuals who had an opportunity to take part in this study consisted of teachers who worked in an inclusion setting. A purposeful sampling method was employed. Using purposeful sampling to select the participants ensures that the participants selected had experience with the phenomenon under study (Robinson, 2014). A sample size of 14 was chosen for this study, with seven general education teachers and seven special education teachers being selected to participate in the study. Boddy (2016) mentioned that qualitative researchers often reach data saturation with a sample size between 12 and 15. Saturation is a measure that the qualitative researcher uses to determine that there is no new information or data generated through additional data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Qualitative researchers often use significantly smaller sample sizes than quantitative researchers because the depth of data generated from each participant is more expansive and exhaustive (Boddy, 2016).

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

Before beginning any study-related tasks, I completed The National institutes of Health (NIH) Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants." I also obtained permission from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once I received Walden University IRB approval, I reached out to the school with a copy of the Walden University's IRB approval letter and the district's approved letter of cooperation.

The letter of cooperation was sent to the superintendent and principal seeking permission to conduct my study with general education and special education teachers from the middle school in the local school district. After receiving approval from the school administrators to conduct the study, I scheduled a meeting with the building principal to request permission to e-mail teachers in each school with the research study invitation flyers. The study invitation flyers noted the study's title, inclusion criteria, purpose statement, and my contact information. Potential participants responded to the invitation flyer and contacted me to receive additional information on the study. When potential participants reached out to me through e-mail or phone, I first confirmed their eligibility to participate. After, I addressed their questions, comments, and concerns about participation. Following the conversation, I inquired about their willingness to participate in the study. Participants who indicated their willingness received an e-mail with the informed consent form along with an inquiry about available dates and times they were available to conduct the interview. Participants who were general and special education teachers were selected the through the invitation flyers because they had direct experience teaching in the inclusion setting.

Researcher-Participant Interaction

The screening process for my study was to select 14 teachers who taught in the inclusion classroom in the middle school setting using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a sampling technique whereby researchers select participants based on their experiences with the phenomenon of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2013). When participants reached out to me to inquire about the study, I first confirmed their eligibility to

participate in the study. Once participants were confirmed to meet the study's criteria, I addressed any questions, comments, or concerns they may have had. Following the conversation, I inquired about their willingness to participate in the study. After this was confirmed, I sent an email to them with a copy of the informed consent form. Included in this e-mail was an inquiry about the dates and times each participant was available for the interview. Scheduled interviews were set based on the availability of the inclusion teachers and lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. During the interviews, I reviewed the consent form and answered any additional questions that the participants had. I also collected the demographic questionnaire. I reiterated and stressed that their participation was voluntary in nature and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. After receipt of the signed copy of the interview protocol, I obtained consent to record the interview.

In qualitative research, the interviewing process calls for researcher-participant interaction through the process of asking interview questions and probing interview responses (Glesne, 2011). During the interaction, it is important that participants answer interview questions candidly without involvement of the interviewer, who must be aware of feelings and interactions (Glesne, 2011). I made every effort to remain aware of feelings when asking the interview questions. I helped ensure that the respondents answered the interview questions candidly by carefully wording the interview questions (see Appendix B). I began with warm-up questions that were easy to answer that built rapport and allowed the respondent to feel comfortable. I ended the interviews with questions that were culminating and reflective. Confidentiality was assured by

conducting face-to-face meetings with the participants on an individual basis and using pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Ethical Concerns

I applied to Walden University's IRB after obtaining approval for the content of my proposal. During this application process, I explained and identified the potential risks and benefits of my study. By doing so, I adhered to the criteria established by the Belmont Report: (a) autonomy, (b) beneficence, (c) nonmalevolence, and (d) justice (Sims, 2010). It was important to ensure that I protected the human research participants who participated in the study. After gaining IRB approval, I began participant recruitment in an ethical manner that protected the human research participants.

All participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the study prior to recruitment and during data collection. I assured participants that they had the right to withdraw their consent to participate at any time without consequences and assured them that their data would be destroyed. I built rapport with the participants by introducing myself and the nature of the study. The nature of the study was conveyed through the informed consent form which was sent to participants once they confirmed a willingness to participate in the study. I introduced myself through the informed consent form by outlining the purpose of the study, the sample interview questions, time commitment, anticipated procedures, risks and benefits of participating in the study, compensation for participating in the study, voluntary nature of the study, and university and my contact information. The informed consent form was provided to fully introduce the study to participants so that participants could make an informed decision to participate or not.

Prior to the beginning of data collection, I sat down with each participant and answered or addressed any questions, comments, or concerns they had. I provided them with a copy of the informed consent form after addressing and answering all questions, comments, and concerns. The participants were asked to sign a consent form agreeing to participate in the study and acknowledge their rights during the collection period. After receiving the signed informed consent form, I began the data collection procedures of interviewing them with a researcher-created interview protocol. I used probing questions with participants when participants provided vague responses to elicit the richest data possible.

After collecting all necessary data, physical and electronic, I stored the data in an office located within my home. This office was accessible only to myself and was locked with a key that only I have when I am not within the office. Physical data were stored in a locked filing cabinet, and all electronic data were encrypted and stored on a password-protected computer located within the home office. Per Walden University guidelines, I will store and maintain all data for a period of 5 years before destroying the data by either deleting the electronic files from the laptop or shredding the physical documents.

Data Collection

Qualitative researchers attempt to provide a better understanding of a phenomenon through in-depth and detailed accounts of participant's experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs (Anyan, 2013). Qualitative research, especially case study research, often includes a variety of data collection methods to triangulate the participants' experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Case study research is a hallmark of multiple data collection methods to examine the case itself from multiple angles (Yin, 2014). The characteristics of case study define the embedded nature of the case within the real-world context (Cronin, 2014). Data used in qualitative research, especially that of case study research, can be taken in a variety of forms that include interviews (individual or focus groups), observations, and documentation (Kerr, Nixon, & Wild, 2010).

After receiving permission from the school to recruit participants through flyers posted in teachers' break room, I began recruiting participants. Each flyer provided a summary of the purpose of the study, listed the eligibility criteria, and contained my contact information and e-mail address. Potential participants reached out to me through e-mail or telephone. I provided further detail about the study and answered any questions, comments, or concerns participants had. Once participants confirmed their willingness to participate after these steps, I scheduled interviews with participants. Interviews were conducted in locations that were convenient to the participants so that participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences.

I explained to participants that the expected time commitment was between 45-60 minutes for the interview. I conducted a second but shorter follow-up interview to confirm details and get additional clarification. This follow-up interview was conducted face-to-face at locations that were convenient to the participants or via telephone conversation. Data collection continued until data saturation was reached. Boddy (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of qualitative research sample sizes and found that data saturation is often reached between 12 to 15 participants in a study. As a result, I

interviewed 14 participants because I expected to achieve data saturation with that number.

Interviews give qualitative researchers an opportunity to gather in-depth and rich accounts of participants' experiences (Schultze & Avital, 2011). There are three types of interviews: (a) structured, (b) semistructured, and (c) unstructured. Structured interviews are interviews where a qualitative researcher rigidly adheres to the interview protocol and does not deviate from the protocol (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Unstructured interviews begin with one general question and flow in a similar manner to a conversation (Patton, 2015). Semistructured interviewers use an interview protocol; however, qualitative researchers have more flexibility to deviate from the interview protocol and ask additional follow-up questions about a topic the participant mentioned (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I conducted semistructured interviews with 14 participants: seven general education teachers and seven special education teachers.

I used a researcher-created interview protocol to interview participants and an audio recorder to maintain an accurate account of what participants said. The researcher-created interview protocol was reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts to ensure the interview protocol was an appropriate instrument to gather the intended data. I had two audio-recording devices on my person and checked each device prior to each interview to ensure there were no equipment failures. I began the interview by asking basic demographic information (see Appendix C) prior to asking interview questions (see Appendix B) so that I could build rapport with each participant. During the interview, I took field notes that documented participants' nonverbal communication. After the

interview, I reflected on the experience and wrote down what topics were prevalent during the interview in a reflective journal. After the interview, I reflected on the experience and wrote what topics were prevalent during the interview in a reflective journal.

Data Tracking

I kept a detailed account of all decisions that I made during the data collection process and data analysis procedures. This formed the basis of the audit trail that I used to establish trustworthiness of the research study's findings. I also utilized field notes and a reflective journal to keep an accurate record of thoughts, feelings, and nonverbal communications. Reflective journals are instruments that qualitative researchers use to appraise themselves during the data collection process (Lakshmi, 2014). The electronic data are kept on my personal computer that requires a personal passcode to gain access and all physical data will be in a locked file cabinet that only I have the key to.

Role of the Researcher

Patton (2015) stated that the qualitative researcher is an instrument of qualitative inquiry, which makes him or her the primary tool within the qualitative research process. I am currently a special education teacher at a high school in the local school district in Northern New Jersey. I have 20 years of service in the local school district. My role in the district has varied from a special education teacher to program specialist, data coach, inclusion specialist and summer site supervisor. My various positions within the district have allowed me to focus on the special education students in the district along with their parents. Over the years, I have also facilitated workshops for regular and special

education teachers along with teacher assistants on the topic of collaborative practices, IEPs, and the classification of students with special needs. During the summer, I am the site supervisor for a middle school in the local school district.

Despite my current position and co-worker relationships within the school district, these relationships did not adversely impact my research study. My position within the school district was a separate entity from my role as a qualitative researcher to ensure that participants did not feel pressured or coerced to participate in the research study. Since I planned to conduct my research study with colleagues of mine, I was explicit and clear about my role as a researcher. I explicitly stated that while participants may have known me within my professional role, my role as a researcher was removed from that role. I approached my colleagues in a fair and ethical way by explaining the consent process, measures that I took to ensure confidentiality of their account, how their participation was completely voluntary, and how they had a right to withdraw from the research study at any time without any penalty.

My role as the researcher was to dig deeper into a single phenomenon while focusing on the depth with a limited number of participants. Depth for this study focused on the experience of the participants from a close-up view while collecting more information to enrich my desired understanding. I also employed a more patient-focused practice that was sensitive to the research participants. I paid attention to qualitative rigor and modeled trustworthiness. I planned a second interview with the same participants from the first interview. This allowed me to reflect on the original conversation, filling in missing pieces or new information. This ensured that the participants' words were

accurately described. I created rapport and an adequate environment for the participants in the hopes of eliciting reflection and truthful comments. When I introduced myself, I included statements of confidentiality, consent, options to withdraw, and use and scope of the results. I also paid close attention to the questions in the interview to make sure the participants perceived them as respectful and culturally sensitive.

Data Analysis

After I received the finalized transcripts resulting from the semistructured interviews, gathered the reflective journal, and organized the field notes, I began the data analysis process. I used Clarke and Braun's (2013) thematic analysis plan for this study. Thematic analysis is a flexible data analysis plan that does not adhere to any research design (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Clarke and Braun noted that thematic analysis is an ideal research design for novice qualitative researchers because it can produce data-driven results to answer a variety of qualitative research questions. There are six phases of thematic analysis: (a) familiarization with the data, (b) coding the data, (c) search for the themes among the codes, (d) review the themes, (e) name and define the themes, and (f) write up the final report. Prior to beginning the data analysis, I uploaded the interview transcripts into NVivo 11. NVivo 11 is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) that qualitative researchers use to organize and manage data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). This software is not capable of analyzing the data itself, instead it is merely a tool that I used to help facilitate organized accounts of the data analysis process.

The first thing I did was to familiarize myself with the data. I did this by reading and re-reading my reflective journal along with my organized field notes. I made remarks or comments of any preliminary developments from my notes. Next, I developed labels for relevant features from the data. This was guided by the research question when generating pithy labels. I then used the codes to capture the semantic and conceptual reading of the data. This was done by coding data and by pulling the information out and then collating all codes and related data. I then constructed themes. The themes were formed while searching through the data and identifying similarities in the data. The themes that were created were relevant to the research question.

The themes that emerged created a compelling story about the data. I checked that the themes I created worked with the coded extracts and full data set. Once I completed checking the themes, I reviewed which themes worked and which themes worked best together and eliminated any unnecessary themes. When the unnecessary themes were eliminated and I had developed a story through the data, I created a name for each theme as well as a written analysis of each theme. Lastly, I wrote up an analytic narrative detailing the data that was extracted that gave the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data and contextualized it in relation to existing literature.

Themes revealed the focus of my study by identifying abstract constructs found in expressions, images, sounds and objects from the data collected. The themes for this project study are the participants' lived experiences and practices. These themes provided a view of the conditions of the participants by providing a deeper understanding of the experiences of coteachers in inclusion classrooms.

Data Analysis Procedures

There are six phases of thematic analysis, the first being to become familiar with the data. During this first phase, I read and reread the qualitative data and immersed myself within it. I began to note any initial observations I had about the data. After familiarizing myself with the data, I began the second phase of thematic analysis: coding. Coding is a process of identifying important words, fragments, or entire sentences and labeling those with a phrase that summarizes the important feature identified in the data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). I did not utilize a preexisting framework to guide the coding process; instead, I used the observations I made during the first phase and the guiding research questions to focus my analysis. I coded every interview transcript and generated a list of codes that emerged before beginning the third phase of thematic analysis: searching for themes among the compiled list of codes (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Clarke and Braun (2013) defined a theme as a meaningful pattern that exists within the data that is found by examining the relationships between the codes. The themes that are constructed can provide insight to the phenomenon or experience under investigation and can provide answer to the research questions (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

After I found the themes within the data, I moved on to the fourth phase of thematic analysis: reviewing the themes against the full dataset. It is important to confirm the relevance of the themes to the whole dataset and to reflect on how the themes create a vivid and compelling story about the data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). I looked at all the emergent themes to identify if there were relationships that existed among them. Once themes were reviewed and confirmed against the dataset, I began to name and

define each theme. Each theme played an important role in telling the story of the data itself, which is why I identified and defined that role. This process made generating the final report easier because there was an established plan to follow for writing. After I created a succinct and informative name for each theme, I began writing the final report. The final report included the data, using verbatim extracts of the participant's responses to provide readers a clear and persuasive story about the data.

Qualitative researchers use strategies to establish the four criteria of trustworthiness: (a) credibility, (b) dependability, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability. Credibility in qualitative research is obtained when people who share the same experience immediately recognize that experience because the researcher provided an accurate description or interpretation of it (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). I used member-checking and reflexivity to establish the credibility of the findings. Member-checking is a technique where qualitative researchers present participants with their responses to the interview questions to verify the accuracy of the transcription (Koelsch, 2013). Reflexivity is a technique that qualitative researchers use to be transparent about the decisions they make during the research process (Engward & Davis, 2015).

Thick description is a strategy that establishes a research study's transferability and promotes the research study's credibility as well (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Thick description focuses on the detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one history into experience. This is done so that readers have an opportunity to evaluate whether the conclusions and interpretations made by the qualitative researcher can be transferable to other circumstances, situations, groups of

people, or settings (Hadi & Closs, 2016). I used the strategy of methodological triangulation to establish conformability in the research study's findings. Triangulation is an important strategy to help qualitative researchers overcome the weaknesses of one data collection method by utilizing two or more data collection methods to study the research problem (Joslin & Muller, 2016).

I used the peer review process to establish the dependability of the findings. Once I completed the first two steps of the thematic analysis plan, I had a colleague review the transcribed interviews as a form of validity checking. Allowing for sharing of opinions also helped to alleviate bias in my findings (Hadi & Closs, 2016). If any discrepant cases were found when conducting this project study, they were discussed relative to the findings of the study. According to Williamson and McLeskey (2011), discrepant cases are deviations in the data that can appear to contradict the accounts of other participants. This provided me with an opportunity to explore why this may be the case.

Data Analysis Results

This qualitative case study focused on gaining a better understanding of the inclusion teachers' perspectives on coteaching at the middle school level at a Northern New Jersey school district. I used three sources of data to gather a clear understanding of how teachers perceive the challenges that arise from coteaching in inclusion classrooms. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that the analyzing of data provides clarity and meaning to the research topic. After the collection and analysis of the data, an aggregation of my results allowed me to organize responses to the research questions for this study. Throughout the interview process, the participants freely shared their perceptions of their

experiences. During each interview, participants shared their experiences and viewpoints of the challenges they experienced with the implementation of coteaching in inclusion classrooms. These interviews were audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis, and I took notes throughout the interviews. I present the thematic results of this data analysis by research question in the following subsection.

Findings

The problem that I sought to address through this study was how teachers perceive the challenges that stem from collaboration in inclusion classrooms. I developed two research questions:

1. What challenges do middle school teachers face in the coteaching classroom?

2. How do middle school teachers perceive their collaborative experiences to affect them in the inclusion classroom?

To complete this project study and address the research questions, I conducted 14 one-on-one interviews. In addition, participants each completed a demographic questionnaire. I also conducted a follow-up interview with each participant. I took careful field notes during each interview and I used these data to triangulate data and delve deeper to better understand participants' perspectives on coteaching in inclusion classrooms. I analyzed participants' perceptions regarding the challenges that they face when coteaching to better understand their needs based on their experiences.

Discrepant cases are those that do not conform to the other cases in the study or fit within a logical amount of variation of a theme. In this research study, I looked carefully

for discrepant cases or negative cases as I conducted the analysis. No discrepant cases arose in this research study.

Evident Themes

After collecting the data for this study, I performed Thematic Analysis (TA) as outlined by Clarke and Braun (2013) to answer the two research questions. Table 1 presents an example of how the raw data were coded.

Table 1

Example of raw coding

Raw data	Assigned code
Coteaching has taught me to be more flexible and to find benefits in things being handled in different ways than I might be used to.	Learned to be more flexible or adaptable
In the past, the coteacher as well as myself, we treated all the student with the same (sic)(…) If a general education student needed help at the time, the coteacher would assist them, or I would assist the special need students. You really couldn't tell which students were special need or which students were general ed, because the way we conducted our classroom.	Coteaching provides more support for students
Table 1 (Continued)	
One year I really had a tough time coteaching because the other teacher didn't allow me to work as a coteacher; she made me seem like I was a teacher's assistants and the students would notice.	Felt treated as a teacher's aid

Four themes emerged from the interview data: a) Personal or Professional Problems with the Coteacher; b) Macro-level Challenges, c) Personal and Professional Growth, and d) Greater Support. The relationship between these themes and the research questions is

presented in Table 2. Themes A and B address RQ1, and themes C and D address RQ2.

Table 3 presents the thematic structure for this section.

Table 2

Relationships between research questions and themes

Research Question	Theme
1	Personal or professional problems with the coteacher
	Macro-level challenges
2	Personal and professional growth
	Greater support

Table 3

Thematic structure

Research Question	Themes	Subthemes	Codes
RQ 1.	A. Personal or Professional Problems with Coteacher	Dominant Classroom Personality	Felt treated as teacher's aide; one teacher thinks they're in charge
		Professional Differences	Classroom management differences; different teaching styles; lack of consistency across the classroom

Table 3 (continued)

		Work Load	Unequal time spend on or in classroom tasks
		Communication Challenges	Not on same page; hasty decision-making

	B. Macro-level Challenges	Problems with Macro-Level Support for Coteaching	Inadequate planning time; lack of professional development; lack of school district support
RQ 2.	C. Personal and Professional Growth	Collaboration and Sharing	Collaboration on or in classroom tasks; coteaching provides new or different perspectives
		Flexible and Adaptable	Learned to be more flexible or adaptable
	D. Greater Support	Coteaching Provides Support	Coteaching provides more support for students Coteaching provides more support between coteachers

Research Question 1

What challenges do middle school teachers face in the coteaching classroom?

Theme A. Personal or professional problems with coteacher. Theme A captured the perceptions of participants regarding their relationships with their coteachers. Participants described the challenges they faced in the coteaching inclusion classrooms in four different ways, and these became the subthemes. These subthemes were work load, professional differences, dominant classroom personality, and communication challenges.

Work load. Ten out of 14 participants expressed the feeling that the classroom workload, including class preparational work that had to be completed at home, was not split equitably between both teachers. This perception was shared by both general education and special education teachers. Four of the seven (57%) special education

inclusion teachers thought one teacher did more work than the other, while six of seven (88%) regular education inclusion teachers also thought this. The special education teachers spoke of this inequality in general terms, stating that the tasks of classroom management and grading were not equally divided between the coteachers. While three of these special education teachers did not elaborate on the ways in which the workload was divided, Participant E said, "I'm stuck doing all the work, for the most part." From the interviews with the other special education teachers, what was less clear was whether they felt that the work of grading fell onto them or the regular education coteacher in their inclusion classroom.

The special education teachers believed that they were the ones who were responsible for most of the workload around the classroom, especially when it came to grading assignments and other classwork, as compared to regular education coteachers. When asked of the challenges of coteaching, Participant F described the challenge of "sharing responsibilities of classroom duties including lesson planning, grading assignments, gathering resources and materials, and classroom management" with a coteacher. Further, the participant stated, "I had to handle most of the responsibilities in the coteaching environment." Participant J also experienced this feeling that the bulk of the classroom responsibilities fell to them. S/he said that sometimes, there is only one person carrying the work load while the other is "just kinda *[sic]* happy to be a teacher's assistant," when the reality is that they are both supposed to be coteachers. S/he added, "it's usually the person that takes charge of the classroom, and with the coteachers there's usually one person, and in my experience, it was usually me," when asked to discuss how

the workload was divided between the two coteachers. For the participant, this was a significant disadvantage of coteaching and indicated that the coteaching inclusion teachers were not making the most of the unique situation that they were placed in.

Participant K, also a regular education teacher, said that s/he was told that s/he was responsible for the students' test scores in the classroom despite having a special education coteacher. This made him/her feel like s/he needed to do more of the work and put more effort into the classroom than the special education coteacher. The participant said that s/he did work cooperatively sometimes, but not most of the time, and tried to interact less with the coteacher because s/he was "fearful that if the students don't do well" then s/he would be in trouble and take the blame.

The participant felt like "I'd be the captain" who did more of the work. Participant K said that most of the workload fell to the general education teacher which, in this case, was the participant, despite believing that tasks such as grading could easily be divided equitably between the two teachers. Participant M also thought that s/he did more of the work but indicated that this may have been because s/he had more experience than the special education coteacher.

Professional differences. Participants described the challenges that the coteaching inclusion classroom presented in terms of professional differences with their coteachers. Seven participants indicated that they faced challenges because of different classroom management styles. Four of these participants were special education teachers and three of them were regular education teachers. Participant C, a special education teacher, said that, "you also have to come to terms with like, you know, classroom

management, rules and routines, and procedures and such," which s/he presented as a disadvantage to coteaching in an inclusion classroom. Participant B provided an example of this, stating that s/he had "taught with teachers where I produced a very structured environment and they were the opposite of me." This posed professional challenges for the teachers and created confusion for the students. As Participant H, a special education teacher, described:

> Teachers have different styles and different forms of discipline and mannerisms. Where if it's only you in the classroom it could be very effective, but if somebody comes in with a different style, or may overlook one little thing, then an argument arises over, "this teacher doesn't do that. The other period of the class I don't have to do that." Or, "she didn't notice my gum." I tend to overlook, I pick and choose my battles, and I may be picking differently than the other teacher. Which, the other teacher may be just as effective as I am. But sometimes then the kids say, "Well she didn't do that. I don't have to do that with her."

The participants recognized clearly that different teaching styles were not just a professional or personal problem with their coteacher, but that they posed larger problems for students. For the students, different teaching styles created more confusion in the classroom and, especially for special needs students who might require more structure, presented an even greater challenge.

The regular education teachers described the challenge of different teaching styles like the special education teachers did. Participant J said that classroom

management was a challenge. Participant K said that in addition to "personality

conflict," classroom management was his/her biggest challenge in the coteaching

inclusion classroom.

Other participants struggled to adjust to the differences in teaching styles

between themselves and their coteachers. Participant F, a regular education teacher, said

that, "agreeing on what to teach, when to teach it, and how to teach it can be challenging

for two strong-minded teachers." Participant I, also a regular education teacher, said

that differences in teaching styles was not necessarily a problem if the communication is

good between the coteachers, but admitted that at times it could be problematic if there

was not good communication to facilitate the ease of lesson planning and delivery.

However, Participant M, a regular education teacher, thought that poor communication

could lead to conflict if these two teaching styles were too different. Participant C, a

special education teacher, felt the same. S/he thought this could pose challenges if the

teachers did not possess the flexibility or adaptability to adjust themselves based on the

differences in teaching styles.

Finally, two special education teachers and one regular education teacher spoke

of the challenges coteaching created in terms of consistency across the classroom.

Participant D said, "I believe being coteaching (sic) makes consistency more of a

challenge because again there are two teachers leading a classroom environment."

Participant K, the regular education teacher said the same. S/he felt, especially in the

inclusion classroom, there needs to be consistency either in terms of routines and rituals

or in terms of homework and assignments, and that this consistency was one of the disadvantages of the coteaching inclusion classroom.

   Dominant classroom personality.   Another significant challenge coteachers faced in the inclusion classroom was one coteacher expressing dominance in the classroom. Ideally, in the coteaching inclusion classroom, both teachers are considered equal and given equal control of the classroom. According to both regular and special education teachers, this equality was not always the case. Six teachers, including two regular education teachers, felt like they were treated as a teacher's aide or assistant as opposed to a coteacher. Participant A spoke of this lack of equality b in terms of its impact on the students. Participant A said:

> Special education teachers often struggle to present themselves as equals
>
> to their students, and this becomes even more evident in the middle school
>
> setting. Elementary coteachers share a classroom all day, but a middle
>
> school special education teacher can feel like a guest in a general
>
> education teacher's space. It is crucial to have conversations with your
>
> coteacher in order to provide seamless instruction for their students.

Participant C, also a special education teacher, noted the impact of coteacher inequality on students as well. The participant said that s/he had a really difficult time coteaching because his/her coteacher would treat him/her like an assistant. The students noticed this inequal treatment, which undermined his/her ability to act as a coteacher and be taken seriously. Interestingly, however, the regular education teacher, Participant H, had a different perspective on coteacher inequality. S/he said that,

the other person is just kinda *[sic]* happy to be a teacher's assistant, and

the reality is we are two teachers in there and they're supposed to fill into

each other to deliver the lesson but that's not been the case.

For the special education coteachers, they felt that their regular education

coteacher counterparts treated them as assistants, but the regular education coteachers felt

more like the special education coteachers shrunk into the role of assistant and were

comfortable taking a backseat to their regular education colleagues. Based on the

interviews, both regular and special education coteachers wanted a more equal classroom

than what they experienced.

Similarly, coteachers spoke of their experiences of one coteacher thinking that

s/he was in charge. Some participants felt that they had to relinquish control to their

coteachers because "sometimes you deal with one teacher thinking they're the lead

teacher" (Participant A) instead of working together as equals. Participant C said that,

"there would be times that I had great ideas and wanted to model but wasn't allowed to

because [my coteacher] wanted things her way. [My coteacher] only used me for

classroom management." Participant C felt that his/her coteacher never really allowed

him/her to use his/her skills in the classroom. Participant G, also a special education

teacher, echoed this sentiment, stating that, "as a special education teacher you don't

really get an opportunity to implement your strategies for your students," and felt that

s/he had to follow the lead teacher, which was the regular education coteacher. Only one

regular education teacher spoke of feeling that one teacher had more control in the

classroom. S/he said that, "relinquishing control to another teacher in the room can be

challenging, especially if you [are] accustomed to running the classroom to your liking" (Participant F).

Communication challenges. Finally, two regular education teachers and one special education teacher noted the challenges of communication in the coteaching inclusion classroom. When asked about the disadvantage of poor communication in coteaching, these participants said communication and ensuring that both coteachers were on the same page was important. Participant E, the special education teacher, said, "communication is everything, so being able to communicate with your coteacher prior to that day or that week" was important, especially for meeting the needs of all students in the classroom. The regular education teachers felt similarly and were equally focused on the importance of communication for the sake of the students. Participant I said, "you have to definitely communicate, sit down and plan out for the lesson to be effective." Participant L highlighted communication in terms of the nature of teaching when decisions can happen on the spot. The participant said, "sometimes if there's no communication, so decisions that are made on the spot, (…) if you don't communicate it across, then it's confusing" (Participant L).

Theme B. Macro-level challenges. Theme B contained one subtheme: problems with macro-level support for coteaching. This subtheme related to the challenges that participants described because of a perceived lack of support from school and district administrators. Overall, much of these discussions referred to the belief, held by half of the participants, that they lacked school district support for coteaching in inclusion

classrooms. Participants identified challenges such as lack of adequate planning time,

lack of professional development, and lack of school district support for coteachers.

Twelve of fourteen participants (86%) said they lacked adequate time to plan

lessons and lesson delivery with their coteachers. This lack of time was related to the

challenge of coordinating two teachers' schedules, but participants felt their school

administrators did not give them support in the way of adequate time in the workday to

overcome this challenge. Participant A, a special education coteacher, said this lack of

time was "a big issue" and found it especially problematic at the middle school level,

where s/he had four different coteachers in the day with whom s/he must coordinate

lesson planning. Coming from an elementary school coteaching background, the

difference between elementary and middle school was marked and s/he struggled to

adjust.

Two special education coteachers said they were forced to bring their work home

with them because of the lack of common planning time. Participant B said that this was

"the biggest disadvantage" of coteaching; further, Participant C acknowledged that while

s/he had planning time during the day, it was not enough, and depending on the day they

brought his/her work home with them. Participant E, a special education coteacher, said

that some of the challenge of lack of time was eased by communicating over email for

lesson planning. Participant I, who is a regular education coteacher, said that sometimes

there was enough time to work together during the day to plan lessons, but other times

"it's pushing it to the end, the very end." One participant, the regular education coteacher

Participant N, shared that while s/he was given time for team meetings during the day,

that time was often not put to the best use, and that the coteachers had to spend their time doing other work the administration required rather than planning and discussing lessons.

Participants also felt they were not supported through professional development or other training that would have benefitted them in the coteaching inclusion classroom. When asked if they were given any professional training, both Participants A and G said emphatically, "absolutely not." Others simply responded with "no." Participant N, a regular education coteacher, elaborated on the lack of professional development. S/he said that s/he was provided professional development, but s/he did not feel it was the kind that the coteachers needed to be effective in their inclusion classrooms. Concerning the issue of professional development, Participant N said, "telling is not the same as showing," and the professional development did not meet the needs of the staff.

Participant E, a special education coteacher, felt this lack of support came through in terms of staffing. This participant was currently teaching two inclusion classes with a coteacher. Participant H, also a special education coteacher, when asked about the support s/he received from the school district, said:

> That's hard to say. I feel like we're always encouraged to IRNS kids who
> are failing, but I don't see a big benefit once the kids move into an
> inclusion class. Sometimes those classrooms are even more disruptive. If
> it's just a disruption problem, then what? All it is is *[sic]* they get a
> classroom with an extra teacher, which to me, I don't know. There's no
> other support I see than that.

Research Question 2

How do middle school teachers perceive their collaborative experiences to affect them in the inclusion classroom?

      Theme C. Personal and professional growth. Theme C included two subthemes: collaboration and sharing, and flexible and adaptable. These two subthemes referred to the ways that participants personally felt they had grown because of their coteaching experiences. Despite the challenges outlined in Themes A and B, the regular and special education coteachers reported they learned much from their coteaching experiences that impacted them as teachers in their respective inclusion classrooms.

      Collaboration and sharing. Twelve of fourteen participants described how they learned to collaborate with their coteachers, even in the absence of significant common planning time or when a dominant teacher made such collaboration difficult. Participant C, a special education coteacher, said collaboration and sharing were necessary for effective instruction. S/he elaborated how "we have to figure out exactly, you know, following the curriculum and implement and modifications where needed" and this could not happen without an environment of collaboration and sharing. This collaboration was also a necessity for Participant D, another special education teacher, who reported, "that's very important, to assist the students in the class, both special education and regular." Participant D continued:

          sometimes the regular teacher may decide [the lesson plan] and he'd give it

          to me to modify or ask me if there's anything that need to be changed for

the other students or the lower functioning students in general, or my

students.

For Participant I, a regular education coteacher, collaboration was important for

practical reasons such as time management and ensuring that the coteachers were on the

same page. Regarding these collaborative efforts s/he said that, "you have to because you

have to know what you're doing at every step. If you don't then you'll be all a mess and

you[r] class will be a mess." S/he felt that collaboration was important for both the

regular and the special education coteachers because, "she needs to tell me from her

special ed. perspective and I need to tell her from my regular ed. perspective where we

need to meet in the middle."

Two regular education coteachers, Participant J and Participant K, said they

collaborated well with their coteachers but they wanted to collaborate more. Participant

L, also a regular education coteacher, enjoyed collaboration, stating "it's part of the fun."

Participant N worked with the same coteacher for five years, and during the first three

years the two failed to collaborate or share effectively, but s/he said, "toward the last two

years she started to really collaborate and have input" (Participant N). S/he said that

tasks like grading could easily be divided between the two coteachers.

Coteaching provides new and different perspectives. Four participants believed

that one of the biggest advantages of coteaching, and one that impacted them positively

in the classroom, was that their coteachers often provided them with new perspectives on

teaching. Participant B, a special education coteacher, said new perspective was helpful

because, "you get someone else's input, someone else's ideas that may help reach all of the students in class." Participant C agreed:

> The advantage is having a second person in a room to be to again, analyze the performance of student performance to see like maybe they see something that you're not seeing, or maybe the might have different ideas when it comes to the lesson or, you know, engagement strategies and such.

Regular education coteachers voiced similar feelings regarding the added perspectives from coteachers in inclusion classrooms. Participant F, for example, liked that s/he could observe his/her coteacher and learn new tips and strategies for classroom management and teaching. Participant I also liked this aspect of coteaching. S/he said it was helpful to have someone in the classroom with him/her who sees things from a different perspective. S/he said, "you can see it from someone else's viewpoint and then you can work together to see where your weaknesses are, where you need to fix them" (Participant I). These regular education teachers liked that coteaching with special education teachers in inclusion classrooms allowed them room for growth and personal reflection, which they believed made them better, more effective teachers.

Flexible and adaptable. Finally, two special education coteachers (Participants D and E) and one regular education coteacher (Participant F) felt coteaching taught them to be more flexible in their teaching style and in the classroom. Participant D was positive about the impact of coteaching, stating, "coteaching has taught me to be more flexible and to find benefits in things being handled in different ways than I might be used to," while Participant E was more negative about the impact of coteaching on flexibility.

Participant E said, "it did affect my teaching because I wasn't sure exactly of what happened in the period with the other teacher, so I had to re-figure out where the students were in the lesson," which was a challenge. For Participant F, the biggest impact of coteaching was learning to adjust to the coteaching environment, which was a challenge but also a growth experience.

Theme D. Greater support. Theme D contained one discernible subtheme: coteaching provides support. Participants felt that this support from coteaching came in two different ways. The first was that coteaching inclusion classrooms provided the students with greater support and the second was that coteaching provided more support for the coteachers.

Ten participants spoke of the importance of coteaching regarding the support that it provided students in the inclusion classroom. Participant C, a special education teacher, said support was created because the partnership with his/her coteacher had the right chemistry. S/he said that they "worked very well. We tried our best and the kids and students knew we were both the teachers," which s/he felt was an advantage for the students. Participant D, also a special education coteacher, felt the same way. The participant said, "there's no disadvantages, there are always advantages because of the two people working together to support kids who need extra help." Participant F, a regular education coteacher, agreed with these special education coteachers. S/he said that the advantage for the students is that "we are able to break down the lesson (…) do small groups with the student."

Other regular education coteachers expressed the same feelings about the advantages that coteaching inclusion classrooms provide for students. Participant L referred to the classroom and said coteaching provided more support because "there's a lot more brains in there." Participant M stated:

I think the advantages are that students get to learn in different ways, because each teacher has their own style. I think the other advantage is that you get to kind of chop the workload in half. So, one teacher works with one group, like with parallel teaching. That works out very well. So, you've got one teacher working with one group, and the other teacher working with another group.

Of the support that two coteachers in the classroom provides to students, Participant N said,

I think it could really help the students to see that there is more than one person there and that those people are there to help them. I think, for the students, it really drops the ratio and it gives them a person to go to. (…) the students can go to an expert, almost as soon as they need one.

Participants also spoke of how coteaching provided them with more support in their classrooms. These sentiments of increased support came from both special education coteachers and regular education coteachers. Participant B, for example, liked that s/he received input from the coteacher that supported his/her own teaching. Participant D stated, "there [are] no disadvantage[s], it's always a plus, because you have a qualified special ed. teacher in the class and a regular teacher who are working together

and supporting one another." Participant D elaborated, "benefits to coteaching include having more adults to manage the environment which is great, so we could offer support to one another and finding solutions with someone else who is in the classroom and understands is awesome as well."

Participant H, also a special education teacher, said that it was desirable to have someone else in the classroom to provide a backup, especially if students got off task. Finally, Participant M, who was a new teacher, had a good experience because s/he learned a lot from a much more experienced teacher. This participant felt that there were opportunities for mentorship that provided support in his/her early days of coteaching.

Evidence of Accuracy and Credibility

The research design for this study involved procedures to maintain the accuracy and validity of the data that were collected. I followed measures as approved by the Walden University IRB throughout the case study process. I transcribed the interviews and follow-up interviews into a Word document (see Appendix D). I used member checking to ensure the accuracy of the interview data. I also provided the participants the opportunity to review their interview transcripts to ensure that the data were accurate, and they had an opportunity to clarify any of the information they provided. I also presented participants with the final study findings for accuracy of their interviews and follow-up interview, to minimize any possible researcher bias. I uploaded these documents into NVivo and checked the list of participants for accuracy of the research process.

Summary

Four themes arose from a thematic analysis of the data. Themes A and B addressed the first research question, What challenges do middle school teachers face in the coteaching classroom? The challenges for both regular and special education coteachers included challenges they had with their coteachers, such as the lack of effective communication and teacher dominance. Other challenges of coteaching stemmed from coteachers feeling they did not have the support of the school district in terms of being allowed enough time to prepare lessons with their coteachers or not being provided ample and relevant professional development.

Themes C and D addressed the second research question, How do middle school teachers perceive their collaborative experiences to affect them in the inclusion classroom? Despite some negative experiences coteaching, regular and special education teachers expressed positive experiences resulting from the inclusion classroom. The participants described learning to be flexible and adaptable with their coteachers. They also described the support that they believed coteaching provided for both students and themselves. These coteaching experiences impacted participants' teaching in the classroom and their efficacy in reaching and supporting their students. Based on the data analysis, a three-day coteaching professional development training was developed. The training is for coteaching teams and their building administrators. The coteaching professional development training was designed to address the challenges that coteaching teams face. The training includes team building, trust, and collaborative lesson planning. There are also five additional training sessions of two hours each. These additional

sessions were designed to focus directly on the challenges with which the teams struggle. All sessions will include a question and answer period followed by an opportunity to evaluate the training period. The coteaching teams will be encouraged to bring their concerns or share their successes during the five additional training sessions.

After reviewing my findings, I reflected on the conceptual framework for this study, which is Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD theory. This theory emphasizes the need for socialization among adults. Vygotsky emphasized learning through communication and interaction with others rather than through independent work, which corresponds with participants' indication that coteacher communication was lacking and needed improvement.

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist views also centered on learning communities and the way they support learning. My findings indicated that there is a need to develop a more cohesive learning community for middle school coteachers. Because the inclusion classroom requires regular and special education teachers to coteach and collaborate on students' lessons, my findings reflected Vygotsky's work on collaboration being a social process in which differences are emphasized and discussed among group members. In my study, several coteachers expressed needs for better and increased collaboration with each other. My findings also connected to Vygotsky's work in that there was a demonstrated need for teachers to attend collaborative training to reinforce learning in the workplace. This need will be addressed with the three-day teacher professional development I developed.

Based on the findings of this study, I have created a professional development program with the goal of promoting teachers' growth and self-efficacy. In Section 3 of this study, I discuss the project. This project includes a three-day professional development training focused team building, lesson planning through lesson study, and mindful training to improve communication and effective collaboration. Additionally, I will provide a detailed description of the goals for the training, the rationale, literature review, and implementation and evaluation method of the project. Lastly, I will review the significance of this project including the implications for positive social change.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

In this study, I focused on teachers' perceptions of the challenges resulting from coteaching in middle school classrooms. I found that there was a need for additional professional development focusing on team building, lesson planning, building trust, and ensuring that all decisions coteachers make are considered best practice. The project was designed to address how coteachers can successfully share duties and best practices. Jenkins and Agamba (2013) indicated that professional development for teachers is a means to create collaborative relationships.

Goals

The goals for the outcome of the professional development project (see Appendix A) are directly related to the research problem of middle school teachers in Northern New Jersey experiencing challenges with the implementation of coteaching in inclusion classrooms. These challenges resulted in communication breakdowns regarding common planning time, classroom management, defining teacher roles, and teachers' perceptions on collaboration. The primary goal of the implementation of this project is to provide professional development training to increase coteachers' knowledge, understanding, and attitudes, ensuring their implementation of coteaching is done with fidelity and reflects a better understanding of the needs of students and teachers in inclusion classrooms. In creating the professional development project, the goal was to increase team building, collaboration, and trust among coteachers and teachers in inclusion classrooms.

Professional development can often increase teachers' understanding and knowledge of the various challenges and their causes connected with coteaching and inclusion classrooms. The findings presented in this case study can help the middle school and district staff members address challenges that may limit the effectiveness of coteaching.

Project Structure

The project for this study is professional development training sessions. The training modules consist of a 3-day training session and five follow-up training sessions. The 3-day training includes team building activities; discussions of inclusion, coteaching, professional development, and lesson study; lesson planning; and reflections and reviews. The professional development training highlights fundamental goals of coteaching in inclusion classrooms and the purpose of each process in the implementation of effective coteaching.

Rationale

The decision to create a professional development training stemmed from the findings in Section 2, which revealed that there are many challenges coteachers faced in the middle school inclusion classroom. Participants identified challenges like lack of adequate planning time, lack of professional development for coteaching inclusion classrooms, and lack of district support for coteachers in inclusion classrooms. Half of the participants in my study indicated that there was a lack of effective professional development to aid in implementing effective coteaching.

Problem Addressed

The goal of teacher professional development is to provide teachers with evidence-based pedagogical practices and methods to implement in their classrooms. However, successful implementation of instructional practices resulting from professional development has been found to be difficult for many teachers (Blackburn, 2014). Cornett and Knight (2009) investigated the experiences of 50 teachers and found that those who had participated in professional development, including an introductory workshop, were more likely to implement the teaching strategies that they had learned than teachers who did not attend further professional development. According to Lewis and Dikkers (2016), individual teachers have various levels of training and experience with coteaching. Professional development enables teachers to have meaningful conversations and provide opportunities for implementing the training in the classroom together.

The project includes several elements valuable to effective coteaching. First, as a part of the training session, coteaching teams will receive an overview of special education and coteaching to ensure that each participant has equal knowledge of these topics. Secondly, coteachers and administrators will participate in team building activities to develop trust and communication. Thirdly, coteaching teams will work collaboratively to create lesson plans through a lesson study to better learn how to modify and adjust instruction based on students' academic needs. Finally, the teams will become acquainted with collaboration, communication, and trust activities that are focused on

working as a team, sharing ideas, and interacting as equals, knowing that everyone brings something to the team.

To inform and influence teachers' perspectives, the professional development will be presented in an informal manner with no more than 10—12 people, a total of five or six coteaching teams. The professional development training will provide coteaching teams with recommendations on how to work collaboratively in the classroom, along with lesson planning and team building activities. Learning to plan lessons is part of professional development that was identified by Scruggs and Mastropieri (2017) as necessary for effective collaboration and communication.

Review of the Literature

This section includes a discussion of the conceptual framework that guided the creation of the project, and it continues with an evaluation of recent scholarly research focused on the need to provide additional professional development to the staff of middle school complex E. In this review of literature, I focused on professional development, the recognized project for this doctoral study. This literature review includes articles and publications retrieved from Walden University Library's electronic database including Pro Quest, Sage, EBSCO host, and ERIC, and academic texts. Key research items included *professional development* and *adult learning theory*.

Adult Learning Theory

Andragogy is the concept of adult learning, which can be used to implement successful educational strategies for adult learners. The term andragogy is derived from the terms *andro* (man) and *agogus* (leader of; Knowles, 1989). Knowles (1989)

explained that andragogy refers to adult learners' independent self-concept and ability to direct their own learning. Using andragogy, educators design and plan their courses to engage adult learners by including them in the educational planning process (Sato, Haegele, & Foot, 2017).

The world has become more learner-centered in recent years, as compared to teacher-centered education of the past. Education has become a lifelong activity because of an increase in the significance of adult education, and in meeting the needs of adult learners, concepts such as andragogy and professional development are significant (Javed, 2017). Andragogy focuses on adult learner characteristics and is commonly known as the process of engaging adult learners with a structure of the learning process and experience (Javed, 2017).

The term andragogy was originally used by Kapp, in 1833. In the early 1970s, andragogy was further developed into a theory of adult education by Knowles (Holton & Swanson, 2011; Knowles, 1980; Loughlin, 1993). Andragogy stresses the need for collaboration between the adult learner and the adult educator. Knowles (1980) indicated that the adult educator is a facilitator in the teaching-learning process, which allows adult education to be learner-centered. Adult learning theories, such as self-directed learning and transformative learning, are founded on principles of andragogy, as andragogy provides a theoretical framework for academics and educators (McCray, 2016).

Education extends beyond age and years and includes complex influences such as cultural and development cues (Knowles, 1980). Adult education provides adult learners with a chance to grow, achieve goals, and create meaning in their lives. According to

Knowles (1980), adult learners need to know why they need to learn something to fully participate in the learning process. Adult learners must be recognized as being both self-directed and autonomous (Knowles, 1980). Adult education enables adult learners to develop critical consciousness, which is vital to assist them in facing situations and using prior knowledge and experiences to learn how to succeed when faced with challenging situations (Javed, 2017). In adult education, the educator must bear the responsibility of assisting learners in diagnosing their learning needs, defining their learning objectives, putting their learning strategies into practice, and evaluating the outcomes of the learning process.

Andragogy can be used to assist learners in associating current learning with their existing knowledge and experiences, as well as in adopting problem-centered approaches to education, such as applying new knowledge to personal situations and problems to resolve them (Loughlin, 1993). Andragogy not only helps adults become self-directed learners, but also helps them develop critical and reflective thinking skills. Using andragogy to encourage the use of face-to-face learning methods, adults learn to value their experiences and use them as resources for learning.

The four necessary components of andragogy are self-directed learning, student engagement, experiential learning, and transformative learning (Knowles, 1980; Sato et al., 2017). Andragogy helps teachers address adult students' educational needs because adult and child learners have different educational needs, and teachers must be mindful of them (Knowles, 1989; Sato et al., 2017). When teaching courses for adult learners, pedagogical methods can be ineffective (Davenport & Davenport, 1985). Knowles

(1980) indicated that adult learners must be actively engaged in their learning; they should realize that although their teachers are knowledgeable, they are also knowledgeable in their own fields and take responsibility for their education (Knowles, 1975, 1980). Educators should use andragogy to engage adult students by connecting educational content to students' life experiences and relevant knowledge.

Professional Development Models

As was indicated by Dogan and Yurtseven (2016), when educators participate in professional development, they often begin implementing new and innovative teaching methods and practices in their classrooms. Teacher professional development can be both informal and formal and can include learning activities in schools. Professional development is defined as the "constant development of knowledge and professional skills throughout one's career" (Avidov-Ungar, 2016, p. 654). Teacher professional development includes practical knowledge and strategies that can be used in classrooms and can lead to teacher empowerment and improved student outcomes. Professional development increases educators' knowledge and understanding of teaching practices and student needs (Avidov-Ungar, 2016). This increased knowledge and understanding is accomplished through the ongoing process of education promoting knowledge, skills, and values that is the foundation of professional development (Avidov-Ungar, 2016).

Teacher professional development is a contributing factor of effective policy implementation in schools as well as improved school outcomes and reform (Wieczorek, 2017). This effective implementation is evident in policy-driven environments, where local professional development programs are the most successful method of teacher and

school improvements. Professional development can be used to reiterate theories and research that educators may already be familiar with. In professional development, participants can share prior experience and learn from each other (Oliver, 2016). Participants can also suggest actionable steps or strategies that can be enacted to solve various challenges in the classroom.

Professional development for teachers is also a means to form collaborative relationships, with the overall goal of increasing student achievement (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013). Professional development can transform teacher practice and student learning with traditional and new development models. Teacher professional development is a part of educational reform. Teacher change occurs during and directly following professional development. Professional development helps teachers determine what to teach and how to best educate and help students.

Professional development also plays a role in global perspectives and teaching global citizenship. Classrooms are diverse representations of the broader world. Teachers are encouraged to help their students develop global perspectives and become global citizens (Sider & Ashun, 2013). However, teachers' beliefs impact teaching practices in the classroom. Through teacher professional development, teachers' beliefs may change, leading to more active involvement in teaching global perspectives in the classroom (Sider & Ashun, 2013).

Anrig (2015) pointed to organizational professional development practices as integral to improving student outcomes. Based on the University of Chicago's Consortium on Chicago School Research, schools with relational trust among their

administrators, teachers, and parents achieved improved student outcomes than schools with little to no relational trust. Anrig found five organizational features that contributed to this success: incorporating meaningful teacher involvement across all grades regarding instruction guidance systems; providing ongoing professional support and guidance for teachers, including sharing classroom work with other colleagues and external consultants for review; fostering an environment in which students who are experiencing problems are identified in a student-centered learning climate; investing in shared responsibility between teachers, parents, and community members to better support students; and developing a support network for students involving school personnel, parents, and the community.

Continued professional development for teachers is often focused on teacher leadership development; however, a model for continuous professional development using action research would benefit both teachers and students (Kennedy, 2014). According to Kennedy (2014), models for continuous professional development should focus on conditions, characteristics, and effectiveness. Focusing on those factors would be a comprehensive approach to teacher learning and professional development.

Current practice and learning are the baselines to be considered before schools engage in professional development for teachers. The importance of establishing a baseline and collecting evidence of its impact when evaluating professional development was discussed by Earley and Porritt (2014). Earley and Porritt identified that five levels of Guskey's (2000) seminal model for learning outcomes for young people should be included in professional development in effort to improve overall outcomes: participants'

reactions, participants' learning, organization support and change, participants' use of new knowledge and skills, and student learning outcomes. Guskey also suggested that reversing these levels of learning outcomes can be helpful in professional development planning: the intended impact, the practices to implement, the time and resources needed, the existing knowledge and the skills that need to be developed, and the activities (e.g., training) needed to gain those skills.

Evaluating professional development techniques and practices is a part of ensuring the success of the professional development. Traditionally, evaluating the effect of teacher professional development included gauging teachers' satisfaction rather than teachers' learning (King, 2014). The evaluation of teacher professional development on their learning is becoming more significant. However, researchers, policy-makers, and school leaders continue to struggle to understand the effect of teacher professional development. One reason for this challenge may be in school leaders' and school districts' lack of tools and experience in researching and measuring professional development effectiveness (King, 2014).

Evaluation is not the only flaw in teacher professional development. Throughout the 20th century, there was a persistent divide between the theory and practice of professional development. This divide has remained the central problem of preservice and in-service teacher education (Korthagen, 2017). Throughout analysis of this problem, the focus has been on the question of how practice can become better linked to theory. The theory-to-practice approach used in professional development is used to promote teacher behaviors that corresponds with theory.

Lesson study. Lesson study is a method of teacher professional development. This approach was founded in Japan and is popular among in-service teachers (Gutierez, 2016). Lesson study allows teachers to learn how to set long-term student goals, improve lessons, learn new teaching methods and strategies, expand relevant knowledge, collaborate with other teachers, and self-reflect on teaching quality and strategy. Thus, lesson study can be a successful method of teacher professional development (Gutierez, 2016). In lesson study, teachers are encouraged to view lessons as tools for students to use in facing difficulties and challenges in their lives. In lesson study, teacher collaboration includes posing individual and organizational goals as questions and then working with peers on lessons and lesson plans as methods to answer those questions (Norwich & Ylonen, 2015). The lesson is studied through observations of students' learning. Lesson study is an example of an effective teacher professional development strategy.

Implementing teacher collaboration. Teacher collaboration resulting from professional development can improve instructional practices (Killon, 2013). Evidence-based practices are detailed in the standards for professional development and guide the design, assessment, and evaluation of effective implementation of teacher collaboration. Killon (2013) found that when implementing, planning, and evaluating professional learning, using research-based features is necessary. Administrators must distribute expertise among staff to increase the diffusion of expertise which will be beneficial by creating multiple experts such as instructional coaches, rather than a single expert. Further, it is recommended that school leaders adjust teachers' and school calendars to

allow time for successful collaboration (Killon, 2013). Professional development for teachers who are new to coteaching should include support after the initial professional development ends (Miller & Oh, 2013). This would increase the likelihood of educators effectively implementing coteaching. I stopped reviewing here due to time constraints. Please go through the rest of your section and look for the patterns I pointed out to you. I will now look at Section 4.

Increased professional development would enable teachers to learn to more effectively communicate with one another. This is important because, although teachers have extensive interactions with students, they are often limited in interactions with other teachers (Chenault, 2017). Chenault (2017) found that teacher-teacher interactions and communication allow for teacher collaboration and lead to increased student outcomes. For leaders, successful collaboration requires professional development that creates opportunities for and encourages teacher collaboration. It is important that school leaders can effectively evaluate teachers and their professional development needs.

Public school teachers have grown accustomed to top-down mandates in educational reforms (Willis, 2015). Further, teachers often have little voice in making curriculum decisions that impact overall instruction as well as teacher accountability. Teachers must be involved in identifying classroom challenges and in determining teaching structures and curricula. School leaders and school environments that support and value research and research-based teaching practices are significantly beneficial for teachers and students. Research-based teaching practices and professional development that supports them allows for high levels of teacher involvement and knowledge sharing,

which helps determine best practices and implementation strategies for new teaching methods (Olin & Ingerman, 2016).

Individual teachers have various levels of training and experience with coteaching. Because of their varied levels of training, professional development is necessary (Lewis & Dikkers, 2016). Professional development for this population of teachers should recognize their strong pedagogical knowledge and years of experience in the field while simultaneously addressing their varied experiences. Further, professional development focused on coteaching is especially important in the education of special needs and special education students. Teacher professional development must meet regular and special education teachers' instructional needs so that they can then meet the demands of their regular and special education students (Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). This focus on both regular and special education students stems from the inclusion of special education students into general education classrooms, which has led to the proposal and teaching strategy of coteaching and coteachers professional development (CoPD; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). Shifting from general education classrooms to inclusion classrooms can be challenging and thus everyone involved (teachers, staff, school leaders) must learn new and necessary skills and information to help with the shift to inclusion classrooms (Nishimura, 2014).

Mindfulness. Organizational mindfulness is a concept initially introduced and developed by Weick and Roberts (1993). It is an organizational disposition, skill, and set of processes. As a disposition, mindfulness refers to an organization's collective disposition toward learning in an ongoing quest for effective and reliable performance.

The mindful organization is committed to performance-directed learning, and its culture is defined by this. As a skill, mindfulness is the capacity of an organization to effectively engage in such learning. As a process, mindfulness refers to a set of activities found in an organization that reflect and build collective capacity.

There are five defining features of mindful, reliable organizations (Kruse & Johnson, 2016). First, mindful organizations exhibit a healthy preoccupation with potential failure. This focus is expressed in substantive and ongoing discussions of threats to organizational performance and how these can be eliminated, or their effects minimized. Second, mindful organizations are characterized by a reluctance to simplify interpretations of these threats to performance. A culture exists that promotes a healthy skepticism of operating assumptions and of existing organizational structures and process (Kruse & Johnson, 2016). Third, mindful organizations are further distinguished by a heightened sensitivity to the link between organizational processes and outcome. Fourth, mindful organizations are marked by a resilience that assumes the inevitability of failure, yet at the same time is tenaciously committed to avoiding failure. This defining commitment promotes a robust culture of learning. Finally, mindful organizations not only promote team approaches to learn but flatten coordinating structures as well (Kruse & Johnson, 2016)

The concept of mindfulness is derived from Buddhist thought. This perspective draws attention to a leader's awareness of the moment and quality of awareness that allows the leader to hear, observe, and learn from the experience unfolding (Kruse & Johnson, 2016). Attentive listening and non-judgmental observation informs and

characterizes a leader's heightened awareness. As leaders work to craft informed responses to the demands before them, Kruse and Johnson (2016) argued that mindfulness places them in a position to maximize learning from the experiences of the moment. Improving the acuity of this mental awareness is the subject and object of eastern mindfulness.

Mindfulness truncates negative functioning and ameliorates positive outcomes in multiple domains (Kruse & Johnson, 2016). Organizational mindfulness is evident when leaders create cultures that encourage rich thinking and a capacity for action. Mindfulness is a process, skill, and mindset. Additionally, mindfulness is more that an event; it draws attention to the thinking-doing relationship and how this relationship affects the quality of individual and collective decisions (Kruse & Johnson, 2016).

Project Description

The professional development training is appropriate for all staff members who are a part of a coteaching team. My project consists of three full-day training modules supported by team building activities conducted by building administrators at least once a month. The training will provide participants with implementation strategies for coteaching and recommendations for addressing and reducing challenges faced by coteachers. The professional development sessions were designed to promote coteacher teams building trust, collaborating, and lesson planning together.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The training program facilitator will collaborate with building administrators and selected staff participants. The training facilitator will send an invite through district

email to each participant detailing the primary goals and objectives of the training. Also, the facilitator will provide the agenda for each training session and the recommendation for a follow-up by building administrators. The coteachers will register for the training and receive continuing professional education credits. Participants will have access through the district Google Drive account to Hangouts and the PowerPoint presentation. The middle school will provide support materials and resources necessary to effectively conduct the professional development training such as the location for the professional development, projector for displaying the presentation, and the district evaluation form. The support materials and resources that might assist the teachers during the professional development include, but are not limited to: writing tools, technology, professional development training handouts, and daily sign-in sheets. The first day of training will begin with an overview of special education, inclusion, coteaching, and PLCs. The goal of the first day of training is to establish clarity about the purpose and shared vision of the professional development training in response to coteaching in inclusion classrooms. The first day will conclude with collaboration, reflection and an open discussion regarding the topic of coteaching or the training session, and a review of the next day.

The second day of the training will allow coteaching teams to address issues, concerns, and challenges they face in coteaching in inclusion classrooms. In addition to team-building activities and mindful leadership training, the training sessions will allow coteaching teams to work together, finding each other's strengths and weakness and how to delegate classroom duties. The next session will provide opportunities for participants to work together to prepare lesson plans. This training day will allow coteaching teams

to interact and participate in research-based inclusion classroom strategies and techniques. The third day of training will also allow coteaching teams to work together in determining classroom duties, team bonding, and planning lessons. The facilitator and building administrator will be available for support and guidance throughout the training.

Solutions to Potential Barriers

A significant barrier in professional development training is administrative dedication to provide consistent support to the coteaching teams after the training ends. The participants will be encouraged to continue with monthly training sessions with school administrators in addition to a follow-up session with the facilitator. Coteaching teams will be encouraged to continue to plan together and communicate and to work through challenges that may arise. These challenges can also be addressed during follow-up sessions. Some coteaching teams may continue to face challenges and feel overwhelmed, thus making administrative support even more important.

Implementation and Timetable

The project will be prepared for implementation in August 2018 at middle school complex E. The timetable for the training is as follows:

1) Provide the theme that arose from the study to the participants and administrators from middle school complex E;

2) Secure consent to conduct the professional development training for staff members from administrators;

3) Meet with administrators to determine date, time and location, and attendees for the training;

4) Coordinate with the technology specialist at the chosen location to obtain necessary equipment for my presentation;

5) Provide information packets to each attendee and administrator in attendance;

6) Perform the follow-up professional development sessions based on the school district calendar; and

7) Conclude each professional development session with reflection, question and answer period, and discussion of what coteaching teams require in future professional development sessions.

The goal of the follow-up sessions is to provide continuity and support for coteaching teams. This follow-up will include the discussion of unforeseen challenges that may not have previously arisen. Communication, sharing best practices, discussion of areas that may need improvement within coteaching teams are all aspects of the follow-up sessions. The coteaching teams should feel that the sessions are a place of trust and support where they can grow in their profession.

The sessions will allow the staff to work through the challenges and problem solve through a discussion of research-based practices. The follow-up sessions will include only the coteaching teams and their administrator who attended the previous sessions. The coteaching teams will discuss the need for further professional development and topic areas in which they need further support or training.

Roles and Responsibilities of Facilitator and Others

Facilitator. I will make certain that the implementation of each phase of the timeline is followed. I will also serve as the facilitator for each professional development

session during the sessions. Because of my knowledge of the case study and the expectations for the professional development training, I will provide administrators with feedback and be receptive to administrators' evaluation of the coteaching professional development. I will coordinate with building administrators on the time and location of the training. I will organize and prepare all documents for the training and provide information to the coteaching teams in a timely manner. I will also work with administrators to schedule sessions to ensure teachers receive professional development hours for their participation in the trainings. I will ensure that the training provided is clear and precise and directly meets the needs of the coteaching teams to improve coteacher communication, trust, and lesson planning.

Others. The middle school complex E administrators will ensure that the schedule for the professional development is met. The middle school administrators will determine which coteaching teams will attend the training and the facilitator will review the expectations for the training and the anticipated outcomes with the coteaching teams. The administrators and school content coaches will ensure that the training is aligned with district policies and needs.

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Project Evaluation Plan

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A plan has been developed to evaluate the coteacher teams' perceptions of the professional development training. The instrument that will be used to measure coteachers' responses to the training will be a summative survey provided to the coteacher and middle school complex E administration following the training. The results from the evaluation form will be used to develop further training sessions. The

evaluation form will contain a 5-point ranking system from not informative (1) to very informative (5), with room at the bottom of the evaluation for participants to write in their opinions or suggestions.

From this evaluation form the facilitator will gather data about the participants' perceptions about the training they have received. Participants will be informed that the summative evaluation is confidential and will exclude all personal information. Additionally, the effectiveness will be observed through informal walkthroughs by administrators and follow-up sessions. The school district evaluation form is done online at PDExpress, which is used for all workshops completed by teachers in the district. This allows teachers to receive credit from the district for participation in the professional development, and thus this evaluation form will be used to evaluate my professional development project as well.

Project Implications

Local Community

The project presented in this study was designed to ensure that, based on the data of the study, that the training sessions will result in a change of instructional practices, ensuring that professional development is used to reiterate theories and pedagogical practices that teachers may already be familiar with (Oliver, 2016). The professional development will be presented with intensity and depth. According to Martin, Kragler, and Frazier (2017), professional development should focus on the importance of quality instruction in schools with effective teaching, and the product is better learning outcomes for students. The challenges that participants indicated having impact on the fidelity of

coteaching in the inclusion setting are not enough planning time, collaboration on or in classroom tasks, communication challenges, and being flexible and adaptable.

The importance of addressing instructional challenges and clear expectations are foundational conditions. Clear instructions and expectations are implemented with fidelity every time an intervention is provided. School administrators are at the forefront of education training carried out in educational institutions (Balikeri, Skbash, Sahin, & Kithe, 2017). The instructional plan is designed to develop performance indicators that assist in evaluating intervention tools used to strengthen participants' understanding of grade level content.

Social Change at the Local Level

The project will be beneficial not only to the middle school complex E but also to other secondary schools within the local school district. These benefits include ensuring that coteacher teams and middle school administrators are implementing coteaching strategies to meet students' academic needs, as well as creating effective coteacher teams, changing perceptions about coteaching, and decreasing the challenges that coteachers face. The project will also ensure that all coteaching teams in the middle school receive the same training and information, allowing for teachers to collaborate effectively. As identified in the literature review, educational leaders, teacher empowerment, and collaborative support from coteachers and administrators are essential to the success to coteaching in the inclusion classroom. When implemented with fidelity, coteaching supported by professional development provides clarity and purpose for the inclusion classroom. The findings in this study provide information regarding quality of training

sessions and improving teacher efficacy through an informative session to improve
implementation fidelity. The coteachers and administrators should have a clear
understanding about the instructional techniques, collaboration, and trust needed to
effectively implement inclusion.

Broad-Scale Social Change

The dissemination of the study on ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global data
will provide data to researchers seeking clarity on the fidelity of coteacher teams. In
addition, based on the findings in this study, this project is a valuable resource to improve
teacher self-efficacy and implementation of coteaching in the inclusion setting. Thus,
implementation of similar professional development workshops nationwide can benefit
regular and special education teachers in inclusion settings to minimize challenges faced.

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Summary

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Section 3 provided a discussion of the proposed project developed for this study.
The professional development training addresses the needs of the coteaching staff at
middle school complex E.   To achieve social change, I will implement the coteaching
training project as a tool to provide clarity to teachers concerning the coteaching
framework. In addition, the coteaching professional development will provide teachers
with team building techniques, assist with building trust among coteaching teams, and
provide collaborative practices to assist with communication and lesson planning.
Section 3 also provided a detailed account of each day of the coteaching professional
development, including session evaluations, and included a discussion of how the project
will lead to positive social change for coteachers and students. The next section includes

a discussion of the reflections of my doctoral journey and closes with the conclusions of

the project study.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

This qualitative study was designed to focus on the daily challenges coteachers face in inclusion classrooms. I reviewed the challenges demonstrated in the findings and the need for professional development to improve teacher self-efficacy, communication, trust, and lesson planning. I designed a training session, *What Coteachers Need to Know,* after reviewing the results of my study regarding coteachers' need for professional development to help them with building trust, team building, and lesson planning. Besides a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the project, I also discuss recommendations for practice and possible further research on my topic.

Project Strengths

The implementation of research-based practices is essential for schools and academic accountability. Gutierez (2016) stated that professional development opportunities must be intensive to achieve optimum results in students' achievement. The teachers experienced challenges with teaching in inclusion classrooms. For example, Participant A stated that coteaching in the inclusion classroom often results in communication breakdowns regarding common planning time, classroom management, defining teacher roles, and teachers' perceptions of collaboration. Thus, this project is designed to focus on issues directly related to coteaching teams. The project strength is in providing coteachers with tools that they can implement in their classrooms upon completion of the 3-day professional development training.

The project includes five follow-up sessions that will allow coteachers to speak openly in a trusting environment, feeling safe to share and provide feedback to their peers. The overall goal of the professional development is to encourage communication by allowing both coteachers to listen to each other, which can strengthen lesson planning and improve the implementation of the coteaching model. Coteachers' willingness to improve their teaching environment is essential to the effectiveness of professional development. Coteachers sharing their opinions, perceptions, and experiences is an asset to the professional development, allowing the project to reduce the challenges that they face in inclusion classrooms.

Project Limitations

One limitation of the project is that teachers may have difficulties implementing unfamiliar strategies. Another limitation is that coteachers may be at different levels of familiarity with the coteaching model and may have difficulty using the coteaching framework. Building, district, and state requirements also create implementation challenges for coteachers. The coteachers indicated a need for additional training throughout the year to ensure consistency of the implementation of the coteaching model. Staff members mentioned receiving coteaching training but stated that additional training is needed. Further challenges of the professional development training include coordinating and planning further training sessions based on building and district calendars, the availability of substitute teachers for the duration of the 3-day training and the subsequent sessions, and lack of consistent attendance at every session.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Most professional development training in the field of education is primarily designed for exposure to new knowledge and instructional practices and to provide retraining when necessary. Aside from the professional development project in this study, alternative approaches to coteacher professional development can include online professional development (such as Mindset Professional Development Training and PBS TeacherLine) and more frequent classroom observations by administration.

I found that the school district could incorporate modeling of the coteaching framework. The district could also provide feedback to the coteaching teams after completing informal and formal walkthroughs and additional c-teaching training for new teachers to the team. This would ensure that everyone entering an inclusion classroom implementing the coteaching framework is trained equally.

Gutierez (2016) indicated that to have an impact on teaching practices, teachers need professional development that is continuous, school-based, and adjusted to their needs, and they need mentoring and collaboration with peers. Professional development for adult learners requires leaders to consider staff learning styles, interests, and commitment to improving and learning in areas they may not be familiar with.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

For this study, scholarship is considered to begin with a concern for the coteaching framework and the challenges it presents. To build upon this scholarship, I reviewed relevant peer-reviewed research to assist in identifying solutions to the

challenges that the coteachers face. My dexterity has increased as a scholar practitioner throughout each stage of my doctoral experience. I have gained a better understanding of research methods and how they are beneficial in developing and changing institutional practices. As an agent of social change, the scholar practitioner uses data to benefit members of the learning community. My role as a scholar practitioner enabled me to take the data gathered from various stages of my learning experience and apply them to existing knowledge with proficiency.

The learning and scholarship that I have acquired from my Walden University experience has changed the outlook on my professional life. The doctoral program at Walden University has provided caring, knowledgeable professionals to address my individual needs.   Throughout the development of my study and project, my committee chair and second chair, the university research reviewer (URR), and the IRB assured that educational standards were met with the highest of standards.

Project Development and Evaluation

The development of the project was based on the challenges that coteaching teams face in inclusion classroom settings. The project addressed concerns of teacher efficacy in inclusion settings. My strategy through the process of developing my project was to use peer-reviewed research to create an in-depth presentation of the challenges faced by coteachers. The information gained allowed me to facilitate teaching and learning for all staff members through professional development. To create the project in this qualitative study, I collected data, analyzed the data, and created themes to address the research questions. Through this process, I identified the goals of the project, aligned them to the

study problem as well as a review of literature that addressed the project, increased the credibility of the project, and provided confirmation as to why certain of the aspects of the project were developed. Throughout the project development, I maintained a systematic process that allowed me to reflect on why each aspect of the project was important. As a project developer, I mastered the need for current, relevant, and peer-reviewed literature. Additionally, I learned there are aspects of the project that should be discussed including formative and summative evaluations.

Leadership and Change

The professional development training sessions for this project centered on equipping coteachers and administrators with clarification of the coteaching framework and the procedures and expectations for its implementation in inclusion classrooms. If implemented and addressed, the findings and recommendation resulting from my study will promote change for the district, its staff members, and its students. Through this process will come modification to current instructional and organizational practices with the purpose of improving strategies for the implementation of coteaching in inclusion classrooms.

Reflective Analysis

My doctoral experience has provided me with an enriching experience that I can incorporate into my daily professional practice. My correspondence with professors and students, in addition to the high expectations that were set for every stage of my experience, has made this journey rewarding. As I reflect over my journey at Walden University and arrive at this pinnacle stage of my learning, I reflect on how valuable it is

to have credible programs such as this for educators. My objective throughout this doctoral experience was to grow as a learner and become a scholarly facilitator of learning. Social change delves deeper than doctoral programs; it applies to everything educators do and say, guaranteeing the use of credible and valid research to support decisions, actions, and points of view.

Analysis of self as a scholar. As I ponder my doctoral journey at Walden University, I can see how much I have grown as person and as a scholar. I learned how to disseminate the knowledge I have gained to captivate adult learners in a learning environment. I recognized how social change can affect instructional practices within a school. Throughout this journey, I found myself being challenged and growing in areas that, at the time, were unfamiliar and uncomfortable. The expectations and standards set by my committee chair and second chair made my experience invaluable. This capstone stage in my research experience reinforced the need for programs such as this for educators.

As an educator, I could explore an area of interest with in-depth analysis of its challenges and create a project to rectify the problem through my time at Walden University. Through course discussion, I could communicate with others who experienced situations similar to my own, providing insight and motivation to move forward. Throughout the duration of my doctoral journey, I found the guidance and motivation from my committee chair and member invaluable. My doctoral journey enabled me to be an agent of social change in future leadership roles and current work endeavors.

Analysis of self as a practitioner. My Walden University doctoral journey gave me experiences that I can apply to my career and future endeavors. The use of the online classroom, the weekly interaction with my chair, communicating with my second member, and communicating with students in the same program all served as supports during the dissertation process. The feedback that guided me through every stage was essential to my growth as a practitioner. My professors' guidance through this doctoral process gave me the expertise to seek out quality research-based, peer-reviewed information. Their patience and enlightenment made my doctoral journey a great experience. My members refused to let me succumb to anything else but completing the program with fidelity and I am thankful.

I am appreciative of my district's assistant superintendent, who made sure that whatever was needed from her office was done and completed in a timely fashion. My data collection process would not have been possible without the coteachers who set aside time from their busy schedule to allow me to conduct my interviews. Once we came together, they shared their experiences openly and honestly. Their honesty led to data that informed the creation of the professional development project. My goal for this project is for it to be implemented at the middle school complex E and to help other coteachers throughout the district.

Analysis of self as project developer. My collaborative experience at Walden University gave me the confidence to apply the necessary skills to conduct research. Research is not conducted alone. Researchers must communicate with others to receive assistance. My Walden University librarian communicated with me and I with her to

address concerns and progress successfully through the dissertation process. This communication gave me the guidance to study literature, using the conceptual framework to connect with my topic. It allowed me to develop a prospectus and follow my EdD planning tool. It gave me the ability to obtain IRB approval, collect data from the participants, and culminate the findings to develop a project. Communication is essential to an online doctoral study. It allowed me to become a project developer who can produce research to assist in solving challenges.

As my doctoral courses concluded, the intensity level increased as I began working on my project with my chair and committee member. This required me to stay focused and committed to the needs of coteachers. This permitted me to create a project that accurately represented the coteachers' opinions and experiences. The project may provide relevant and valid information to other coteaching teams in the district and promote social change.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

The coteaching framework is a viable component in the field of education. Developing a project that focused on this crucial area to provide equal education opportunities to all students was enriching. The professional development training and additional follow-up sessions will supply coteaching teams with the tools to communicate, share classroom responsibilities, and create an environment of trust. The project allows for consideration of the diversity of teachers and administrators and that each may enter the field with varying levels of knowledge on this topic. The aim of the project is to have everyone reflect on where they are in this process, to keep an open

mind as they attend the professional development sessions, and to try different research-based methods to see which will work best for each coteaching team.

How the project is implemented with consistency and follow-up walkthroughs is essential to the improvement of coteaching. Providing support and guidance to implement the information learned from the professional development is also necessary. The professional development training includes in-depth conversations with coteachers, allowing them to reflect on the process and procedures implemented. The aim is to enhance collaboration, increase trust through team building activities, assist with lesson planning together and addressing the needs of each person from the coteaching team, and encourage communication among members of coteaching teams. The training will expose the coteaching teams to a variety of team building activities and open discussions to bond and create ideas that work with each team. The project is paramount in meeting the vision and mission of the school and district.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Impact on Social Change

This qualitative case study revealed that professional development training sessions could address the challenges that middle school E coteachers faced. Through the results of this study, I revealed that ongoing professional development aligned with team building and lesson planning activities could strengthen the coteaching model and improve its implementation. Through my findings, I exposed the need for additional professional development in the areas of personal and professional growth, support, personal and professional problems of coteachers, and macro-level challenges. The goal

of the professional development training is to improve teacher efficacy, which could improve students' success in core subject areas.

Social change and development require competencies to changing circumstances to be met (Ozdemir, Sezgin, & Kilic, 2015). The project's impact on social change includes providing coteaching teams with the guidance to implement the coteaching framework with fidelity. The project encompasses three days of training with an additional five follow up sessions. These training sessions will equip coteaching teams with the necessary information to collaborate, increase trust, successfully lesson plan together, and increase communication. Additionally, the coteachers' training incorporates research-based strategies and resources needed to educate all students.

Applications

The training sessions were constructed such that the staff will transform the standard of the implementation of coteaching framework. This will build stronger coteaching teams in inclusion classrooms. The aim of coteaching is to educate both regular and special education students in the same classroom environment while meeting the needs of all learners. The middle school complex (E) will benefit from this project because the inclusion classroom will function more collectively, allowing the coteaching team to work collaboratively.

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Directions of Future Research

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Future research may expand the scope of this project to determine whether professional development increased teachers' ability to implement coteaching effectively. In addition, follow-up research can be implemented to determine if the training done

collaboratively with coteaching teams is an effective framework to meet the needs of all students. I believe that the knowledge shared of the challenges that coteachers face will assist educational leaders in directing future research. Educational leaders could implement an instructional approach to observe, analyze, and provide direct feedback to adjust, modify, or change practices with suggestions for improvement. Additionally, future research on coteaching could involve all secondary coteaching teams at the secondary education level. Lastly, school leaders who have coteaching models in their schools could implement and analyze the observations from walkthroughs and adjust and modify practices in inclusion classrooms.

Summary

This project supported the purpose of the study which was to explore teachers' perceptions of collaboration challenges that result from coteaching in the middle school classroom. The project aim was to address the challenges coteaching teams face in the inclusion classroom and address the findings from the qualitative case study. The coteaching team training and follow-up sessions will address the implementation of the coteaching framework. It will allow the coteachers to reflect on and review the findings of this study to meet the needs of teachers and students. The impact on social change will be the positive changes in coteachers' instructional practices in inclusion classroom that result from professional development training.

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Appendix A: The Project

Co-teaching Teams Professional Development Training

Day 1

Day 1 Agenda

8:30-9:00 – breakfast/ light refreshments (find your assigned table with your co-teaching team's name on it, please sit together).
9:00-10:30 – Welcome / Introduce myself/ discuss the goal and purpose today's workshop
10:30-11:00 – co-teacher Introductions and Team building activity
11:00-12:00 – Overview of Special education/ inclusion
12:00 – 1:00 – lunch
1:00 – 1:30 – Team building activity
1:30-2:30 – What is co-teaching?
2:30 – 3:00 – Reflection, Review and Closure
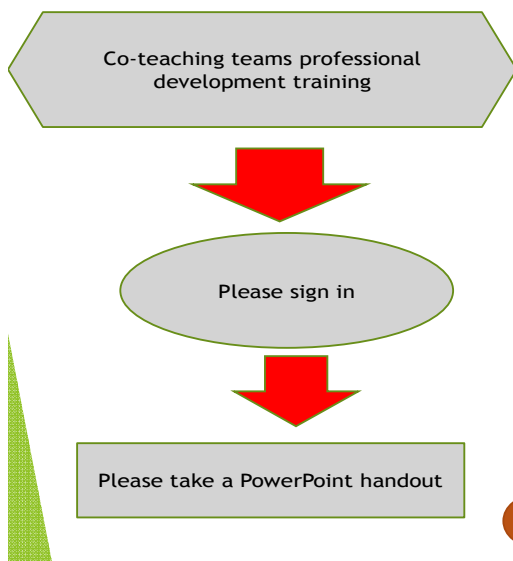
Co-teaching teams professional development training

Please sign in

Please take a PowerPoint handout
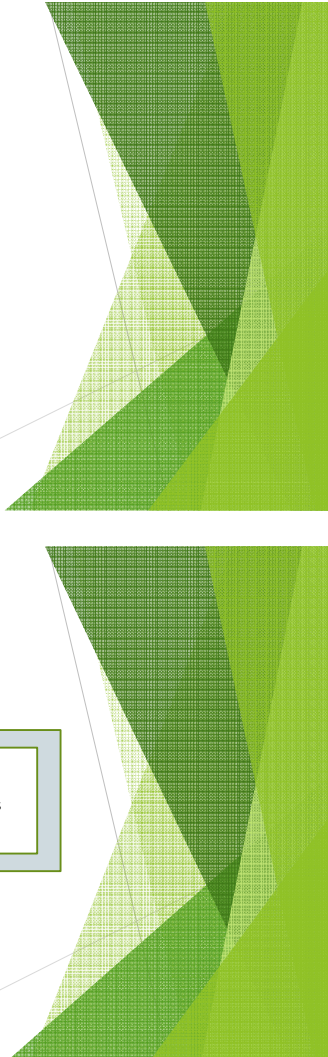
Co-Teaching Professional Development

CoPD
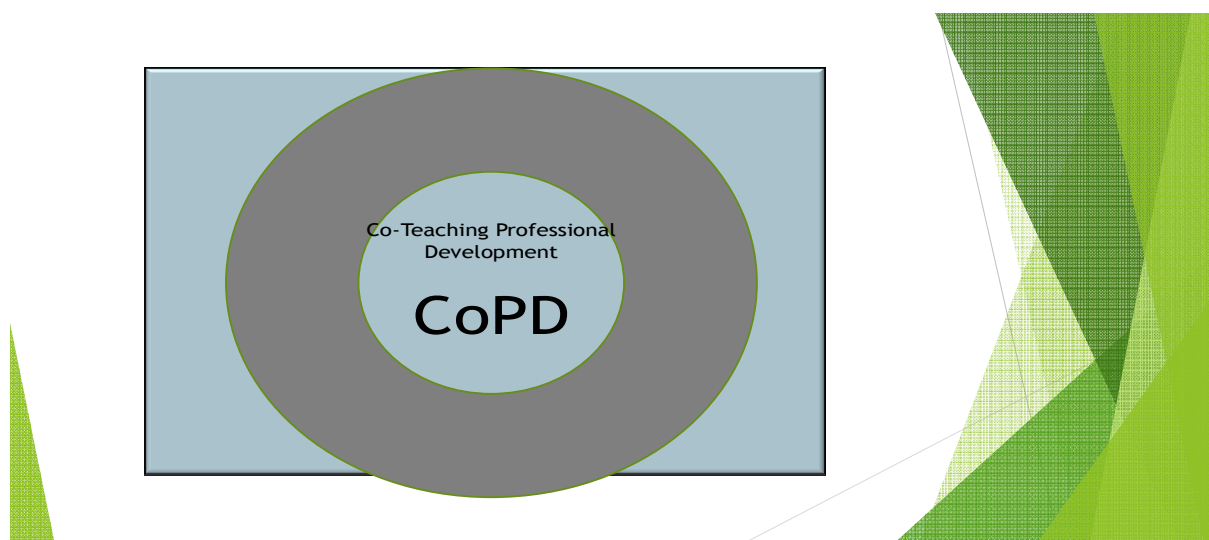
The goal of this project is to encourage good communication through active listening for co-teaching teams.

The co-teaching teams professional development is designed to highlight fundamental goals of co-teaching in the inclusion classroom, and the purpose and intention of each process in the implementation of effective co-teaching.

Scruggs (2017) states that co-teachers must listen to their parents as well communicate their own views and suggestions especially when planning together.

This co-teaching teams professional development is designed for co-teaching teams and the challenges that they face

The co-teaching teams professional development goal is to provide team building activities, build trust among team members, collaborative lesson planning

Can you find me Game
Directions- Can you find at a co-teacher that …………
This game requires you to walk around the room and ask other co-teachers

Has a pet Initials _____	Loves chocolate Initials _____	Has children Initials_____
Is currently taking college courses Initials _____	Has been teaching for 10 years or more Initials _____	Who has been teaching 10 years or less Initials _____
Loves to garden Initials_____	Have you been to Jamaica? Initials_____	Have you been to Spain? _____

40 years since federal lawmakers mandated legislation requiring special education services directly involving students with disabilities with the passing of P.L. 94-142 in 1975 (Gold & Heraldo, 2012).

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) was designed

focusing on the educational, social, and emotional needs of students with disabilities (Gold & Heraldo, 2012).

The Special
Education Law
of 1988
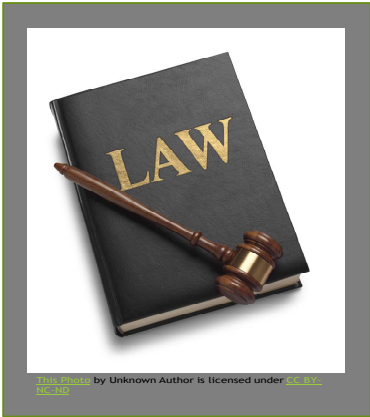
The law emphasized that special education students are required to be educated in the regular education classroom, allowing them to be educated with their equals

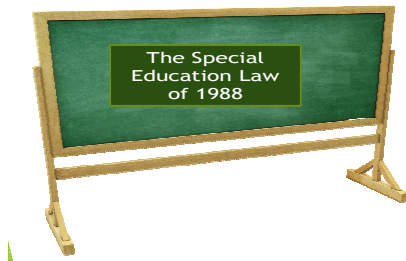## Individuals with Disabilities Act — IDEA

- IDEA safeguarded children with disabilities and their parents by ensuring them services unique to their instructional and emotional needs (Zirkel, 2013)
- States and public agencies provide support for individuals with disabilities in the form of early intervention and special education, among others. In addition, under IDEA, special education students also receive related services such as physical therapy and counseling in the

Least Restrictive Environment — LRE

- law entitled every child to a free appropriate public education (FAPE
- documented in an IEP
- students are classified based on completion of an evaluation process provided by their school district.
- The areas of disabilities can be cognitive, physical, social or emotional, and adaptive development (Taylor, 2011).

Free Appropriate Pubic Education — FAPE

- The law provided federal funds to public schools as long as specific requirements were met (Taylor, 2011).
- public schools as well as enumerating the educational responsibilities of general and special education teachers, school administrators, and parents

The No Child Left Behind Act — NCLB of 2001 (Pl 107-110)

- Teacher accountability, ensuring that all students are proficient
- accomplished through yearly assessments

NCLB (2001) and IDEA (2004)

- These two federal laws have brought more special education students into the general education classroom and held regular education teachers accountable for their performance

Every Student Succeeds Act — ESSA ends NCLB

- shifts the power away from the federal government and back to the state and local school districts

- This new legislation replaces NCLB and places educational accountability on stakeholders such as educators and parents who are utilizing evidence-based practices to determine which schools need improvement (Ferguson et al., 2014).

Review and discussion/ Reflection

Reflect on your experience working with students with special needs in the inclusion classroom. Brainstorm on how you would define the inclusion classroom:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Review and discussion/ Reflection

- ❖ Keep in mind that inclusion is constantly evolving concept
- ❖ Keep in mind not looking for co-teachers to agree unanimously during discussion and reflection

- ❖ This activity was to encourage to co-teachers to think about the overall vision of inclusion and it's unique situations

Review and discussion/ Reflection

www.eenet.org.uk/resoureces/docs/inclusion%220in%20Action%20MAIN%20REPORT.pdf

Some brainstorming suggestions:

Equality

A continuous process

Freedom to interact and play

Effective education for all

Removing barriers to learning

Supporting each other

Respecting our differences

Education for all

Accepting each other

Accepting each other

Accepting each other
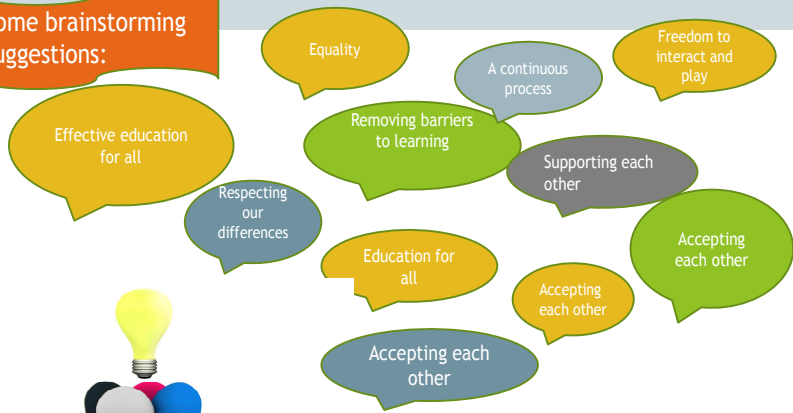
Lunch
12:00 noon – 1:00pm

Was I listening Game

► <u>Directions: Pull a name out the hat of</u> a co-teacher or administrator's - tell us two things about that person (Each participant gave 3 things in the earlier game)

Inclusion is developed through research and is an education framework

Inclusion was created to address every singe student's educational demands

Inclusion was founded on social justice and human rights

The philosophy behind inclusion " equity in education"

Students are educated correctly

Inclusion moves from segregation based on learning, challenges or behaviors

Co-Teaching

Co-teaching

is an approach

It supports integration of students with special needs

Two teachers share a classroom and blend their expertise

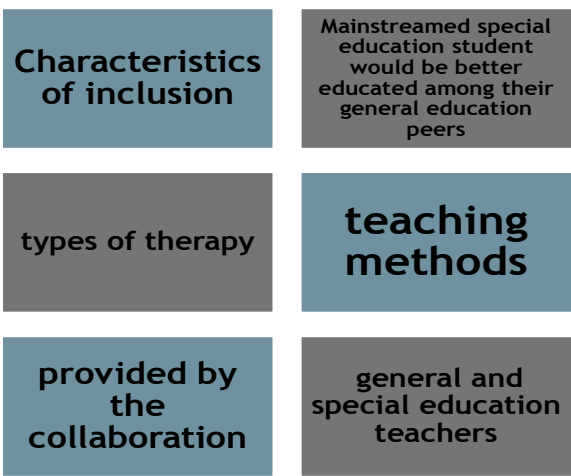Two teachers collaborate on planning, instruction, and student assessment

Characteristics of inclusion

Mainstreamed special education student would be better educated among their general education peers

types of therapy

teaching methods

provided by the collaboration

general and special education teachers

Models of Co-Teaching

These models are used to guide teachers with instructional design and delivery (King-Sears, 2014)

Team Teaching

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Station Teaching

One Teach, One Assist

Alternative Teaching

Alternative Teaching

One teacher works with a large group while the other teacher is working with a small group of students. Small groups can be pulled for pre-teaching, re-teaching, enrichment, interest groups, special projects, make-up work or assessment groups.

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-NC

Co- Teaching Models

One teach, one drift
Team teaching
Parallel teaching
Alternative teaching
One teach, one observe
Station teaching

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA

Co- Teaching Examples on YouTube

We will view a video showing the models of co-teaching

https://youtu.be/6llQCG8QhBE

C O L L A B O R A T I O N

Occurs when both teachers work together as equal partners

Requires continued professional learning and communication of instructional techniques

Collaboration encourages empowerment among all participants

COMMUNICATION IS
An essential part of any
collaborative partnership

CO-TEACHING TEAMS -
Must purposefully plan
to talk with each other
regarding their view
points, values, shared
roles, and
responsibilities

CO-TEACHING TEAMS -
Must purposefully
disgust their outlook
concerning the
educational success of
the students in their
classrooms

Reflection, Review and Closure

this activity encourages participants to talk to people they may not have spoken to yet during the workshop, and help them to reflect on their learning or ideas so far

Directions - select a letter from the hat that is being passed around. The hat contains the letters **A** and **B**. If you chose the letter A make a circle in the front left corner of the room. If you chose the letter B make a circle in the front right corner of the room
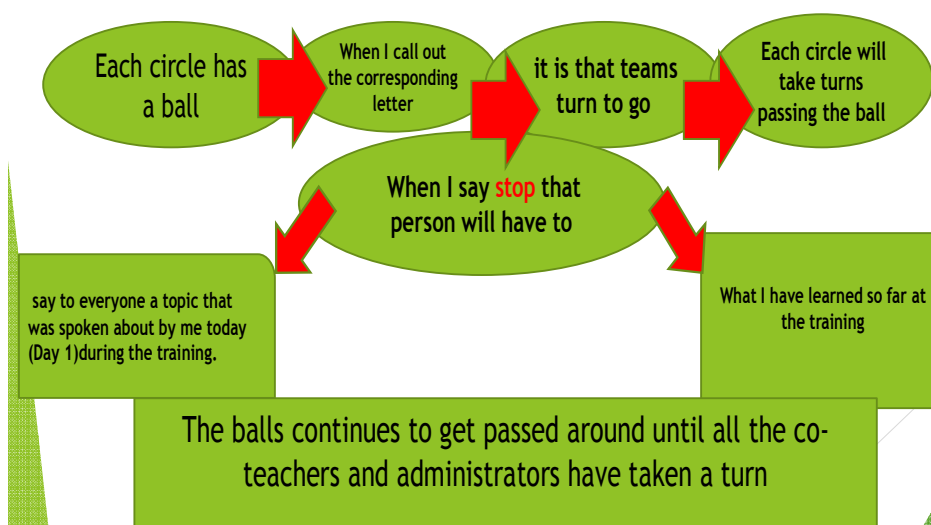
.

Each circle has a ball

When I call out the corresponding letter

it is that teams turn to go

Each circle will take turns passing the ball

When I say stop that person will have to

say to everyone a topic that was spoken about by me today (Day 1)during the training.

What I have learned so far at the training

The balls continues to get passed around until all the co-teachers and administrators have taken a turn

Welcome to Day 2 of the Co-teaching Teams Professional Development Training

Day 2 Agenda
Please sign – in

8:30-9:00 –   breakfast/ light refreshments (find your assigned table with your co-teaching team's name on it, please sit together).

9:00-10:30 – Welcome /discuss the goal and purpose today's workshop

10:30-11:00 – Team building activity and discussion

11:00-12:00 – CoPD and PLCs

12:00 – 1:00 – lunch

1:00 – 1:30 – Team building activity

1:30-2:30 –   Growth Mindset

2:30 – 3:00 – Reflection, Review and Closure

Activity

- Create a poster advertising identifying skills, attitudes and experiences that you and your co-teacher bring to the inclusion classroom

- You need a 100% truthful. A starter example is – We are the ideal co-teaching team to receive funding for work that promotes inclusive education because…..

- Each table is provided with the big post-stick paper and markers.

- One person from each co-teaching team will stand next to their poster and discuss the contents
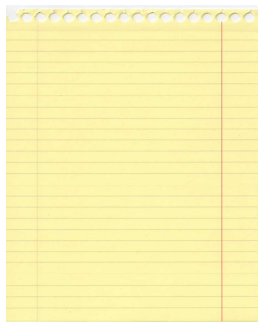
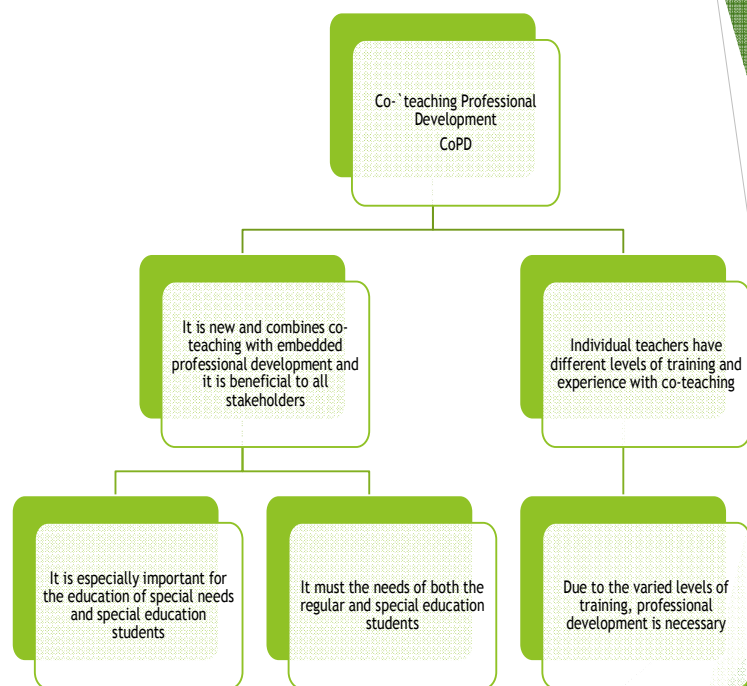This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA

Discussion on activity

❖ We are not used to thinking about our own personal beliefs and experiences in relation to work.

❖ We are not use to thinking and representing our ideas in different ways

Co-Teaching Professional Development

CoPD

Co-`teaching Professional Development

CoPD

It is new and combines co-teaching with embedded professional development and it is beneficial to all stakeholders

Individual teachers have different levels of training and experience with co-teaching

It is especially important for the education of special needs and special education students

It must the needs of both the regular and special education students

Due to the varied levels of training, professional development is necessary

Professional Learning Communities

PLCs

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PLCs

Shared purpose

Shared values

Shared leadership

A Collaborative culture

Collective inquiry

Focus on continuous improvement

Professional Learning Communities

PLCs

Professional Learning Communities

PLCs

Is a concept that emerged form the concept of teacher professional community as far back as the 1980s

School culture is determined by the values, shared beliefs, and behaviors of various stakeholders with the school's community

Shared understanding of the school mission (purpose)

Shared vision of an educational organization, including indicators, timelines, and targets of student learning

A collaborative culture is the way teachers and administrators thing and behave regarding sharing information about their practice

Reflection and Review

Open discussion about:

❖ challenges that coteaching teams face
❖ Co-Teaching in the inclusion classroom
❖ Reflection about co-teaching team professional development

**Lunch
12 noon – 1pm**

Brain storming Activity

Discussion and reflection on their own interpretations and understanding of concepts from previous sessions

How would you define the inclusion classroom

The challenges of how we conceptualizes and implement the inclusion classroom

Reflecting on the barriers with co-teaching in the inclusion classroom spend a few minutes writing and reflecting on your personal experiences.

Draw a road that leads from the barriers to resolving the problem. Find solutions to one of your barriers. Plan to discuss your choice with the group

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS IS ALWAYS UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

thingsweforget.blogspot.com

Mindset Professional Development

ACTIVITY - to jumpstart our discussion on Growth Mindset quickly write your answer the following questions. (5 minutes)

The objective is to – reflect on how we all have both fixed and growth mindsets about different aspects of our lives.

❖ One thing you have always been good at,

❖ One thing they think they'll never be good at and

❖ One thing they weren't good at, but became good overtime.

Mindset Professional Development

Activity Discuss with your co-teacher the following. Plan to share your finding with the PD group

❖ What did you notice about your own mindset?

❖ Was there anything from the 3 questions that surprised you about yourself?

Communication Skills for Effective Collaboration

▶ LISTEN ACTIVELY

❖ Concentrate on what is being said when someone is speaking

❖ Maintain eye contact (letting the speaker know you are engaged

❖ Pay attention to nonverbal cues from the person that is speaking

❖ Avoid interrupting and set aside judgement

❖ Pause before responding to make sure the person is finished

❖ Paraphrase what you are hearing to check for understianding

❖ Pay attention to your reactions- if something makes your pulse increase, pause and breathe before responding

PERTS, Standford University-www.perts.net- twitter.com/pertslab-contact@perts.net

The Importance of LISTENING

Be curious

❖ Ask questions to deepen understanding of the situation

❖ Ask questions to probe an idea

❖ Be a thought partner, not a lecturer, Explore solutions together

❖ Be a thought partner, not a lecturer. Explore solutions together

❖ Listen actively to responses

Provide effective feedback

❖ Only provide feedback with permission or when it is the goal of an activity such as peer observation

❖ Avoid giving advice- work to explore ideas with curiosity

❖ Balance positive with negative feedback. Start with sincere positive observations before jumping into critiquing performance or challenging an idea

❖ Be direct and honest with people as a consistent practice

❖ Be kind

❖ Be specific – the more detailed you can be, the better

❖ Be helpful, make sure your suggestions are relevant to the objectives of the situation or the learning foals of the other party

❖ Give potentially sensitive feedback privately, not in front of others

Speak concisely and sensitively

❖ Use as few words as possible so there is more time for exploring new ideas and solutions

❖ Focus on getting to a solution when you talk about problems. Avoid just complaining

❖ Pay attention to your body language and keep it active but not distracting

❖ Scan and make eye contact with everyone as you speak so everyone feels included and invited into the conversation

Being Concise

Create Group Norms for Communication

► Setting clear ground rules can help create a supportive environment of trust and respect, which are necessary for effective collaboration.

ACTIVITY : INDIVIDUAL

*** on the sheet of paper provided identify a strength and challenge in your communication style and set an intention – THIS SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 10 MINS

Group discussion

Effective Team Communications

Co-teaching Team Activity
Forming Ground Rules

Directions- Ground rules, or norms, are important for a group that intends to work together on difficult issues, or who will be working together overtime. Starting with basic Ground Rules builds trust, clarifies group expectations of one another, and establishes point of " reflection" to see how the group is doing regarding process.(30 mins.)

Know the Rules

Each co-teacher writes down what each person needs in order to work productively in a group.
- An example is that you will start and end your meeting with "we will"

Taking turns- each co-teacher will name one thing from his/her list
- to have all ground rules listed

Ask for any clarification- if
- needed (assume nothing- one person may not understand what another is saying or may interpret the language differently

If the list is contains more than 10 Ground Rules
- ask the team if some of the them can be combined to make the list more manageable-sometimes the subtle differences are important to people, so it is more important that everyone feel their needs have been honored than it is to have a short list.

Ask if any one of the Ground Rules might be hard for the group to follow

- If there is one or more, those Ground Rules should be highlighted and given attention. With time it will become clear if it should be dropped, or needs significant work. Sometimes what might appear to be a difficult rule turns out not to be hard at all

While work is in progress, refer to the Ground Rules whenever they would help group progress

- If one person is dominating, for example, it is easier to refer to a Ground Rule that says, " Take care with how often and how long you speak '" than to ask someone directly to stop dominating the group

Check in on the Ground Rules when reflection is done on the group work

- Note any that were not followed particularly well for attention in the next work session. Being sure they are followed, refining them, and adding or subtracting Ground Rules is important, as it makes for smoother work and more trust with the group

- **National school Refrom Faculty – www.nsrfharmony.org**

Reflection, Review and Closure

<u>Directions</u> – complete the debriefing sheet and plan to discuss one of your answers as your exit ticket from today's PD

What were your thoughts on the Communication skills for effective collaboration	
What were your thoughts on the Ground Rules that you and your co-teach made together	
What did you learn today and how does it add to your own practice	

Reminder . . . .

Co-teaching team lesson planning
Remember to bring your lesson plan objective tomorrow (Day 3)

Welcome to Day 3 of the Co-teaching Teams Professional Development Training

Welcome Back!

Welcome to Day 3 of the Co-teaching Teams Professional Development Training

8:30-9:00 – breakfast/ light refreshments (find your assigned table with your co-teaching team's name on it, please sit together).

9:00-10:30 – Welcome /discuss the goal and purpose today's workshop

10:30-11:00 – Team building activity and discussion

11:00-12:00 – Lesson Study

12:00 – 1:00 – lunch

1:00 – 1:30 – Team building activity

1:30-2:30 –   Co-Teaching teams Team lesson planning time

2:30 – 3:00 – Reflection, Review and Closure

Activity - review of yesterday's workshop

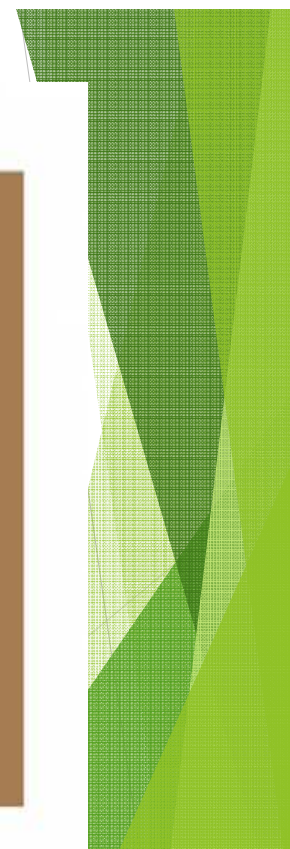Write your name and answer to the following questions on the post sticks provided.
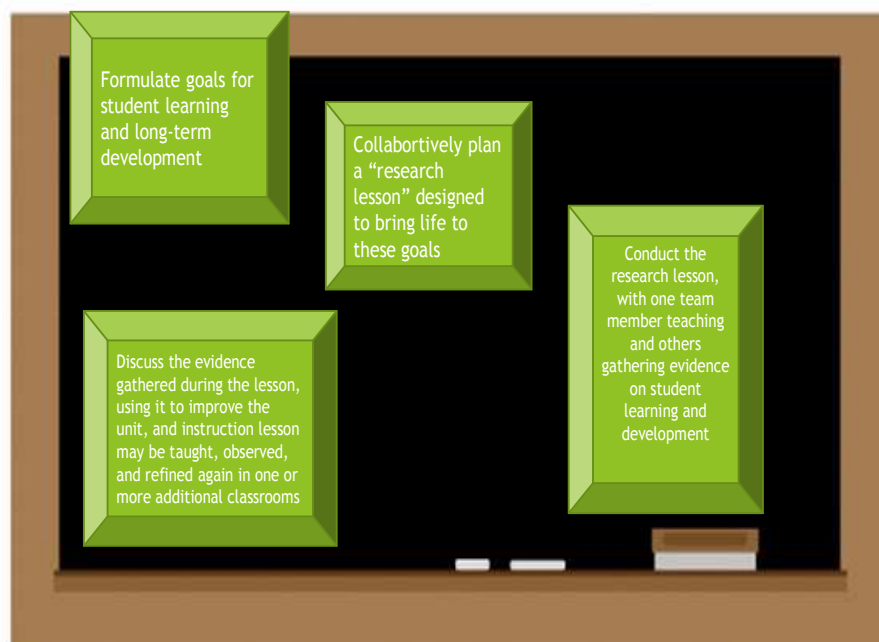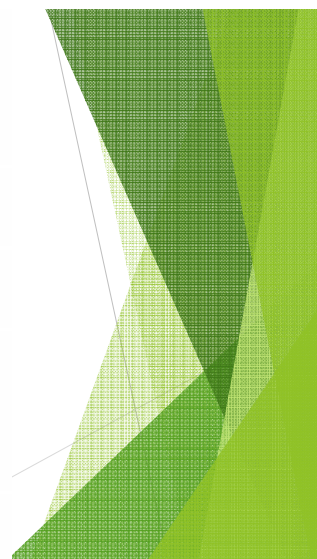
Place your post-stick under the topic of:

 I need to know and I can offer

I need to know

Johnny Q

I can offer

Johnny Q

Lesson study Overview

Lesson study provides an ongoing method to improve instruction based on *careful observation of students and their work*. In the lesson study cycle teachers work together to:

Lesson study – Catherine C. Lewis, Education Department, Mills College, Oakland CA
…www.lessonresearch.net

Formulate goals for student learning and long-term development

Collabortively plan a "research lesson" designed to bring life to these goals

Conduct the research lesson, with one team member teaching and others gathering evidence on student learning and development

Discuss the evidence gathered during the lesson, using it to improve the unit, and instruction lesson may be taught, observed, and refined again in one or more additional classrooms

For the local school district purposes we will be focusing on:

Results

Formulate goals for student learning and long-term development

Collaborativley plan a "research lesson" designed to bring life to these goals

Using the district's curriculum pacing guide and the current objective you will working on with your students
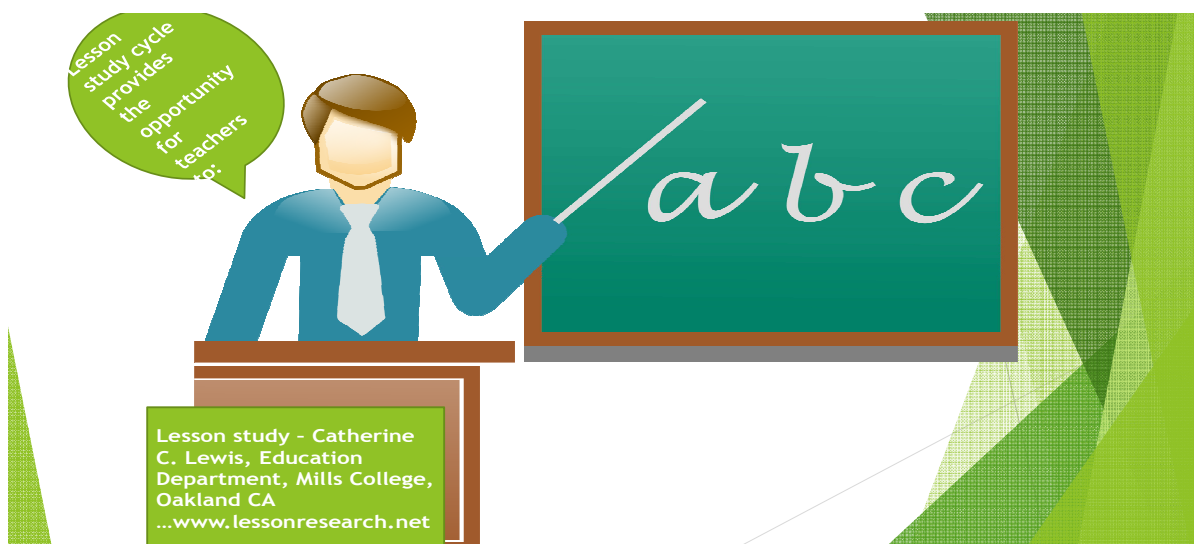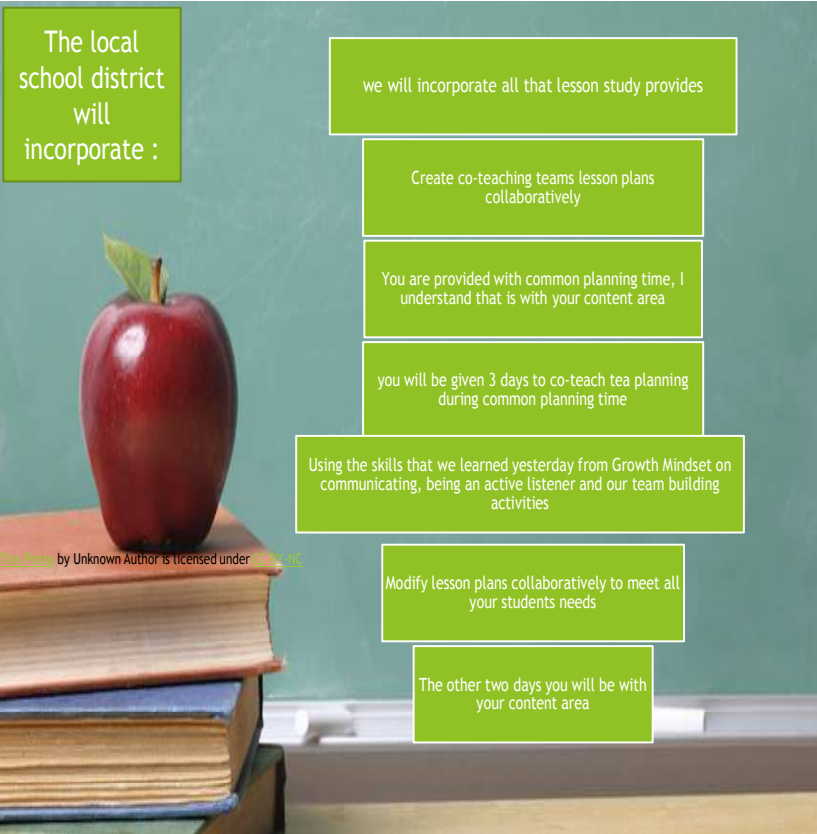
The local school district will incorporate :

we will incorporate all that lesson study provides

Create co-teaching teams lesson plans collaboratively

You are provided with common planning time, I understand that is with your content area

you will be given 3 days to co-teach tea planning during common planning time

Using the skills that we learned yesterday from Growth Mindset on communicating, being an active listener and our team building activities

Modify lesson plans collaboratively to meet all your students needs

The other two days you will be with your content area

Lunch
12 noon – 1 pm

TIME FOR
LUNCH

shutterstock · 267178496

1. Everyone in the group gets 10 pieces of candy

2. The first person states something he/she has done (e.g. water skiing)

3. Everyone else who has done the same thing admits it and puts one piece of candy in the middle of the table

4. Everyone else who has done the same thing admits it and puts one piece of candy in the middle of the table

5. Everyone who has done it puts another piece of candy in the center.

Continue until someone has run out of candy

CC BY-NC

Team Building Activity
Give the group a specific time (perhaps 5 minutes) to write a list of everything they all have in common. Tell them to avoid the obvious ("we're all taking this course"). When time is up, ask each group how many items they have listed. For fun, ask them to announce some of the most interesting items

Lesson Study -
Co – Teaching Team content planning Time

At this time you will plan a lesson together. You were asked to bring an objective with you based on your content area. Based on the district's curriculum pacing guide.

Closing activity, Reflection

this activity encourages participants to think about what they want to achieve from 5 follow up training (at least for the first follow up training). They can put any concerns and allows the participants to communicate with the facilitator. It also gives the facilitator a starting point for upcoming PD

Co-teacher comments	what they may like to learn to address the comments
Ex.. I am concerned that my lack of experience in the co-teaching and I won't have anything to talk about	More activities where everyone experiences is relevant.
Ex. Some may be reluctant to share best practices	More activites to help everyone feel comfortable to share and discuss
Ex. I need to know ……. About co-teaching in the inclusion class room	

Evaluation form for the 3 day co-teaching team professional development training

A district professional development evaluation form will be attached

Online Professional Development Resources

Co-Teaching Professional Development Training

► Co-Teaching and Inclusion Training - Consortium for Educational …
  ► https://www.cecweb.org/co-teaching/
► On-Site PD Course | Co-Teaching That Works: Effective Strategies for …
  ► https://www.ber.org/onsite/course.cfm?CR=XCB
► Online Professional Development for Teachers | Exceptional Child …
  ► https://www.exceptionalchild.com/
► PBS TeacherLine | Online Professional Development
  ► www.pbs.org/teacherline/

Online Professional Development Resources (Cont.)

Mindset Professional Development Training

► MindsetMaker - Mindset Works
  ► https://www.mindsetworks.com/programs/mindsetmaker
► Mindset Kit | Resources for growth and learning mindsets
  ► https://www.mindsetkit.org/
► ASCD PD Online - Online Courses for Teachers
  ► www.ascd.org/professional-development/pd-online.aspx
► Professional Development | Collaborative for Educational Services
  ► https://www.collaborative.org/services/professional-development

PD Express Evaluation Form

Instructions

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5. A score of "1" will indicate "Strongly Disagree" while a score of "5" will indicate "Strongly Agree".

1. The content was clear and well organized.

2. The workshop was informative.

3. The presenter was able to integrate theory and practice.

4. The presenter was well prepared.

5. The information was practical and useful for my professional and/or personal growth.

6. The handouts were useful.

7. My level of knowledge was increased.

8. Please provide any comments you may have regarding this workshop.

Submit Workshop Evaluation

Form: WORKSHOP EVALUATION (10001)

Note-
District professional development evaluations are completed online in PD Express

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1.   What was your perception when you heard that special education students will be in your class?

2.   How did you feel about teaching special education students?

3.   What were your perceptions about coteaching?

4.   How did you feel when you were assigned to an inclusion class?

5.   What were your beliefs about special education students placed in the regular education class?

6.   Now that you are teaching in the inclusion setting do you feel the same way?

7.   Has your inclusion class roster changed or you were reassigned to another inclusion home-base during the school year?   Yes _____   No_____

8.   If yes to the above question how many times in one year?

9.   Is that at least once a year? Yes_____   No_____

10.   Do you feel that your pre-service college program prepared you to teach special education students?

11.   Do you and your coteacher collaborate on lesson plan?

12.   Do you feel that you have adequate time to plan and discuss student performance?

13.   Do you feel like you and your coteacher work as a team, planning and delivering the lesson?

14.   I understand that you are teaching at least five periods each day. Are you assigned the same coteaching throughout the day?

15.   Discuss any disadvantage(s) to coteaching?

16.   Discuss any advantage(s) to coteaching?

17.   Who decides how the objective will be taught and delivered?

18.   Grading test and classroom environment are those duties equally shared?

19. Do you feel that inclusion is supported by the school district?

20. Do you feel that you are given enough professional development training?

21. Do you find the professional development useful?

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

Date:_____

Gender: _____Male   _____Female

Age: _____25-35 _____36-45 _____46-55 _____56-65

Degree: _____ _____ _____ _____

Certification: _____ _____ _____ _____

● Years teaching in the public school setting
(Fill in) _____

● Total years teaching
(Fill in)_____

● Years teaching in an inclusion setting
(Fill in) _____

Appendix D: Sample Interview Transcript

Speaker 1:   Yeah, what was your perception when you heard that special education students would be in your class?

Speaker 2:   Due to the fact that I am a special education teacher, I was okay with it, knowing that's the population that I will be dealing with.

Speaker 1:   How did you feel about teaching special education students?

Speaker 2:   Excited.

Speaker 1:   Okay, that's fine. That's fine. Oh, okay.

Speaker 2:   The reason being, that our students require more. I enjoy modifying lessons and plans ...

Speaker 1:   You've got 23 questions here.

Speaker 2:   ... and challenging students.

Speaker 1:   What were your perceptions about coteaching? So, you came in when coteaching was already in.

Speaker 2:   Yes.

Speaker 1:   So, you were comfortable or ... I can't lead questions.

Speaker 2:   I was on the fence, I was in between, being that going from my own self-contained class to inclusion. It was a transition.

Speaker 1:   Okay. How do you feel when you were assigned to an inclusion class?

Speaker 2:   I didn't like it.

Speaker 1:   Okay.

Speaker 2:   I really didn't. I don't know if it was more of a territorial thing with me having my own classroom, my own self-contained class, versus, having to coteach with someone else and share that whole environment.

Speaker 1:   What were your beliefs about special education students placed in the regular education class? What were your beliefs?

Speaker 2:   What were my beliefs?

Speaker 1:   About placing a special education student in a regular ed class?

Speaker 2:   Questions arised in terms of why? Would the student be able to progress, function properly? So, I wasn't sure if it work or will work or not. I still have my reservations on it.

Speaker 1:   Now that you're teaching in the inclusion setting, do you feel the same way?

Speaker 2:   Yes. Absolutely.

Speaker 1:   Has your inclusion roster changed or were you reassigned to another inclusion home based during the school year? Answer's yes or no.

Speaker 2:   Yes.

Speaker 1:   All right. If yes to the above question, how many times in one year?

Speaker 2:   Twice.

Speaker 1:   Is that at least once a year it happens? Does it happen every year to you, pretty much?

Speaker 2:   Yes.

Speaker 1:   Okay. Do you feel that your pre-service college program prepared you to teach special education students?

Speaker 2:   Yes.

Speaker 1:   Do you and your coteacher collaborate on lesson plans?

Speaker 2:   Sometimes, not all.

Speaker 1:   Do you feel that you have adequate time to plan and discuss student performance?

Speaker 2:   No.

Speaker 1:   Do you feel like you and your coteacher work as a team, planning and delivering the lesson?

Speaker 2:   No.

Speaker 1:   I understand that you are teaching at least five periods a day. Are you assigned the same coteacher throughout the day?

Speaker 2:   No.

Speaker 1:   Discuss any disadvantage to coteaching?

Speaker 2:   Disadvantages to coteaching. Besides the different teaching styles, just like we have different learning styles, trying to find a common planning time, which is a big issue. Sometimes you deal with one teacher thinking they're the lead teacher, as opposed to a coteacher, which is a difference.

Speaker 1:   Discuss any advantages to coteaching.

Speaker 2:   Advantages would be, when done correctly, coteaching and collaboration can be effective.

Speaker 1:   Who decides how the objective will be taught and delivered?

Speaker 2:   It should be both teachers, but sometimes it's the general ed teacher.

Speaker 1:   [inaudible 00:04:14]. Grading tests and classroom environment, are those duties equally shared?

Speaker 2:   Yes, in my setting.

Speaker 1:   Do you feel that inclusion is supported by the school district?

Speaker 2:   No.

Speaker 1:   Do you feel that you're giving enough professional development training?

Speaker 2:   Absolutely not.

Speaker 1:   Do you find the professional development useful? The ones that you did receive.

Speaker 2:   That we have received, yes.