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Middle School Teacher Perceptions and Implementation of Special Education Coteaching

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Walden University

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Leanne M. H. Ratcliff

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Middle School Teacher Perceptions and Implementation of Special Education Coteaching
Practices

by

Leanne M. H. Ratcliff

MEd, James Madison University, 2006

BS, James Madison University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Special Education

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Abstract

Coteaching is a mandated practice in which students with disabilities are educated in the general education setting among their peers, but it often is not effectively implemented. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of both middle school general education and special education teacher relative to coteaching parity and barriers to effective coteaching practices. Friend and Cook's conceptual framework of collaboration, outlining the importance of understanding roles when working in teams, supported the purpose and design of this study. The research questions were designed to investigate the extent to which the general and special education teachers share coteaching responsibilities and implementation of coteaching practices. Eleven general and special education teachers participated in interviews and observations. Teachers were selected through convenience sampling from a large school district in the Southeastern United States. Data were analyzed with thematic coding and open coding. General education teachers were perceived as clearly dominating lesson planning and delivery during interviews and observations. Common perceived barriers to effective coteaching included low expectations of the special education teacher, limited coplanning time, inadequate training, large class sizes, student behaviors, and issues with special education teacher presence. The results of this study can promote positive social change by helping improve the coteaching environment for teachers and help administrators make informed decisions that will facilitate more effective coteaching decisions.

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Dedication

For Max. My drive for personal betterment began with the idea of you and is now because of you.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background.....	2
Problem Statement.....	4
Purpose of the Study.....	6
Research Questions.....	7
Conceptual Framework.....	7
Nature of the Study.....	8
Definitions.....	10
Assumptions.....	11
Scope and Delimitations.....	12
Limitations.....	13
Significance.....	13
Summary.....	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	15
Literature Search Strategy.....	15
Literature Review Regarding Conceptual Framework.....	16
Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts.....	17
Planning Time.....	18
Professional Development.....	20
Need for Coteacher Training.....	20

Implementation of Initiatives	22
Administrative Support.....	23
Sharing Responsibilities.....	24
Importance of Interpersonal Relationships	25
Teacher Perceptions on Coteaching.....	27
Student Perceptions on Coteaching	27
Coteaching for Preservice Teachers.....	28
Summary and Conclusions	29
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	31
Research Design and Rationale	31
Research Questions.....	31
Role of the Researcher	33
Methodology.....	35
Participation Selection Logic.....	35
Instrumentation	37
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	39
Data Analysis Plan.....	41
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	42
Credibility	42
Transferability.....	43
Dependability	43
Confirmability.....	44

Ethical Procedures	44
Treatment of Human Participants	44
Summary	46
Chapter 4: Results	48
Setting	49
Participant Demographics	49
Data Collection	50
Participant Specifics	50
Interviews	52
Observations	53
Data Analysis	55
Interviews	55
Observations	56
Results	57
Research Question 1: Implementation	58
Research Question 2: Planning and Sharing Responsibilities	66
Research Question 3 : Barriers to Coteaching	69
Evidence of Trustworthiness	74
Credibility	74
Transferability	74
Dependability	75
Confirmability	75

Summary	76
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	78
Interpretation of the Findings.....	79
Confirming and Extending Knowledge	79
Lack of Planning and Training	79
Parity of Instruction	80
Extending Discipline Knowledge	81
Conceptual Framework.....	82
Parity, Routines, and Feedback.....	83
Limitations of the Study.....	84
Recommendations.....	86
Implications.....	88
Conclusion	89
References.....	90
Appendix A: Interview Questions	104
Appendix B: Observation Protocol.....	105

List of Tables

Table 1. Interview Question Alignment to Framework	38
Table 2. Interview Question Alignment to Research Questions.....	38
Table 3. Research Questions and Data Collection Tools.....	39
Table 4. Participant Number and Certification	51
Table 5. Participant Number and Study Participation	52
Table 6. Interview Codes and Themes.....	57
Table 7. Observation Codes and Themes	58
Table 8. Interview Analysis–Active Coteaching	59
Table 9. Lead Teacher Tallies.....	62
Table 10. Parity of Teacher Leading.....	63
Table 11. Parity Observations.....	64
Table 12. Planning for a Cotaught Lesson.....	67
Table 13. Interview Analysis—Planning.....	68
Table 14. Barriers to Coteaching	71
Table 15. Comparing Interview and Observation Data	87

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Teachers of children with special needs are challenged to instruct their students in their least restrictive environment and provide equal access to the general education curriculum (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 2004; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). A push for students with disabilities to be educated in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom with their typically functioning peers has led to the implementation of coteaching (Conderman, 2011). In a cotaught classroom, a general education teacher and special education teacher provide instruction in the same setting to a class of students with and without disabilities. The purpose of this study was to gain insight into both middle school general education and special education teachers' perceptions on coteaching, particularly their perceptions on the different models of coteaching and the implementation of these models in their settings. Coteaching can have many positive effects on the education of a child with a disability (Graziano & Navarette, 2012; Tremblay, 2013). In this study, I examined current middle school teachers' perceptions on coteaching and investigated the extent to which they are participating in coteaching planning and classroom responsibilities. The findings from this study may help to better understand perceptions of middle school coteaching models from those currently working in a cotaught classroom and add to the literature and education practices regarding middle school students with disabilities. In subsequent sections, there are outlines of the background, problem, and purpose of the study. Definitions are provided to better understand key terms important to research.

Background

A wide array of research has been conducted on coteaching (Brown, Howerter, & Morgan, 2013; Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013). Much of this research examines coteaching as a method to educate students with disabilities in the general education setting (Conderman, 2013; Kamens, Susko, & Elliot, 2013). Positive effects upon students and teachers participating in coteaching have been documented, including an improvement in academic performance and an increase in student self-esteem (Conderman, 2011; Conderman & Hedin, 2012). Elements of effective coteaching include coplanning, communication, and equal participation from team members (Brown et al., 2013; Ashton, 2014). These elements are discussed in further detail in the following section. Six different models of co-teaching are widely defined; however the most effective models are not always implemented for various reasons (Graziano & Navarette, 2012; Tremblay, 2013). Conderman (2011) defines the six models of coteaching:

- One Teach/One Observe, with only one teacher leading class instruction while the other collects data;
- One Teach/One Assist, with one teacher leading instruction and the other assisting as needed around the classroom;
- Station Teaching, where stations are set up with each teacher leading a stations and other stations are completed independently;
- Parallel Teaching, where the class is split into two groups and each teacher teachers a group;

- Alternative Teaching, with one teacher leading class instruction while the other teacher pulls a small group and differentiates instructions as needed; and
- Team Teaching, in which both the general education teacher and special education teacher share equally in instructing the students.

Barriers are often faced by coteachers, including lack of common planning time, lack of shared vision amongst colleagues, an unequal participation in planning, delivery of instruction, and assessment (Fenty & McDuffie-Landrum, 2011). A lack of proper training for both the special education and general education teacher is cited as an obstacle commonly in the way of effectively implementing coteaching (Nierengarten, 2013; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). Appropriate training is necessary for making teachers aware of which models of coteaching are most effective and the elements needed to provide an environment in which positive outcomes, including academic and emotional gains for students, are fostered. The literature review in Chapter 2 provides an in depth look into each of these and other barriers.

Despite much research examining coteaching, a greater amount of research is needed to understand which models are currently in place and how both the general education and special education teachers perceive current implementation. Results from this study of teacher perceptions can be utilized to create appropriate training opportunities for preservice teachers, those currently coteaching, and educational leaders. Interviewing and observing coteaching participants will help shape the information regarding current barriers that still exist for coteachers and the elements of coteaching that are yielding positive outcomes that needs to be provided for training new coteaching

pairs or for helping those who have already been working on a coteaching team. The education field changes daily, and updated research can provide a current picture of models and elements occurring or lacking in the coteaching setting.

Problem Statement

The coteaching model has become a mandated way to educate students with disabilities in the general education setting. The problem is a lack of effective implementation of coteaching practices in schools throughout the United States (Nichols, Dowdy, & Nichols, 2010; Nierengarten, 2013; Pugach & Winn, 2011). While coteaching has been shown to benefit both the teachers and students involved (Conderman 2011; Graziano & Navarette, 2012; Tremblay, 2013), best practices and implementation are not always followed by both general and special education teachers (Ashton, 2014 Pugach & Winn 2011). Thus, there is a need to examine how coteaching is being implemented and teachers' perceptions and beliefs about coteaching practices relative to implementation. While literature exists that provides perceptions of special education teachers regarding different aspects of coteaching, there is very little information provided by the general education teacher, who is equally as important to the coteaching process (Ashton, 2014; Conderman 2011; Graziano & Navarette, 2012; Nichols et al., 2010; Nierengarten, 2013; Pugach & Winn, 2011; Tremblay, 2013). Both special education and general education teachers need to be involved when implementing coteaching models to instruct students with disabilities and their typically functioning peers. Thus, I focused my research on the perceptions of coteaching from both middle school special education and general

education teachers, with the intention of examining their insights on coteaching and implementation of various coteaching models in their setting.

Effective coteaching exists when positive student outcomes such as academic, emotional, and social gains are seen in and out of the educational setting. Students are not the only ones benefitting from coteaching, as the coteachers themselves can also experience positive outcomes through productive professional relationships with their colleagues (Petrick, 2014). While the benefits are well documented, effective coteaching is not always common practice.

Several reasons for the lack of effective implementation of coteaching in the inclusion setting have been presented in the literature. Nationwide, there is a lack of common planning time provided during a school day for both teachers to work together, preparing for their shared class assessments (Brown et al., 2013; Conderman & Hedin, 2013; Fenty & McDuffi-Landrum, 2011). Coplanning time allows for teachers to compare strategies and ask each other questions, allowing for more effective instruction (Lindeman & Magiera, 2014). In addition, effective professional development opportunities that are not provided to both coteachers may prevent the team from understanding how to implement effective coteaching practices (Bronson & Dentith, 2014; Graziano & Navarette, 2012; Nierengarten, 2013).

Furthermore, when one member of the coteaching team assumes the primary responsibility for instruction, assessing, and grading, a weak instructional paradigm occurs. King-Sears, Brawand, Jenkins, and Preston-Smith (2014) showed in a recent study that general education teachers lead instruction more than two thirds of the

observed instructional time in a coteaching classroom. This clear dominance of the general education teacher in the coteaching setting, lack of effective training, and absence of common planning time are all inadequacies in special education teaching practice. Thus, coteaching is an important topic for future research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to examine both general and special education middle school teachers' implementation of coteaching practices and investigate teachers' perceptions and beliefs that may be influencing effective implementation. Coteaching is defined as a setting in which both a special education teacher and a general education teacher share the responsibilities of instructing and assessing a group of students (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010; Tremblay, 2013). Coteaching can have a positive effect on student achievement outcomes, yet a discrepancy between theory and practice exists, primarily in proper implementation (Ashton 2014; Bronson & Dentith, 2014; Graziano & Navarette, 2012; Tremblay, 2013). Due to these issues, the focus of the study was on the extent to which each teacher (i.e., special education and general education) participates in the coteaching process, perceptions on the different models of coteaching, and their experiences with coplanning and coteacher training. This study is unique in that I sought to understand teacher perceptions of coteaching models and practices in their current settings as well as observe implementation of coteaching for the purpose of determining effective strategies to support effective implementation of coteaching practices. Particularly, I wanted to ensure

the perceptions are shared from both sides of the coteaching pair by including the general education teacher in my study.

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent do middle school teachers, both special education and general education, implement coteaching practices?

RQ2: To what extent do middle school teachers on a coteaching team plan and share classroom responsibilities for coteaching practices?

RQ3: What perceived barriers exist for both special education and general education teachers when implementing coteaching?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for my study is based on Friend and Cook's (2007) concept of collaboration. Friend and Cook (2007) defined collaboration as "a style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal" (p. 7). This framework was appropriate for this study because I designed the research questions to find answers related to the collaboration of the special education and general education teacher on a coteaching team.

Barriers exist that limit how effective coteaching is for the academic and social success of special education students (Fenty & McDuffie-Landrum, 2011; Graziano & Navarette, 2012; Tremblay, 2013). RQ1 and RQ2, which I intended to help determine the extent to which coteachers are sharing classroom responsibilities and implementing coteaching practices, were informed by Friend and Cook's (2007) framework. Friend and

Cook noted that parity is important for collaboration between colleagues. Coteachers should feel they are equals in all aspects of the coteaching process. Providing feedback is also highlighted in Friend and Cook's conceptual framework of collaboration. This informs each research question by ensuring that both the general education and special education teacher provide feedback on the barriers they have encountered when implementing coteaching in their settings. Capturing the perceptions of coteaching models and their implementation from both the general education and special education teacher provided the distinct perspectives of the two parties who have direct interaction and are engaged in shared decision making.

The concepts of equal participation from coteachers and shared decision-making are critical to the understanding of coteaching models. Coteachers should be sharing equally in their teaching duties. While different models of coteaching may require more from a specific teacher as far as delivering instruction, equal participation in planning should occur. I sought data for this study from both partners in the coteaching teams in order to provide a more complete picture. The common goal described in Friend and Cook's (2007) framework is to create an environment conducive to learning and to foster gains from all students involved.

Nature of the Study

For this qualitative study I utilized a descriptive case study approach to gather and analyze data. I chose the qualitative design because it best addressed the research questions. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voeglte (2010) noted that case studies give up-close and deep understanding of the topic being researched. Gaining insight into teacher

perceptions allowed me to better understand the elements of effective coteaching models and appropriate implementation. Yin (2014) noted the importance of using case studies for program evaluation and defined a case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context” (p. 16). Taking what I learned from a review of literature regarding the gap between promising outcomes of coteaching and program implementation, a case study in a local school district was appropriate to understand barriers faced in coteaching and who is actively planning and teaching in the cotaught classroom. The results may allow for educational leaders to make decisions that promote positive change in cotaught classrooms.

Information from those involved in classroom planning and the direct instruction and assessment of the special education students and their peers is vital to understanding the coteaching phenomenon. The key data investigated involved the participants’ perceptions of coteaching, specifically the different models available and how they are implemented in their educational settings. I collected data through individual interviews with general education and special education teachers participating on a coteaching team to provide insight into their perceptions of effective coteaching models and implementation in their current setting. I also collected data through classroom observations to study the extent to which teachers were participating in the implementation of coteaching practices. Further explanations of participant selection and the interview process are outlined in the Research Design and Rationale section. Data from interviews were analyzed and coded to find common themes.

Definitions

Coteaching: A setting in which both a special education teacher and a general education teacher share the responsibilities for instructing and assessing a group of students (Tremblay, 2013).

Coplanning: Time set aside for the general education and special education teacher to equally contribute to determining the methods, resources, types of assessment, and accommodations and/or modifications for students with special needs in their shared classroom setting (Conderman, 2011).

Coassessing: Both teachers on the coteaching team collecting and analyzing student data from formal and informal assessment. Teachers make decisions together regarding their instruction and student progress, determining what parts of lessons have been working to promote positive academic and behavioral results (Conderman, 2011).

One teach/one observe: A model of coteaching in which one teacher collects data from particular groups of students or from the other teacher to inform future planning, while the other teacher leads the instruction for the class (Conderman, 2011).

One teach/one assist: A model of coteaching in which one teacher walks around the room assisting students through clarification of directions, answering questions, redirecting inappropriate behavior, or going over assignments, while the other teacher leads the instruction for the class (Conderman, 2011).

Station teaching: A model of coteaching in which the classroom environment consists of different learning stations. Each teacher leads one of the stations as groups of

students rotate through them. The remaining stations will be completed independently by the students (Conderman, 2011).

Parallel teaching: A model of coteaching in which the classroom is divided into two groups of students. Using the same lesson plans, each teacher actively instructs a group of students (Conderman, 2011).

Alternative teaching: A model of coteaching in which one teacher instructs a large group of the class. The other teacher works with a small group who may have been absent or who are in need accelerated material. The smaller group can receive pre- or reteaching or enrichment instruction for advanced learners (Conderman, 2011).

Team teaching: A model of coteaching in which the special education and general education teacher participate equally in the instruction of all students (Conderman, 2011).

Assumptions

1. Teachers are aware of different models of coteaching.
2. Both the general education and special education teacher are actively participating in their selected model of coteaching.
3. Teachers understand what positive outcomes are for students in their cotaught setting.
4. Participants of the study are open and honest when responding to interview questions.
5. Observations are a good representation of how delivery of instruction is occurring throughout the school year.

The above assumptions allowed for valid results when analyzing the data collected through the study.

Scope and Delimitations

The research problem involved issues and barriers that are hindering the effectiveness of coteaching, despite it being proven to be an effective way of educating students with special needs in the general education setting. The main scope was the effectiveness of coteaching as seen through the perceptions of special education and general education teachers in the inclusion setting. I sought this data to possibly create professional development opportunities for new coteachers and current coteaching pairs.

Participants in this study were teachers in the middle school setting, Grades 6–8. Participants were limited to those who were currently an active participant of a coteaching team, including both the general education and special education teacher. Participants were selected from one school district in the Southeastern United States. Potential transferability for the results of this study can be in creating training for preservice special education and general education teachers planning to work in a middle school setting. These teachers will likely encounter coteaching settings when they enter the work field. Similarly, professional developments created from study results can be used to educate current teachers and educational leaders in the middle school setting. Data collected from this study may also inform future research in the areas of middle school education, specifically that of coteaching. Reasonable measures can be taken to address limitations.

Limitations

Limitations of this study may be in the transferability of findings. Middle schools that differ in setting and demographics than the one from which participants were selected may not be able to use findings to benefit their own setting. While the district used for the study population is large and features a diverse student demographic, other settings will be dissimilar. For example, one setting may be understaffed and underfunded, unable to provide common planning and assessment time for coteaching pairs. Honesty of participants may also limit dependable findings.

Significance

Internationally, the practice of coteaching remains a major focus in the field of special education (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). Special educators are expected to enter the workforce prepared with coteaching skills (Conderman et al., 2013). The information collected from this study will lead to insight on the perceptions of both general education and special education teachers on the topic of coteaching. Perceptions include elements believed to be crucial to successful implementation of coplanning and various models of coteaching from personal experiences. Professional development opportunities for coteaching for special education teachers, general education teachers, administrators, and district leaders could be adjusted as a result of the qualitative research. These professional developments may lead to effective coteaching teams using the most appropriate coteaching models for their settings and best practices to produce positive gains in their students' social experiences and academics.

Summary

In summary, a problem exists in coteaching. While literature provides effective ways to educate students with disabilities in the general education setting, many barriers exist to implementing coteaching with fidelity (Fenty & McDuffie-Landrum, 2011; Graziano & Navarette, 2012; Tremblay, 2013). I took a closer look into present day coteaching and the perceptions of those directly involved. Special education teachers and general education teachers provided a snapshot into current coteaching models being used and different barriers that still exist through interviews and observations of coteaching implementation. Specifically, I analyzed middle school teacher's perceptions that I gathered through interviews and observations.

Chapter 2 provides a synopsis of literature regarding coteaching as a widely used practice to educate students with disabilities in the general education setting. Through an initial review of the literature, various themes arose, highlighting both the positives and negatives of coteaching. Through coding these themes and gathering further literature to add to the review, I completed an exhaustive review of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A review of the literature provides a deeper understanding of coteaching and the barriers that currently exist to creating a truly effective way of educating students with disabilities in the general education setting among their typically functioning peers. Unfortunately, best practices are not always being followed (Ashton, 2014; Pugach & Winn, 2011). This study of the perceptions of both the general education and special education teacher provided a look at how teachers view different models and their implementation. These data pieces may also aid in creating appropriate professional developments and teacher trainings. For an initial search into the literature, the search terms *coteaching*, *special education*, *inclusion*, and *middle school special education* were helpful in providing a basis to understanding the literature that currently exists. From the start of reviewing current and historical research, themes began to stand out in the area of middle school coteaching.

Literature Search Strategy

The majority of literature was found through digital search engines provided through Walden University's online library. ERIC, Education Research Complete, SAGE Premier, dissertations, and theses were vital in locating appropriate literature. During database searches, only peer-reviewed entries from professional journals were utilized.

While *coteaching* and *special education* brought about numerous results, I narrowed search terms as different themes were found during a review of literature. For example, effective coplanning was a consistent theme while reviewing my initial batch of

literature finds. I would then use the term *coplanning* to narrow results to those researchers who zeroed in on coplanning issues and techniques.

Another strategy was to use terms seen in my research questions to find results in the Walden University Library educational databases. Terms such as *middle school*, *perceptions*, *general education*, and *special education teacher* were added to broader terms to narrow results and find journals and studies that might be closely related to my own. Abstracts of results were very helpful in determining which entries to discard and which to keep for further review and possible use in the literature review.

Literature Review Regarding Conceptual Framework

Friend and Cook's (2007) conceptual framework of collaboration supported research design decisions. While coteaching is not a synonym for collaboration, "coteaching, like consultation or team decision making, is an activity that teachers may choose to engage in while using a collaborative style of interaction" (Friend & Cook, 2007, p. 129). Friend and Cook stated that coteaching becomes most effective when strong collaboration occurs between coteaching pairs. Three main contracts of this theory that must be discussed during collaboration to facilitate effective coteaching are outlined by Friend and Cook (2007) as balancing parity signals, outlining and understanding classroom routines, and providing feedback that informs decision-making in the classroom.

While different models of coteaching may lead to an unequal delivery of instruction for members of the coteaching team, Friend and Cook (2007), stress the importance of equal collaboration. Thus, parity signals are important, ensuring the

general education and special education teachers are seen as equals during instructional planning. Part of the planning process includes establishing classroom routines and how those plans will be implemented during direct and indirect instruction. Being able to provide feedback to your coteaching partner when planning for lessons is important in forming positive relationships and ensuring teams are adjusting instruction based on the needs of their shared classroom.

Throughout a review of literature on coteaching practices, collaboration was articulated frequently. Due to the nature of coteaching, collaboration must occur not only initially, but also throughout the life of the coteaching relationship. A team cannot coplan, coassess, coconstruct, coreflect, and so forth, without collaboration. My study benefited from Friend and Cook's (2007) concept of collaboration. Collecting perceptions from both the general and special education teachers yielded many results revolving around the ability of one or both teachers to collaborate effectively during coteaching implementation. Also, through the research I sought to understand perceptions of different coteaching models. Different models of coteaching require varying levels of collaboration to use. Collaboration is arguably the most important aspect of effective coteaching for maintaining a positive coteaching relationship.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

Based on an exhaustive review of the current literature, the following seven themes occurred frequently: (a) a lack of common planning time, (b) inadequate training for special education and general education teachers, (c) a need for administrative support of coteaching practices, (d) dominance of the general education teacher, (e) the

importance of a positive relationship between the general education and special education teacher, (f) perceptions from the special education teacher and students in the cotaught classroom, and (g) the use of coteaching when instructing preservice teachers. This review of literature did not mean I assumed these common barriers to coteaching existed in the setting in which I conducted my research, but it provided guidance on creating appropriate research questions and corresponding interview questions to see if similar themes arose in the local setting. Gaining insight from both the general education teacher and special education teacher on models of coteaching and implementation in their current setting aids in understanding the barriers that exist in the local setting. This information can be used in a number of ways to promote positive change from informing educational leadership to creating appropriate professional development opportunities to work towards overcoming these barriers.

Planning Time

Coteaching is an important topic for those in the field of special education to review, as it is a more effective way of teaching students, yielding positive results in academics and attendance (Devlin-Scherer, & Sardone, 2013; Tremblay, 2013). A review of current literature covered barriers faced by teachers when attempting to put effective coteaching into action. A repeated theme discussed was the need for common planning time with the general education and special education teacher. Effective coteaching requires time management skills and detailed planning from both members of the team (Nierengarten, 2013). Each member of the coteaching team provides an individual set of skills to contribute to the coteaching process (Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, & Patterson, 2017).

Pratt et al. (2017) outlined a framework that coteachers can follow, defining targeted instruction, the specific model of coteaching to be used, and specifics for which member of the coteaching team is responsible for each aspect of delivery, providing specific materials, and assessing student performance.

When planning together, the general education teacher brings knowledge of content, while the special education teacher can ensure that during instruction, suitable accommodations and modifications are being provided to the appropriate students (Kamens et al., 2013). In a study involving a survey of 400 coteachers, Strogilos, Stefanidis, and Tragoulia (2016) found that teachers expressed the time they are given to plan with their coteacher was insufficient. Administrators and leadership staff should ensure coteaching pairs share a time for planning during the school day (Aliakbari & Nejad, 2013; Brown et al., 2013; Johnson & Brumback, 2013; Seymour & Seymour, 2013).

In a 2007 metasynthesis of 32 qualitative studies, the theme of coplanning time as a need for effective coteaching arose repeatedly (Scruggs, Mastopierti, & McDuffie, 2010). Researchers have indicated examples of the requirements that go into coteaching, showing the depth of information needed in a coteaching environment, as well as the importance of time to debrief from a day's lesson (Kerins & Tiernan, 2014; Lindeman & Magiera, 2014; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). In a study on collaborative planning, Rimpola (2014) showed that coteaching pairs were only planning between 30 and 60 minutes per week, displaying a need for planning time to be built into a school's master schedule. The majority of observed coteaching pairs in a particular study participated in a

one-teach, one-assist model and believed this was due to the small amounts of time spent preplanning for lessons (Conderman & Hedin, 2012). The two members of each coteaching pair can provide a first-hand perspective of current student needs. Teachers and educational leadership perceive common planning time as a barrier to effective coteaching (Legutko, 2015; Prizeman, 2015; Sileo & Van Garderen, 2010).

Professional Development

Professional Development is a way to increase teachers' knowledge in a given area and keep them abreast in the ever-changing field of education (Holm & Kajander, 2015; Velardi, Folta, Rickard, & Kuehn, 2015). Providing an opportunity for teachers to have access to new initiatives and procedures is crucial in building knowledge among teachers, which in turn affects the growth of students (Brown & Militello, 2016). Miller and Oh's (2013) research on professional development opportunities for coteachers noted that only approximately half of special education and general education teachers who were surveyed had received any professional development in the area of coteaching. While the special education teachers reported receiving their information in a variety of ways, including publications and observations, the vast majority of general education teachers received information in similar forms (Miller & Oh, 2013).

Need for Coteacher Training

Proper training for coteachers before a new school year begins results in improved coteaching experiences for coteaching teams (Frey & Kaff, 2014; Tzivinikou, 2015). Administrators need to ensure that appropriate and adequate training is available, so that their staff has the information they need prior to entering the classroom (Murawski &

Bernhardt, 2016). In addition to initial training, coteaching provides a situation lending itself to ongoing professional development between the teacher pair and leadership (Seymour & Seymour, 2013; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). Administration and leadership are in the position to ensure ongoing guidance and professional development is available to their staff.

The special education and general education teacher are not the only members of the educational team who need appropriate training. Administration needs to be up to speed on coteaching models and practices (Bronson & Dentith, 2014; Nierengarten, 2013). Kamens et al. (2013) found that many administrators who did receive coteaching training had to seek out the training instead of it being automatically provided by their school district. Administrators should be able to show an understanding of coteaching models and what is necessary to facilitate effective coteaching in their educational setting.

Abu-Hamour and Muhaida (2013) found that special education teachers were often against coteaching in the inclusive classroom due to improper training of general education teachers on how to work with students with special needs. Lack of training for both members of the coteaching team can lead to ineffective coteaching implementation (Gehrke, Cocchiarella, Harris, & Puckett, 2014; Nishimura, 2014). It is important to provide training to both the special education and general education teachers for coteaching practices (Shaffer & Thomas Brown, 2015). Many teachers feel the majority of their training happens from their experience while on the job (Kamens et al., 2013). While this is a good way for teachers to learn which strategies can be effective in their

setting, educators need to be proactive in providing training prior to teachers entering into their coteaching experience. If coteachers do not agree on how to teach together effectively, they will be left to learn through trial and error (Lindeman & Magiera, 2014).

Pancsofar and Petroff (2013) studied coteachers' attitudes towards the professional development opportunities they had been presented. Findings exhibited that teachers were much more confident going into the classroom when they first received training; teachers had a higher interest in using coteaching as a means of teaching special education students in an inclusive setting (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013). The use of technology to provide online training may be a cheaper and still effective option for school districts. Ploessl and Rock (2014) observed teachers before and after online training and found an increase in coteaching models being used after coteaching pairs participated in the provided professional development.

Implementation of Initiatives

The field of education is one that will always be transforming as new procedures are created and best practices are modified. However, a challenge exists in implementing and supporting new initiatives (Center, 2004). Leadership will face many challenges when implementing initiatives in the classroom, including finding time to introduce and train teachers, affording appropriate resources, generating initial interest, and keeping teachers on board (Baines, Blatchford, & Webster, 2015; Thomas, 2013). Sustaining new practices is difficult due to the need for knowledgeable staff and leadership, shared vision, and thoughtful planning (Center, 2004). Administrators and leaders often lack appropriate training on effective coteaching (Kamens et al., 2013). The level of

knowledge the leadership in schools has on educating students with disabilities can have a positive impact on special education practice (Horrocks, White, & Roberts, 2008; Praisner, 2003). Administrators must be up for the challenges of supporting their coteaching teams.

Administrative Support

Barriers such as a need for common planning time and inadequate training, are issues that can be addressed by the administrative and leadership teams within schools. Researchers have shown that the needs of coteachers are linked to administrative support (Andrews & Brown, 2015; Scruggs et al., 2007; Seymour & Seymour, 2013). Leaders within the school must provide the tools and resources necessary for effective coteaching (Brown et al., 2013). One explanation for poor support from leaders is a lack of training available to administrators (Kamens et al., 2013). A need exists for co-teaching professional developments to be attended by administration along with coteaching pairs. School leadership has the power to put school wide policies into place to support effective coteaching (Prizeman, 2015; Schwab, Holzinger, Krammer, Gebhardt, & Hessels, 2015). Using knowledge gained through learning opportunities may lead to necessary school changes.

One way that administration and leadership can aide co-teaching teams is through feedback (Johnson & Brumback, 2013). For example, both formal and informal observations can be completed by administrators as a way to provide feedback for current coteaching teams (Johnson & Brumback, 2013). Along with professional developments, leadership can use observations when determining which practices are working the best

in their environment. Administration should have potential coteachers observe other teams that the school leadership feels are effective (Johnson & Brumback, 2013). In addition, administrators can learn from their staff. Andrews and Brown (2015) examined a discrepancy, through research, between what special educators perceive as necessary support from administration and the backing they were actually receiving. Some educators experience little to no feedback or follow up from administration after the implementation of coteaching (Isherwood, Barger-Anderson, 2008). Constructive feedback from leadership can lead to a more supportive work environment.

Sharing Responsibilities

When two professionals are in one room, it makes sense that the team would want to utilize the expertise of one another. In a coteaching team, the general education teacher has a wealth of knowledge specific to the academics being delivered, while the special education teacher has been trained on differentiating instruction to fit individualized needs (Pratt et al., 2016; Sileo, 2011; Weiss, Pellegrino, Regan, & Mann, 2015). Parity is of utmost importance when working in a cotaught team. Teachers should be sharing equally in the delivery of instruction, as this model has been shown to increase student performance scores (Yopp, Ellis, Bonsangue, Duarte, & Meza, 2014). Along with delivery of instruction, teachers need to share in the other aspects of coteaching, including planning, managing behavior, progress monitoring, and assessing students understanding (Ashton, 2014; Brown et al., 2013; Cobb & Sharma, 2015).

Coteachers need to be able to trust and rely on each other throughout the school year. Unfortunately, a major issue in current coteaching classrooms is that of general

education teacher dominance (Ashton, 2014; Berry & Gravelle, 2013; Seymour & Seymour, 2013). This barrier is not a new one, as researchers have historically observed the issue of unequal participation in coteaching (Embury & Koeger, 2012; Pugach & Winn, 2011; Scruggs et al., 2007). While one-teach, one-assist is a defined coteaching model, it underutilizes the expertise of the assisting teacher. Researchers have shown that the one-teach, one-assist model is most commonly seen in classrooms (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014; Scruggs et al., 2005; Seymour & Seymour, 2013). Coteaching pairs need to be aware of the student success outcomes for the different models of coteaching.

While one-teach, one-assist has been the most commonly used model of coteaching, team-teaching is the most successful when looking at student achievement (Yopp et al., 2014). King-Sears et al. (2014) studied the perceptions of students in cotaught classrooms and found that students enjoy having two teachers in their classroom and preferred both teachers delivering the course content. Teachers also state that they enjoy co-teaching and have had positive experiences over-all (Legutko, 2015). With all parties enjoying the experience and team-teaching proving to have positive results, as opposed to a one-teach, one-assist model, coteaching pairs need to use their time in the classroom and have their areas of expertise utilized equally during all parts of the coteaching process.

Importance of Interpersonal Relationships

Coteachers will be spending a great deal of time together. As with any type of relationship, personalities need to be compatible (Simpson, Thurston, & James, 2014). Coteaching relationships have been compared to marriages, where challenges arise that

must be worked through together as a couple (Howard & Potts, 2009; Sileo, 2011; Weiss et al., 2015). In a working environment, it can be difficult for employees to stay motivated (Muscalu & Ciacan, 2016; Palma, 2016). People who maintain positive relationships in their professional lives have an increase motivation to work (Jowett et al., 2017).

A struggle exists in finding and maintaining effective coteaching relationships (Friend et al., 2010; Murawski & Dieker, 2008). While communication is an important piece of coteaching, aiding in addressing the needs of students in the cotaught classroom (Brown et al., 2013), coteachers sometimes lack this skill, leading to their coteaching not impacting students to a higher degree (Coderman, Johnston, Rodriguez, & Hartman, 2009). Coteachers must be honest and trust each other when providing critical feedback (Cobb & Sharma, 2015). Informing your coteacher when you feel a certain aspect of the lesson is inappropriate or when you think a teaching style should be adjusted, allows for appropriate decision making (Cobb & Sharma, 2015). Interpersonal skills such as communication, honesty, and trust can help build an effective coteaching environment in which pairs stay motivated throughout the coteaching process.

Through building personal relationships, coteachers can learn from each others' strengths and weaknesses. The general education and special education teachers bring certain skill sets from which the other can learn (Bucci & Trantham, 2014; Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013; Loertscher & Koechlin, 2015; Shaffer, Thomas-Brown, 2015). Specifically, general education teachers typically comprehend the core content and pacing of the class and special educators understand unique student needs, legal details of

the field, and focus on mastery instead of pacing (Friend, Embury, & Clarke, 2015). When coteachers' personalities and teaching styles are compatible they can provide effective collaboration and meaningful instruction for their students (Petrick, 2014). Administrators and educational leadership should take personalities and teaching styles into consideration when assigning coteaching pairs.

Teacher Perceptions on Coteaching

Feedback from those most directly involved in the coteaching process, the teachers and students, are a great resource for understanding how they perceive coteaching. Teachers show a high level of satisfaction with coteaching (Berry & Gravelle, 2013, L'anse, 1991; Legutko, 2015). The opportunity for constant reflection with someone may make teachers more open to experimenting with new teaching techniques (Vostal & Bostic, 2014). Teachers perceive that students also gain from the experience of having two teachers in the same classroom, building confidence, self-esteem, and preparing students with special needs for an inclusive life (Abu-Hamour & Muhaida, 2013).

Student Perceptions on Coteaching

Students have also expressed a positive experience of being taught in a cotaught classroom (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013; Conderman, 2011; King-Sears et al., 2014). Shogren et al. (2015) studied student perceptions of coteaching and found that students with special needs felt a sense of belonging and believed they were bullied less in inclusive settings. Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, and McCulley's (2012) similar research on student perceptions showed students with special needs enjoyed the opportunities to work

with their peers in cotaught classrooms. Teachers also perceive a decrease in negative student behaviors when coteaching is occurring (Hang & Rabren, 2009). The positive insights from both teachers and students are promising when continuing to improve effective co-teaching.

Coteaching for Preservice Teachers

A final common theme found when researching was the use of coteaching for pre-services general education and special education teachers. Students seeking to become teachers, when observing teaching, have been inspired to become a part of a coteaching team (Bennett & Fisch, 2013). Teachers wanting to become special education teachers were excited about the opportunity to work with general education teachers, sharing delivery of content (Conderman, Johnston, Hartman, & Kemp, 2014; Wilson & VanBerschot, 2014). Pre-service teachers were sometimes given the opportunity to complete their student teaching experience in a co-taught setting. These students felt it was a better way than traditional student teaching to understand how a classroom works, understand the dynamics of lesson planning, and implementing curriculum (Hogan & Daniell, 2015; Merk, Betz, & Mara, 2015; Patel & Kramer, 2013).

In Yopp et al.'s (2014) study of pre-service teachers who student taught in a cotaught classroom, it was noted that students felt like their time was being wasted. Students felt they were being treated as a classroom aide, instead of an equal teacher. These feelings were seen in prior research as how current classroom teachers feel with general education teacher dominance (Andrews & Brown, 2015). While unequal roles were noted perceptions of other pre-service teachers, they still observed positive

communication between coteachers and felt a strong appreciation for what special education teachers can bring to the team (Strieker, Gillis, & Zong, 2013). Pre-service teachers who were able to participate as part of a coteaching pair for student teaching were shown to be better prepared for building relationships with teachers and having a positive impact on student learning (Harris, Pollingue, Herrington, & Holmes, 2014; Tschida, Smith, & Fogarty, 2015). Participating in a cotaught setting as a method of teacher preparation and student teaching should be considered by pre-service teacher programs.

Summary and Conclusions

As federal mandates continue to require more opportunities for special education students to be educated in the general education classroom, coteaching is an important topic of study. After an extensive and exhaustive review of coteaching literature, many commonalities were seen across numerous pieces of research and articles. The seven most common themes were inadequate planning time, lack of appropriate training, a need for administrative support, overwhelming dominance of the general education teacher, the importance of interpersonal relationships, student and teacher perceptions, and the use of coteaching for pre-service teachers. Teachers and students have a positive view of coteaching and that coteaching has been an effective way of improving student academics and self-esteem. Despite ongoing concern of the barriers that exist in the coteaching process, many still exist and stifle a coteacher's experience. There is a lack of information on the perceptions of the general education teachers, as the majority of studies focus on the special education teacher.

The present study aides in filling this gap in the literature through gaining an insight into both members of the co-teaching pair. The study investigates perceptions on the different coteaching models defined in research and provides observational feedback from current cotaught classrooms. It also provides a current look at teacher perceptions on how they feel coteaching is being implemented in their current setting. It is important that this study obtains not only information collected from the special education teachers, but the general education teachers as well, since previous studies have neglected input from both sides of the coteaching pair. Current teachers and educational leadership will be able to utilize results from this study when creating a vision for their current coteaching settings and providing appropriate training opportunities.

The exhaustive review of research helped to create a study that sought to obtain perceptions of coteaching models and implementation of these models. Choosing a population of middle school coteachers allowed me to get appropriate perceptions of those with coteaching experience. Chapter three outlines my role as a researcher and methodology. It also describes how issues of trustworthiness were handled to provide a study free of bias and ethical concerns.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Multiple perceptions of coteaching can be accomplished by examining both the general and special education middle school teachers' views. The purpose of the study was to gain insight into this population of teachers' perceptions on different coteaching models and implementation of these models in their current educational settings as well as the extent to which each teacher was sharing in classroom responsibilities. Coteaching has been shown to have positive academic and social effects for students; however, a problem exists with implementing the practice with fidelity (Ashton 2014; Bronson & Dentith, 2014; Graziano & Navarette, 2012; Tremblay, 2013). This study used findings to determine effective strategies in order to solve problems occurring in various coteaching settings. One use of analysis of findings may be to create effective training opportunities for both teachers in training, those currently in a coteaching setting, along with educational leaders in charge of assigning coteaching pairs and creating master schedules.

The following chapter details my research of teacher perceptions of coteaching models and implementation. My role as a researcher is outlined. I also address how any biases or ethical issues were addressed. In regard to methodology, I focus on how participants were chosen, how data was collected, and the manner in which data was analyzed.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent do middle school teachers, both special education and general education, implement coteaching practices?

RQ2: To what extent do middle school teachers on a coteaching team plan and share classroom responsibilities for coteaching practices?

RQ3: What perceived barriers exist for both special education and general education teachers when implementing coteaching?

When determining which method of study to conduct, I followed the recommendations outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), who suggested that a study and research questions should be of interest to the researcher. I have worked as a coteacher in both the role of a general and special educator. I have been in situations where coteaching was a useful tool for educating in an inclusive environment, and I have been in and observed situations where staff were underutilized and implementation was ineffective. I wanted to learn more about the perceptions of coteachers regarding coteaching models and how they are implemented. By choosing a middle school population, I was removed from those participating, as I serve in a special education leadership role at the high school level. This level of separation ensured that I would not affect results either through personal biases or by having an authoritative role over the participants. The population I chose was easily accessible as all participants work within my school district.

I conducted a descriptive case study. A case study examines a particular setting, subject, document, or event (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Yazan, 2015). Specifically, a descriptive case study seeks to describe the phenomena occurring in the data (Yin, 2014). This study describes the phenomena of coteaching in depth; in it I sought to find the extent to which each teacher implements coteaching practices, shares classroom responsibilities, and determines perceived barriers. I interviewed middle school teachers

who were currently teaching in a coteaching pair and conducting classroom observations. A case study of teacher perceptions and implementation through interviews, observations, and analyzing data was an appropriate fit to answer the research questions I had proposed.

Role of the Researcher

My participation in the study was limited to participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and reporting. As a data collector, I interviewed middle school general education and special education teachers currently in a coteaching setting in my local school district located in the Southeastern United States. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Once data was collected, I analyzed results to answer my research questions. Results are reported in this dissertation and were shared with participants of the study.

While I work in the same school district as those who participated in the study, I did not have direct working relationships with the sample. I am a special education leader working directly with one high school in the district. There are 15 different middle schools in the school district. My high school draws students from two feeder middle schools with which I have a closer working relationship, especially at the end and beginning of the school year as the teachers begin receiving their students. I did not collect data from the teachers in these two feeder schools, further distancing myself from study participants. I did not have any supervisory or instructor relationships involving power over the participants.

I did not have to manage any power relationships due to the degrees of separation between the participants and myself. A bias that might have existed would be my own perceptions from personal experiences with coteaching. I taught as a coteacher for many years at both the middle and high school levels. I have also acted as an observer to multiple coteaching pairs. While I have my own perceptions of different coteaching models and implementation, they did not play a part in my collection, analysis, or reporting of the data. In my current leadership role, I am not a classroom teacher, so the years removed from the classroom also aided in keeping any bias from the study. Peshkin (1988) stated the importance of a researcher addressing their subjectivity throughout the research process, not just once the researcher has completed a study and is looking back over findings. Throughout my study's process I paused and reflected on my work ensuring my biases had not entered into or persuaded the research process.

A potential ethical issue could have existed if I worked in the same school district as the participants and served in a leadership role. I feel that by drawing my sample from the middle school community instead of the high school level in which I work I eliminated any potential ethical issues. I also feel that by eliminating the two middle schools that feed the high school I work with, I addressed issues that could have existed when conducting a study within my own work environment. I did not offer incentives to participants of the study, so an ethical issue did not arise from this.

Methodology

Participation Selection Logic

The population for the study was middle school special education and general education teachers who were currently working in a coteaching setting in the Southeastern United States. The district had 20 middle schools, with approximately 120 coteachers at that level. I used convenience sampling for participation in this study. The results of a convenience sampling can be used by the school district from which the sample is drawn (Lodico et al., 2010). Along with addressing gaps in current literature by exploring perceptions of coteaching, results can be used to provide important feedback to the local school district for training both general and special education teachers who plan to use coteaching to educate their students. Convenience sampling allows the findings to be used by the school district, which consists of 86 schools serving over 50,000 students, spanning 1,000 square miles.

Criteria for the participants were teachers in a local school district who were serving students at the middle school level. I recruited 11 teachers. Participants were a combination of five general education and six special education teachers who had had at least 2 years of coteaching experience and were currently teaching in a cotaught classroom. The criteria for years of experience allowed for teachers who had a longer experience with coteaching. To establish that participants met these criteria, the middle school coordinator was contacted to provide the names of teachers who met appropriate conditions.

I approached the district superintendent and executive director for the Department of Exceptional Children Services for initial permissions to conduct my study. I submitted my research proposal, a research summary, and cover letter to the district's Assessment and Evaluation's Research Review Committee. Upon their approval I contacted the middle school coordinator for the Department of Exceptional Children Services for potential participant names. I created two lists from the names of district teachers who were eligible to participate. One list had the names of eligible special education teachers and the other had the names of eligible general education teachers. A selection of 10 participants from each list were chosen at random. This allowed for equal response from both sides of the coteaching pair. Once 20 participants were randomly selected, I contacted them via e-mail. I introduced myself, explained the study, and explained what I was asking of them as participants. I ensured them that no identifying information would be shared and responses would be completely anonymous. When a participant declined to be a part of the study, another name was selected at random and asked to participate. From the 20 participants selected, I used the five general education and six special education teachers who responded to participate in my study. If there were a need to reach saturation, based on responses from teachers, I could have selected more names at random to add to the total number of participants. Saturation is the concept of having enough participants so that adding more participants is unnecessary to receive new data input (Creswell, 2012).

Instrumentation

Data collection instrumentation for this study included an interview process and classroom observations. As the researcher, I created the interview protocol. I adapted an established protocol created by Murawski and Lochner (2011) to include space for open comments, examples of parity, and description of classroom routines. Prior to conducting any interviews, I gave participants a consent form through e-mail. To help establish rapport, I made contact over the phone with participants, introducing myself and my study and answering any questions they had prior to the interview process. I conducted interviews in person at the participant's school setting. A neutral location, such as a local library's conference room, was offered, but participants were all comfortable in their own setting. To compile sufficient information for this study's research, questions were created to allow for participants to share a great deal of their personal perceptions. The interviews were semistructured, which allowed for explanation of answers and follow up questions for clarification of responses, as needed.

The basis of development for interview questions was the creation of guiding questions. Determining what information was necessary to answer the research questions helped in creating the questions the participants would answer. For content validity I reviewed two different pieces, content and participants. I believe that receiving information from my participants in the form of a recorded interview accurately provided me with teacher perceptions from both general education and special education teachers. By recording the interviews, I created verbatim transcripts by personally typing them to use for analyzing data. Participants were informed that at any time they could provide

information off the record by asking for the recording to be stopped and subsequently continued. The validity of the information provided by participants comes from the extent of their familiarity with coteaching. It is for this reason that I chose to only include participants who had at least 2 years of coteaching experience and are currently teaching in a cotaught setting. Tables 1 and 2 outline how each interview question aligns to both the conceptual framework and research questions.

Table 1

Interview Question Alignment to Framework

Framework constructs	Aligned interview questions
Parity	1-10
Outlining/Understanding routines	2-10
Feedback that informs decision making	2-4, 9-14

Table 2

Interview Question Alignment to Research Questions

Research questions	Aligned interview questions
RQ1	1, 7-8, 13-14
RQ2	2-6, 9-10, 13-14
RQ3	11-14

Along with interviews I conducted observations in my participants' cotaught classrooms looking specifically at how teachers share in classroom

responsibilities. While my interview protocol helped with understanding perceptions from both teachers on the coteaching team and provided me with a good understanding of how each participates in the planning process, I feel that observations were appropriate to understanding actual implementation in the classroom. The observation form is researcher-adapted from an existing protocol, created by Murawski and Lochner (2011) and allowed for information to be gathered that aided in answering my research questions.

Table 3

Research Questions and Data Collection Tools

Research questions	Tools used to answer research questions
RQ1	Interviews and observations
RQ2	Interviews
RQ3	Interviews

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Interviews took place at a location comfortable to participants. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. I traveled to their location to provide a professional environment at a time convenient for them to meet with me. I had interviews completed in a 4-week time period from recruitment of participants. After data were transcribed and reviewed, I determined follow up clarification of interviews were not necessary as the

answers to questions were clear. Member checks that were completed after initial coding appropriately addressed credibility.

Participants had the right to end the interview at any time or refuse for their answers to be used in my study, which was outlined in an informed consent form, given to them prior to any interview begins. If recruitment had resulted in less than 10 to 12 participants, the needed number of participants would have been randomly selected from the convenience sample, and the same procedure of notification and interviewing would have been followed. Once interviews were completed and it was determined no further follow up clarification was needed, a thank you was sent to each participant for their contribution to the study.

From those participating in interviews, I randomly selected 3 of the general education teachers and 3 of the special education teachers to complete classroom observations. During observations completed a researcher created form noting the duties of each coteaching member and the time, in minutes, each teacher spends providing direct instruction to students. Observations lasted an entire coteaching period. Most middle schools in the district have 60-minute-long class periods, however this varied from school to school based on their master schedule. From this observational data I was able to determine the extent to which the general education and special education teacher are currently implementing coteaching practices.

Coding was used to analyze the collected data. More specifically, thematic coding was completed, followed by open coding for thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves creating categories for data, based on themes that arise during analysis (Miles &

Huberman, 1994). Categories were separated by type of co-teaching training, coplanning, individual planning, effective strategies used when coteaching, classroom responsibilities, and barriers that exist when implementing different models of coteaching. I used axial coding and color-coded as I went through interviews, highlighting parts of transcriptions that connect to a specific category. Coding categories helps the researcher organize and sort data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Throughout analysis and coding, I ensured there was indication that separated general education and special education teacher perceptions.

Data Analysis Plan

For the purpose of this study, data collected through interviews and observations were analyzed. The analysis of the data from the participants were able to answer each research question. Perceptions of both sides of the coteaching pair were addressed by ensuring interviews and observations were completed with both general education and special education teachers.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim. As outlined in Table 3, the interviews were used to answer all three of the research questions. While reviewing transcripts I began to code the results into themes based on the constructs in the framework as they arise (i.e., parity signals, classroom routines, and feedback). Similar responses were highlighted in the same color. I then re-arranged the transcripts, putting all the same colors together and creating a name for each coded category. Interview results were then coded for open themes that emerged after saturation had occurred from the thematic coding.

Observations were completed with approximately half of the participants. These observations were completed to address research questions 1 and 2. In a similar manner to analyzing the interviews, I color coded my findings from the observation forms I completed. As themes arose specific to implementation of coteaching practices and sharing of classroom responsibilities, I highlighted these in similar colors. These colors were grouped together to create categories for common themes found when analyzing observational data.

The interviews and observations were combined to answer research questions 1 and 2. Interview questions and observation protocol were created to help understand and to observe the extent to which middle school coteachers implement coteaching practices and share classroom responsibilities. Interviews alone aided in answering research question 3, which sought to understand teacher perceptions. Interview questions asked for teacher's opinions on coteaching obstacles. Observations did not allow the researcher to understand perceived barriers.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Part of my role as a researcher is to accurately report the perceptions of participants. Credibility of research references how well participants' perceptions and feelings on a particular subject are depicted (Lodico et al., 2010). To ensure credibility my study used the technique of member checks. Member checks involve the researcher reporting back initial codes of interviews to each participant to ensure accurate portrayal of their data (Cresswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). After collecting and analyzing each

transcription, I conducted the initial coding for each interview and sent themes that arose to individual participants. The participants were then asked to provide me with feedback of whether or not they felt I have their feelings and perceptions appropriately documented.

Transferability

The goal of qualitative research is not to generalize the results to a broader population or setting. Transferability is defined as the similarity of the setting in my study to other educational settings (Lodico et al., 2010). The findings of my study can be used in the local setting from which I am collecting data. I selected participants from a school district that is vast in setting, socioeconomic status, and student make up.

Dependability

A study's dependability is related to whether or not a reader can follow the processes utilized to gather and interpret data (Lodico et al., 2010). In my study, I provided an accurate account of when and how my data was collected as well as how and when I received clarification and feedback from member checks. Interviews were dated to provide an easy way for me to keep track of and look back on when pieces of information were received and reviewed. Transcriptions of all interviews were saved electronically, with each participant listed under an assigned number in place of names. These documents were under password protection, lessening a chance of data being lost or accessed by others.

Confirmability

As the researcher and reporter, I needed to ensure that my interpretation of the data and findings were free from personal bias. The use of member checks ensured the data was accurately transcribed and analyzed by myself, and reviewed for accuracy by the participants. The verbatim transcriptions of interviews helped to ensure confirmability, as they reflected exactly what was shared with me. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are all measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of a study.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the process of my study. This includes all parts of the process; prior to gathering data, during data collection, and while interpreting findings. An agreement to gain access to participants was obtained from the Superintendent of the school district in which the participants of the study work. Participants were treated ethically and were aware of their rights as a participant in the study.

Treatment of Human Participants

Following district procedures, I obtained an agreement from the Superintendent of the school district and institutional permissions from building principals who oversee both the general education and special education teachers who participate in my study. Ethical concerns related to recruitment materials and processes were addressed by ensuring that participants were aware of the study and its implications. Prior to participants agreeing to be a part of my study I ensured they were aware of all

components of the study's process, their rights as a participant in my study, as well the assurance that any identifying information will not be shared in the study's findings, ensuring their anonymity throughout the process. Ethical concerns related to data collection could have included participants refusing to participate at the beginning of the study or during the process. It was their right as a participant to withdraw from the study at any point. In the case of non-participation, these individual's partial responses would be removed from the study. If multiple participants were removed from the study and further data was needed, methodology for participant selection and recruitment would have been followed to obtain another participant.

I know participant identification, contact information, and responses for the purpose of reaching out for clarification and sharing results. Any participant information that identifies a specific individual will not be known to anyone else including other participants and readers of my study. All transcription of interviews were kept electronically on my Google drive. This drive was password protected and not available to others. Upon completion of my study, all electronic and audio recordings were destroyed. Transcriptions of participant responses without identifying information will remain.

An ethical issue that may have arisen is that my study was completed within the same school district in which I am employed. While I may work in the same school district, I do not have any sort of position of authority over those participating in the study. I work as a Lead Teacher for the Department of Exceptional Children Services, yet I am school-based and my position oversees a local high school. The participants in my

study were all selected at the middle school level. To ensure an extra step of removing myself from the study, I did not select any participants from the two middle schools who I receive students from. Those involved in my study did not receive anything for participating, lessening any ethical concerns related to incentives for participants.

Summary

An examination of perceptions of middle school coteachers on both the general education and special education side of the team will take place in this study. Data by way of direct interviews and observations was collected from the participants. This research is appropriate as I have a high level of interest in the topic and research questions. Through a case study, I interviewed and observed participants, and analyzed their data to answer my proposed research questions.

My role as researcher is outlined to show this study is free of bias and ethical concerns. Participants were selected from my school district; however, I do not serve in a leadership role to the pool of participants. Methodology for participant selection, instrumentation, and data collection are reviewed. Participant selection was obtained through convenience sampling with an appropriately sized population for a qualitative study. Plans were included for recruiting further participants if this became necessary throughout the study. Instrumentation for the study was person interviews with each participant. Interview data was recorded verbatim from participants. Transcripts from recordings were created to aide in analyzing the data. Data analysis occurred once all interviews were completed. Common themes were determined as they arose from coding the data.

Procedures were outlined and issues of trustworthiness reviewed, including possible biases and ethical concerns and how they were addressed. Credibility was increased through member checks, reporting back to participants to ensure their interviews were appropriately summarized. Transferability was addressed by ensuring my study reports demographics so readers can determine if the findings may be generalized to their own setting. Keeping record dates and times of initial interview and follow up questions as well as having all transcriptions stored electronically under password protection, helped my study's dependability. Confirmability was supported through member checks and verbatim transcripts of interviews. Throughout the study, ethical procedures were followed, which included permission from my school district to conduct the study, agreements from all participants, and anonymity of participants was ensured. Chapter four presents the findings of my study including setting, data collection, analysis, results, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative research case study was to examine both middle school general education and special education teacher perceptions relative to coteaching and implementation of coteaching practices by determining the extent to which each teacher was involved in the coteaching process. When implemented effectively, coteaching has been shown to increase both achievement and social skills (Graziano & Navarette, 2012; Tremblay, 2013). The data gathered illustrates current perceptions of coteachers and my observations of current coteaching implementation. In this study I also sought to close a research gap that exists of a lack of input on coteaching perceptions from both sides of the coteaching team. A plethora of information exists with a focus on the special education teacher; however, a general education teacher is an equal component of the coteaching team. I aimed this study to include the general education teacher in both interviews and observations. During data collection, analysis, and reporting I noted when information came from the special education teacher or the general education teacher.

Three research questions were developed for this study, designed to gather teacher perceptions on coteaching and observe current implementation of coteaching responsibilities.

RQ1: To what extent do middle school teachers, both special education and general education, implement coteaching practices?

RQ2: To what extent do middle school teachers on a coteaching team plan and share classroom responsibilities for coteaching practices?

RQ3: What perceived barriers exist for both special education and general education teachers when implementing coteaching?

In Chapter 4, I discuss the settings in which data collection took place, how data were collected and analyzed, and the results of the case study. I provide an accurate account of the exact steps taken during each stage of the research study and report elements of trustworthiness.

Setting

Participant Demographics

In March of 2018, my Institutional Review Board Application was approved by Walden University (approval number 03-21-18-0406956) to begin data collection in a large school district located in a Southeastern United States county covering 1,000 square miles that served over 50,000 students. During the following 3 weeks, principals from 11 of the 20 district middle schools gave me building level approval, allowing me to contact teachers in their building regarding participation in my study. My community research partner, the middle school coordinator for the district's Department of Exceptional Children Services, provided me with a list of current special education and general education teachers currently coteaching in these middle schools. There were a total of 81 teachers in the convenience sample for my study.

From this list of potential participants, I randomly selected and contacted special education and general education teachers regarding participation in the interview portion of my study. After participants for the interviews were determined, half were asked if they would also like to participate in an observation. Teachers were contacted through

their district e-mail accounts found on staff directories on each of the school's websites. E-mails included an introduction of myself and the study as well as an informed consent attachment. The informed consent included a brief background of the study, procedures of the study, explanation of its voluntary nature, as well as risks and benefits of the study. It was made clear that participants could withdraw from the study at any point. I explained to potential participants that all identifying information would not be shared in the study and contact information for a Walden University Research Participant Advocate was provided. I explained that no compensation would be given for participating. To join in the study, potential participants replied with "I consent" via e-mail. Due to nonresponses or responses of noninterest, further potential participants were randomly selected and contacted until the desired number of participants was reached. My data collection fell during the last 6 weeks of the school year, which is an extremely busy time for teachers, and may be the reason for those responding that they were not interested in participating. I do not believe, however, that this affected study results, as the originally selected participants ultimately participated in the study. I do not believe that at the time of the study's process any personal or organizational conditions influenced participants or that their experiences affected the results.

Data Collection

Participant Specifics

After a process that took a few weeks, 11 teachers provided consent to participate in interviews. This number of participants was appropriate as my original intention was to work with 10-12 participants. Six teachers provided consent to participate in

observations. Unfortunately, one of those who consented to be observed had a family emergency that took her out of town during our scheduled observation day, and she did not wish to reschedule. All participants' areas of certification and type of participation are outlined in Tables 4 and 5. Each participant was assigned a number, which I based off of the order I met with them for interviews.

Table 4

Participant Number and Certification

Participant	Area of certification
1	Special education
2	Special education
3	Special education
4	Special education
5	General education
6	General education
7	General education
8	General education
9	General education
10	Special education
11	Special education

Table 5

Participant Number and Study Participation

Participant	Type of participation
1	Interview
2	Interview
3	Interview and observation
4	Interview and observation
5	Interview
6	Interview
7	Interview and observation
8	Interview and observation
9	Interview and observation
10	Interview
11	Interview

Interviews

As shown in Tables 5 and 6, 11 middle school teachers participated. All teachers currently worked on a coteaching team, six of whom were special education teachers and five of whom were general education teachers. The interviews took place over a 4-week period. Teachers provided me with a date, time, and location where they would like to meet. All teachers chose to meet at their school location, typically during their planning time or after school. There were 14 interview questions that lasted between 12 to 35 minutes, depending on how much information the participant chose to provide.

After arriving at each location, the participant and I found a quiet and private place to meet, and I briefly described my study. I explained to participants that if at any time they wanted to share information off the record, the digital recorder would be stopped. Once interview questions began, I saved our sessions on a digital recorder.

Before the end of each day, I transcribed interviews from the digital recorder verbatim onto a Google drive document, saved under password protection. At this point, all identifying information of the teacher, any students, or school was removed from transcription. For example, if a participant named their coteaching partner or school, the name in transcripts read as “Ms. X” or “X Middle School.”

One variation from my data plan outlined in Chapter 3 was the number of coteaching experience years required to be a participant in the study. I originally outlined that teachers must have at least 3 years of coteaching experience. After the initial phases of participant recruitment, I noticed multiple teachers were declining, noting that they were interested but only had 2 years of experience. In order to reach my planned number of 10-12 participants, I changed the participation criteria to 2 or more years of experience after discussing this difference with my committee chair. A second variation occurred when one participant asked to partake in an interview over the phone during our initially scheduled interview time, when we were unable to meet at the school due to the participant being at home for unforeseen family obligations.

Observations

Once interviews were completed, six of the participants were asked if they wanted to participate in an observation in addition to the interview, receiving a second informed consent specific to observations. Each teacher agreed to participate by providing written consent via e-mail. I confirmed appropriate dates and times with each of the participants over a 2-week period. Originally, three special education teachers and three general education teachers consented and scheduled observations with me. Unfortunately, one of

the special education teachers had a death in her family and was absent on the scheduled day of observation. She was understandably not interested in rescheduling. A total of five observations were completed.

I arrived early to each scheduled observation session so that I could speak briefly with the participants' coteacher, explaining why I was observing the class today and explaining that I would not be recording any information about them in my study. By chance, it occurred that one teacher I was scheduled to observe was coteaching with another participant from my study. I continued my observation, focusing on the participant who had given consent for that particular observation. Each observation took 60-80 minutes, depending on each school's bell schedule, with one observation being cut short a few minutes due to a fire drill.

The observation protocol that was completed was an adaptation of Murawski and Lochner's (2011) coteaching observation tool. I received prior written permission from Dr. Murawski via e-mail to use the adapted protocol from her original work. The protocol consisted of a brief summary of the lesson, a tally box for examples of parity seen between coteachers, a description of the classroom routine including each teacher's role during each activity, and a 14-item checklist that I denoted as I "didn't see," "saw an attempt," or "saw it done well" for specific items to look for during a cotaught lesson. The end of the coteaching protocol had room for additional notes to be taken regarding parity. The adapted protocol was completed during the observation of each lesson. Other than the two noted unusual circumstances of an observation cancellation and interruption

by a fire drill, no variations from the originally planned observation data collection occurred.

Data Analysis

Interviews

For the purpose of analyzing interview data, I performed thematic coding, followed by open coding for thematic analysis. Data from interviews were initially coded by reviewing each transcription and creating a list of codes, followed by themes that arose that were appropriate for helping to answer the three research questions in my study. Member checks with participants were completed via e-mail once central themes were identified. Similar themes were highlighted in the same colors. I cut out these highlighted themes and grouped them together, making a visual of frequent emerging themes across interviews. I originally grouped them into three broad categories based on my research questions and then created multiple themes within each of those categories as they emerged.

To make it easier to ensure data were not lost, I entered all of this information into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet made it much easier to manipulate the data, cutting and pasting as needed, and was a great visual to identify more detailed themes within the three broader categories I originally created. By placing themes in this manner, I could see which theme related back to each research question. Throughout the spreadsheet, I used color-coding to identify which themes came from an interview with a special education teacher and which were from a general education teacher, making it easy to distinguish any differences in perceptions.

Observations

To analyze the completed classroom observations, I used the protocol adapted from Murawski and Lochner's (2011) to categorize data onto a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. Observation data were used to answer only research question 1, pertaining to the extent to which coteachers implement coteaching practices. This directly correlated with one of the broader categories I created for analyzing interview data, regarding active coteaching. This is helpful as it came from what I actually was able to observe, helping to confirm or deny what was being told to me verbally in previously completed teacher interviews.

From the observation protocol I was able to focus on parity as it related to coteaching. I created a spreadsheet to record the number of switches that occurred in direct instruction during classroom observations and how many times each teacher, general education or special education, took a leading role. I also analyzed the specific activities performed during my observations and recorded the number of minutes during a lesson that each teacher spent in a leading role. I also noted the amount of time, in minutes, in which parity appeared equal during instruction. Finally, I took the checklist that I denoted whether I "didn't see," "saw an attempt," or "saw it done well" for specific items to look for during a cotaught lesson, and created a spreadsheet. These checklist data across all five classroom observations provided a single representation for the overall classroom observations.

Not all information fell into the three broad categories I originally created. During data analysis for both interviews and observations, some of the themes that arose across

participants did not specifically answer the research questions I originally developed. I ensured that there was a place for this information on both spreadsheets and noted these discrepant themes in my results.

Results

Through thematic and open coding, I created broad categories that linked to each of my research questions. Then, within each category, themes emerged, helping to answer each research question. Tables 6 and 7 show the codes and themes that were created during data analysis.

Table 6

Interview Codes and Themes

Thematic Codes	Themes	RQs Addressed
Active Coteaching	General educator Responsibilities, Special educator Responsibilities, strategies/Models	RQ1
Planning/Sharing responsibilities	No Coplanning, Coplanning, General Educator planning, Special educator planning	RQ2
Barriers to Coteaching	Low expectations of the special education teacher, No time for planning, Lack of training available, Large class size, Student behaviors, Special education teacher attendance	RQ3

Table 7

Observation Codes and Themes

Thematic codes	Themes	RQs Addressed
Parity–Number of times leading instruction/activities	Special educator leading, General educator leading	RQ1
Parity–Time spent leading instruction/activities	Special Educator leading, General Educator leading, Coleading	RQ1

Research Question 1: Implementation

RQ1: To what extent do middle school teachers, both special education and general education, implement coteaching practices?

To answer this question, I used the results from both interviews and observations.

While research questions 2 and 3 pertain to the planning and barriers to coteaching, I wanted a research question that highlighted the actual implementation of coteaching in the classroom. Two of my interview questions related to coteaching implementation, asking coteachers about what portion of direct instruction they were responsible for as well as what they believe their partner was responsible for. While these data are important to the findings, I wanted to report on what was recorded during observations as well. I was able to observe five full cotaught lessons in action, completing an observation protocol regarding implementation of co-teaching.

Interviews. During the coding process, one of the broad categories was “Active Coteaching.” Here I placed comments and perceptions of coteaching implementation,

which amounted to 33 in all, 23 of which were from special education teachers and 10 from general education teachers. The vast majority came from the two interview questions I aligned to research question 1 regarding the roles of special and education teachers during cotaught instruction. From this broad category of “Active Coteaching”, I developed three different themes; “General Education Teacher Responsibilities,” “Special Education Teacher Responsibilities,” and “Models/Strategies.” Table 8 shows the number of responses that led to these themes and what group of teacher these came from. Some teachers gave multiple responses that fit under the same theme.

Table 8

Interview Analysis – Active Coteaching

Thematic codes	Number of responses from special education teachers	Number of responses from general education teachers
General education teacher responsibilities	6	5
Special education teacher responsibilities	11	5
Models/Strategies	6	0

These themes connect to the constructs of the conceptual framework of the study. The two themes regarding what the different responsibilities are in the cotaught classroom align with the construct of balancing parity signals. The theme of different models and strategies used in the cotaught classroom aligns with the construct of outlining and understanding classroom routines.

When describing the responsibilities of a general education teacher and a special education teacher, responses were almost identical, despite the teachers' area of certification. Of the 11 overall responses from teachers, six were from special education teachers and five were from general education teachers. Only one of the 11 participants responded that general education and special education teachers "share equally in direct instruction." This sentiment was reported by a general education teacher. However, the remaining 10 participants had like responses, stating that during implementation of coteaching in the classroom, the general education teacher is responsible for the direct instruction, while the special education teacher assists as needed. Responses describing the amount of instruction being provided by the general education in a cotaught classroom included, "the vast majority of," "95% of," or "all of" the teaching.

Participants also discussed perceptions of special education teacher responsibilities when implementing coteaching. There were 16 total responses made to create this theme, 11 coming from special education teachers and five from general education teachers. Some of the duties included, "provides accommodations and repeats directions," "helps struggling students on the side," and "redirects behavior and checks in for understanding." Responses were consistent with the one-teach, one-assist model, in which the general education teacher takes the lead of direct instruction and the special education teacher assists with accommodations, behaviors, or struggling students. While the same general education teacher from the previous theme described a special education teacher's role as equal, the other 10 participants' perceptions did not. Both general education and special education teachers described the special education teachers

responsibilities in a similar fashion with comments such as; the special education teacher “does approximately 5% of the direct instruction”, “acts in a supporting role”, and “mostly deals with behaviors”.

The third thematic code was “Models/Strategies.” During interviews, common responses to the interview question asking what has worked well when coteaching were different coteaching models and strategies. Responses were for both their current settings and past experiences. Interestingly, all six came from special education teachers. No specific coteaching models or strategies were mentioned by general education teachers. The special education teachers described a number of models and strategies, including one-teach/one-assist, parallel teaching, station teaching, pulling students for re-teaching purposes, and splitting small groups by ability levels. The one participant who mentioned parallel and station teaching, noted that those strategies had been used in her previous teaching experience, but were not the strategies used in her current setting. All responses for current settings echoed the first two thematic codes regarding teacher responsibilities, describing the special education teacher in a supportive role, with the general education teacher handling the majority of instruction.

Observations. I was able to observe five cotaught classes for an entire class period. Observations confirmed what I learned during interviews, regarding who is responsible for leading instruction during a cotaught lesson. A clear leading role by the general education teacher was observed in each of my observations. The general education teacher led instruction 72% of the class time, the special education teacher led 12% of the time, and they shared the responsibility 16% of the class period. A portion of

the protocol I adapted from Murawski and Lochner's (2011) coteaching observation tool tallied the number of times each teacher took a leading role. The general education teacher led the majority of instruction as illustrated in Table 9.

Table 9

Lead Teacher Tallies

Teacher certification	Number of times in lead role	Percentage of times in lead role
Special education teacher	11	36%
General education teacher	31	74%

Along with tallying leading roles during observations, I recorded what types of activities were implemented, how long each took place, and what the role of each teacher was during those activities. By adding up all of the time spent watching changes in roles, I was able to calculate the overall time each teacher spent leading or supporting classroom instruction. I also calculated the time where both teachers co-led at the front of the class together. Independent student work time, where no teacher was leading instruction or activities, was not calculated into the total time.

Table 10

Parity of Teacher Leading

Teacher certification	Minutes spent leading instruction/activities	Percentage of time spent leading instruction/activities
Special education teacher	33	12%
General education teacher	196	72%
Coleading	45	16%

A final piece of the coteaching observation protocol was to complete a checklist, which described different examples of what one might see in a cotaught classroom. The checklist was completed by checking a column based on whether I observed each description as, “didn’t see,” “saw an attempt,” or “saw it done well.” “Didn’t see” was selected when the parity description was not observed at all during the lesson. “Saw and attempt” was selected when during at least a portion of the class period, the parity description was observed. “Saw it done well” was selected when the parity description was seen during most of the observed lesson. By compiling the data, I was able to create a visual representation of what was observed across the five observations.

Table 11

Parity Observations

Description	Didn't see	Saw an attempt	Saw it done well	Observations
Two or more professionals working together in the same physical space		1	4	-both teachers worked in the same classroom during lessons
Class environment demonstrates parity and collaboration (both names on board, sharing materials and space)		1	4	-teachers shared materials and space
Both teachers begin and end class together and remain in room entire time	2		3	-special ed teacher came in late/left early (2 observations)
During instruction, both teachers assist students with and without disabilities	1	1	3	teachers moved around room, checking in with all students (4 observations) -special education teacher worked with 2 students the entire class period (1 observation)
The class moves smoothly with evidence of coplanning and communication between coteachers	1	1	3	-teachers shows good rapport/respect to each other (3 observations)
Differentiated strategies, to include technology, are used to meet the range of learning needs	2	2	1	-Promethean boards, iPads, AT, printed options, calculators
A variety of instructional approaches (5 coteaching approaches) are used, include regrouping students	1	3	1	-1 teach/1 assist stations

(table continues)

Description	Didn't see	Saw an attempt	Saw it done well	Observations
It is difficult to tell the special educator from the general educator	3	2		-obvious who the general education teacher was -obvious that it was the general education teacher's classroom
It is difficult to tell the special education students from the general education students			5	-special education students among general education students in each environment
Coteachers use of language ("we"; "our") demonstrates true collaboration and shared responsibility	3		2	
Coteachers phrase questions and statements so that it is obvious that all students in the class are included	1	1	3	
Students' conversations evidence a sense of community (including peers with and without disabilities)	1		4	-students on task and interacting with each other (4 observations)
Coteachers ask questions at a variety of levels to meet all students' needs (basic recall to higher order thinking)	2	1	2	

Interviews and observations. The interview questions and observations provided answers to the first research question; to what extent do middle school teachers, both special education and general education, implement coteaching practices? Given interview responses only, it would seem the special education teachers did very little in terms of direct instruction, as reported by general education and special education teachers. Words such as, "vast majority" and "all" were most often used for the general

education teachers' role in providing direct instruction. While the data calculated from the observations also support a clear leading role of the general education teacher, the special education teachers did spend time at the front of the classroom leading instruction or standing beside the teacher taking turns leading activities. When comparing the parity of minutes spent in leading roles during observations, general education teachers led instruction 72% of the class time, while the special education teacher shared in that role or took a lead role themselves 28% of the time. These totals are an average across all lessons.

Research Question 2: Planning and Sharing Responsibilities

RQ 2: To what extent do middle school teachers on a coteaching team plan and share classroom responsibilities for coteaching practices?

While research question 1 was focused around actual implementation in the classroom, research question 2 was created to investigate teacher planning and responsibilities prior to and after a given lesson. Multiple interview questions were aligned to help support research question 2. Most of the interview questions asked for descriptions and examples of coplanning, coassessing, and responsibilities of coteaching. In addition, I asked each teacher to provide me with an estimated number of minutes, on average, that they spend both planning independently and time spent planning with their coteaching partner. Not all participants felt comfortable with giving a specific answer to this question, but most shared their averages; four of five general education teachers provided an average of independent planning, six of six special education teachers provided an average of independent planning, and 10 of the 11 participants provided an

average of coplanning minutes. Results of these planning averages provided by participants are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Planning for a Cotaught Lesson

Teacher who is planning	Average time spent preparing for 1 cotaught lesson (min)
General education teacher (independently)	35
Special education teacher (independently)	5
Coplanning (together)	8.5

When focusing solely on a given cotaught lesson, 48.5 total minutes are spent planning, altogether. With the averages provided by study participants, 72% of planning time is completed by general education teachers independently, 10% of planning time is completed by special education teachers independently, and 18% of the planning time is spent coplanning together. As with direct instruction, the general education teacher plans for the vast majority of a cotaught lesson independent from their special education coteaching partner.

Common themes that emerged from interview transcript coding under the broader category of “planning” were; “limited common planning time” and “general education teacher leads planning.” Table 13 shows the number of responses that led to these themes and what group of teacher these came from. Most teachers gave multiple responses that fit under the same theme.

Table 13

Interview Analysis—Planning

Themes	Number of responses from special education teachers	Number of responses from general education teachers
Limited common planning time	18	14
General education teacher leads planning	16	12

Limited planning time. Of the 11 participants interviewed, nine of them did not have a set planning time during the school day, while two had an 80-minute team planning day each Friday where all general education and special education teachers from a specific grade level met to discuss the upcoming week as far as when tests would be given and what accommodations or modifications might be needed. There were 32 total responses regarding limited to no planning time, with each participant providing multiple comments. Of those responses, 18 came from special education teachers and 14 came from general education teachers. Common responses from both the general and special education teachers included, “we try and chat at the bus loop after school,” “we might get two minutes in the hallways before we step into class,” and “we do what we can on the fly, in passing.” There were no inconsistencies with responses from general or special education teachers.

General education teacher leads planning. The second theme that emerged was regarding general education teachers leading planning for cotaught lessons. There were

28 total responses regarding cotaught planning, with each participant providing multiple comments. Of those responses, 16 came from special education teachers and 12 came from general education teachers. General education teachers provided responses such as, “I plan for the entire lesson and then send it to Ms. X,” “I don’t think Ms. X does anything to prepare for inside my classroom,” and “I believe the “sped” teacher does nothing to prepare for cotaught lessons.” It was not just the general education teachers who felt this way, as this perception was reiterated during interviews with special education teachers; “On my own, I don’t [plan] too much. She’s in charge of it.” “I don’t plan on my own for a lesson,” “the reality is, that we plan on the fly.” General education and special education teacher responses were both numerous and consistent.

The themes that emerged regarding research question 2 were, “having a lack of common planning time” and the “general education teacher being responsible for the vast majority of planning.” It is fair to say that with no planning time provided, it would be very difficult for any substantial amount of coplanning to occur during the school day. Teachers described different creating ways of attempting quick planning, such as phone calls on the weekends, conversations in the hallway, or quick discussions during bus duty. However, no teachers had a daily planning time built into the school’s master schedule.

Research Question 3 : Barriers to Coteaching

RQ 3: What perceived barriers exist for both special education and general education teachers when implementing coteaching?

Interview questions that aligned to coteaching barriers were used to analyze data for the final research question. All participants had a number of points to share regarding barriers they had encountered when implementing coteaching. While coding data, I made sure to differentiate which information was shared by general education teachers and which were shared by special education teachers. Many responses were similar regardless of a teacher's area of certification, however a few of the barriers encountered appeared to be general education or special education teacher specific.

I identified six themes, where at least five of the 11 participants noted similar perceptions. These themes were "low expectations of the special education teacher," "no time for planning," "lack of training available," "large class size," "student behaviors," and "special education teacher attendance." Table 14 outlines these six themes with the number of teachers who reported them as barriers.

Table 14

Barriers to Coteaching

Barrier	Number of special education teachers who noted barrier	Numbers of general education teachers who noted barrier	Percentage of participants noting barrier (general and special education)
Low expectations of the special education teacher	5	0	45%
No time for planning	6	4	91%
Lack of training available	3	2	45%
Large class size	3	2	45%
Student behaviors	3	2	45%
Special education teacher attendance	1	4	45%

Low expectations of the special education teacher. As seen in table 14, five teachers noted low expectations of the special education teacher as barrier. All but one of the participants who were special education teachers noted this; “they don’t want to give up their classroom, so they treat us like an aide,” “[the teacher] didn’t know what to do with me,” “some [teachers] who have no expectations of me.” While this sentiment was certainly consistent with a special education teachers’ perception, none of the general education teachers mentioned having low expectations of their coteaching partner.

No time for planning. Not having time built into their work schedule to plan with their coteacher was most frequently discussed barrier to coteaching. There were 10

participants who mentioned no or limited planning time. One general education teacher did not note this as a barrier. Examples of comments made regarding coplanning were, “We don’t have common planning time, so maybe we do stuff in the hallways,” “everything is done on the fly,” and “There is no planning time carved out... Our plannings do not match, so there is no way we could plan during the school day and before and after is too hard too.” The responses from participants were consistent, regardless of if they came from a special education or general education teacher.

Lack of training available. There were numerous common responses to interview question 1, regarding training. The first interview question asked each of the participants to, “describe the training you have participated in on the topic of coteaching.” All 11 participants, who ranged from fairly new teachers to veterans, said that the majority of coteaching training came from college courses they had taken in the past. Of the 11 participants, five noted this as a specific area as a barrier to effective coteaching. Three of these were from special education teachers and two from general education teachers. Responses from teachers included, “There is no training... I’m trying to teach Ms. X at the same time I’m trying to teach myself,” and “there was no training. I just showed up the first day and they said, ‘here’s your coteacher.’” Responses were consistent between special education and general education teachers.

Large class size. Responses to the interview question asking for perceived barriers to effective coteaching often revolved around large class sizes. Five of the 11 participants noted that large classes sizes served as a barrier to effective coteaching. Responses were consistent between the three special education and two general education

teachers who mentioned this. Participants expressed, “large class sizes... We have large groups this year and it’s really difficult,” and “class size is a big barrier. Our classes are too big.” Also noted by teachers when discussing large class size was the large percentage of students with IEPs in the class; “Having 40% of our kids (in one class) with IEPs doesn’t work.”

Student behaviors. Almost half of the participants felt that classroom behaviors create a barrier to coteaching. Five participants shared this response, including three special education teachers and two general education teachers. One of the two general education teachers who noted behavior said, “behavior is a barrier. A huge barrier. There is no structure.” Half of the special education teachers also brought up behavior with similar comments such as, “17/22 (kids) having IEPs, a good chunk of them have behavior needs.” Responses were consistent despite teacher certification areas.

Special education teacher attendance. One barrier to coteaching that was shared mostly by the general education teachers was an issue regarding the special education teachers’ attendance. Of the five participants who discussed this barrier, one was a special education teacher and four were general education teachers. All but one of the general education teachers discussed this problem, ranging from them coming into class late or leaving early to missing multiple class sessions completely. One general education teacher commented about the number of meetings the special education teacher has to have and said, “I’m talking once or twice a week, where she can’t even come into class.” This was also noted by one of the special education teachers; “I can see there would be “gened” frustration, because it’s not always consistent with me being able to go in there

with meetings.” Reasons provided for missing portions of class or whole class periods the amount of IEP meetings they needed to attend or the students not needing a teacher in the classroom the entire period, based on service minutes outlined in their IEPs.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility of research is related to how well participants’ feelings on a particular subject are depicted (Lodico et al., 2010). Once all interviews were conducted and transcribed, I completed initial coding. From each transcription, I created a list of themes from the data. I then completed member checks by sending e-mails to each of the participants with this list of themes and asked them if they were consistent with what they meant or implied during our interviews. I asked for each participant to provide feedback about the accuracy of the identified themes. Only one participant responded that she would like to add some clarification to a few of the themes I noted. I updated my information appropriately to reflect the participant’s input. All other participants who responded to the member checks said the information that I provided was consistent with their perceptions. During the course of the study, there were no adjustments to credibility strategies outlined in Chapter 3.

Transferability

Transferability is defined as the similarity of the setting in one study to other educational settings (Lodico et al., 2010). The goal of my study, as with most qualitative studies, is not to generalize findings to a broader setting. The results of my study can be used within the middle schools and district from which I selected the participants. The 11

participants from the interviews in my study represent six of the district's schools and observations were completed at three different middle schools. The middle schools vary from rural to suburban and have a mix of student populations from low to high socio-economic status. The findings can potentially apply to other schools in the district with a comparable make-up of students. Similar settings and populations may be able to utilize the results. During the course of the study, there were no adjustments to transferability strategies as outlined in Chapter 3.

Dependability

A study's dependability is related to whether or not a reader can follow the processes utilized to gather and interpret data (Lodico et al., 2010). I have provided an accurate account of when and how my data were collected and I reported feedback received during member checks. Interviews and observations were dated and all correspondence is documented. Transcriptions of all interviews were saved electronically with each participant listed under an assigned number instead of their name. All electronic documents were saved under password protection, not accessible by anyone other than myself. During the course of the study, there were no adjustments to dependability strategies outlined in Chapter 3.

Confirmability

While collecting, analyzing, and reporting data, I ensured that I did not include any personal bias. During face-to-face interviews, whether I agreed or not with opinions, I was sure to not interject my own feelings. At times when I may have agreed or disagreed with what was being shared, I made sure not to use any body language that

may have affected what was discussed. Verbatim transcriptions helped to ensure I had an accurate account of each interview. The use of member checks aided in making sure I accurately interpreted the findings. During the course of the study, there were no adjustments to confirmability strategies outlined in Chapter 3.

Summary

From the combination of interviews and observations, I was able to answer each of the research questions that were originally developed. Interviews provided feelings and perceptions of middle school teachers from both sides of a cotaught team. Observations allowed for me to witness and collect data on coteaching implementation in action. Research questions were appropriately answered by the data collection that aligned to each.

In both interviews and observations, the general education teacher showed a clear dominance in implementation. Research question 2 sought to find the extent to which middle school coteachers plan and share classroom responsibilities for coteaching practices. Results from general education and special education teachers were similar. Coteachers provided an average number of minutes spent planning for a cotaught lesson. These results yielded that on average, 72% of planning time is completed by general education teachers independently, 10% of planning time is completed by special education teachers independently, and 18% of the planning time is spent coplanning together.

Research question 3 inquired about the perceived barriers that exist when implementing coteaching practices. Again, both the general education and special

education teacher presented similar findings. The top five barriers to coteaching that were shared by all coteachers were no time for planning, a lack of training available, large class sizes, student behaviors, and attendance issues of the general education teacher. An additional barrier that was perceived by the majority of special education teachers was a lack of expectations of them, by the general education teacher. A barrier that was perceived by the majority of general education teachers was the lack of content knowledge from the special education teacher.

For the most part, my study went according to plans as outlined in Chapter 3 with a few minor adjustments. These have all been appropriately reported along with the steps taken during data preparation, collection, and analysis. In Chapter 5, an interpretation of and limitations of the results will be presented. Recommendations and implications will be discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Case studies give an up-close and deep understanding of the topic being researched (Lodico et al., 2010). This descriptive case study allowed for a closer investigation of middle school teachers' feelings on coteaching, the extent to which they plan and implement coteaching practices, and perceived barriers to effective coteaching. An important component of this study was the inclusion of general education teachers as participants. Much literature exists on coteaching and coteaching practices; however, there is a lack of studies that include the general education teachers alongside the special education teachers. Educational leaders can use the results to make informed decisions regarding coteaching in their buildings and departments as well as use the information to train new and existing coteaching teams. The findings from this study include input from those currently working in a cotaught classroom and add to the literature and to education practices for middle school students with disabilities.

In Chapter 4, I discussed the findings from this study. Key findings from interviews and observations show issues with the parity of coplanning and coteaching. Both interviews and observations show a clear leading role by the general education teacher when planning for a cotaught lesson as well as when providing direct instruction in a cotaught classroom. Along with answering research questions regarding teacher parity, findings from RQ3 identified six commonly faced barriers when implementing coplanning and coteaching practices. These included (a) low expectations of the special education teacher, (b) a lack of common planning time, (c) absences of coteaching

training, (d) large class sizes, (e) student behaviors, and (f) attendance issues with the special teachers being unavailable during class time.

Interpretation of the Findings

Confirming and Extending Knowledge

An extensive review of the current literature was completed in Chapter 2. The initial searches of *coteaching*, *special education*, *inclusion*, *middle school special education*, and subsequent refined searches helped to create a basis for understanding the literature that currently exists. After an exhaustive review of coteaching literature, I found many commonalities across numerous works of research and articles. The seven most common themes from the literature were (a) inadequate planning time, (b) lack of appropriate training, (c) a need for administrative support, (d) overwhelming dominance of the general education teacher, (e) the importance of interpersonal relationships, (f) student and teacher perceptions, and (g) the use of coteaching for preservice teachers. The findings of my current study help to confirm much of the literature as well as extend knowledge in the discipline of middle school coteaching.

Lack of Planning and Training

Effective coteaching requires time management skills and detailed planning from both members of the team (Nierengarten, 2013). Each member of the coteaching team provides a unique set of skills to contribute to the coteaching process (Pratt et al., 2017). A review of the current literature shows a lack of common planning time made available for coteachers in a school day's master schedule. The findings from my research confirm this lack of planning time. Ten of the 11 participants in my study described a lack of

common planning time as a barrier to coteaching in their setting. The outlying participant mentioned that they do have a common planning time built into their schedule; however, it is only 80 minutes per week and includes all teachers on their grade level team.

Findings from interviews stated a dominance of the general education teacher with planning for cotaught lessons, with 72% of the planning being their responsibility. The special education teacher was responsible for 10% of the planning and the final 18% of the planning time was spent together, coplanning.

Exhaustive research into current literature also presented a lack of training for coteachers. While professional development is a way to keep current teachers abreast in the ever-changing field of education (Holm & Kajander, 2015; Velardi et al., 2015), a lack of training has been provided to coteachers, especially to the general education teacher population (Miller & Oh, 2013). Results of the current study showed 45% of teachers who were interviewed felt there was a lack of training available to them. Only one of the participants stated she attended district training and another noted a school-based professional development. That leaves 82% of participants, general education and special education teachers, who could not describe any coteaching training they participated in outside of college courses they had taken.

Parity of Instruction

Parity is extremely important when working on a cotaught team. Both the general education and special education teacher should play an equal part in the delivery of instruction, as this model has been shown to increase student performance scores (Yopp et al., 2014). Unfortunately, the review of literature outlined in Chapter 2 shows both a

historical and current finding of general education teacher dominance (Ashton, 2014; Berry & Gravelle, 2013; Embury & Koeger, 2012; Pugach & Winn, 2011; Scruggs et al., 2007; Seymour & Seymour, 2013). The results from this study confirmed this common theme as ongoing. Along with interviews that showed teachers perceive a general education teacher dominance in both planning and implementing coteaching, observations gave a true depiction of how much discrepancy exists. An average of the instructional delivery times across all five observation protocols showed that the general education teacher spent 72% of the time leading instruction, while the special education teacher lead 12% of the time, and they shared in leading only 16% of the time.

Extending Discipline Knowledge

I stated in the conclusion of the literature review presented in Chapter 2 that there is a lack of information on the perceptions of the general education teacher when it relates to coteaching, as the majority of studies focus on the special education teacher. I felt it was important for this study to aid in filling this gap in the literature through gaining an insight into both members of the coteaching pair. Half of the participants in both the interviews and observations were general education teachers. It can be noted that when seeking out participants through convenience sampling, I heard back more quickly from and had more luck in securing general education teachers willing to participate in my study. This leads me to believe that general education teachers want their voices to be heard.

When performing thematic coding and open coding for thematic analysis, I was sure to keep a record of which data were provided by special education and general

education teachers so that I could examine if any discrepancies between perceptions existed. While the majority of the interviews showed similarities in teacher perceptions of coteaching, there were a couple points that stood out during review of general education teacher interview transcripts. First, general education teachers reported issues with special education teacher attendance during cotaught lessons. Some participants mentioned their special education coteaching partners arriving late or leaving early and at times missing full class periods of instruction due to meetings or other special education obligations. This was reflected on coteaching observation protocols that were completed when during two of the five observations, the special education teacher came late to the lesson and left before the class ended. In addition, general education teachers also mentioned that special education teachers were not confident with or not knowledgeable in the class's content area. One general education teacher shared that while she had asked the special education teacher to provide direct instruction during a cotaught lesson in the past, the special education teacher declined stating that she did not feel comfortable with the content.

Conceptual Framework

Friend and Cook's (2007) conceptual framework of collaboration was used when making research design decisions. Three main constructs of this theory are balancing parity signals, outlining and understanding classroom routines, and providing feedback that informs decision making in the classroom (Friend & Cook, 2007). Interview questions were directly aligned to these main constructs, with parity being analyzed in questions 1-10, outlining and understanding routines discussed in questions 2-10, and

feedback that informs decision making examined with questions 2-4 and 9-14. The observations that I conducted also correlated with this conceptual framework of collaboration. Parity was addressed throughout the protocol, specifically when tallying the number of times teachers switched roles and noting during each activity how long each teacher took the leading role during a cotaught lesson. I analyzed outlining and understanding of classroom routines when recording what occurred during each part of the lesson, how long each took, and exactly what each teacher was doing during that length of time.

Parity, Routines, and Feedback

Parity, in the context of this conceptual framework, can be interpreted from answering RQ1 and RQ2. Friend and Cook (2007) stress the importance of equal collaboration. Unfortunately, the results showed a dramatic disparity in both the roles played during coplanning and codelivery of instruction. The clear dominance of the general education teacher was reported throughout interviews with both general education and special education teachers. Teachers stated that the responsibilities of direct instruction relied on the general education teacher. While many expressed that they would like to spend more time coplanning, the fact that no common planning time is carved into their master schedules meant that little to no actual coplanning occurred on a regular basis.

A second main element in Friend and Cook's (2007) conceptual framework of collaboration regarded outlining and understanding classroom routines. This was analyzed throughout the five cotaught observations. When selecting Murawski and

Lochner's (2011) observation protocol, I was immediately drawn to the section that outlines the entire lesson, breaking it down into a description of each activity, the amount of time spent on each, and then an account of what each teacher's specific role was. This directly linked to the conceptual framework used to design my research questions. Again, analysis of these classroom routines presented a dominance of the general education teacher when providing direct instruction, leading activities, and assessing knowledge of content.

The findings of this study directly correlate with the final construct listed, providing feedback that informs decision-making in the classroom. I hope that the information provided and shared can be used specifically in the district where the data were collected, aiding educational leaders to make more informed decisions in their buildings and departments. Results can drive decision making when it comes to all aspects of coteaching, from building a master schedule to choosing coteaching partners and providing appropriate professional development opportunities for their staff members.

Limitations of the Study

At times during the execution of a study, limitations of trustworthiness arise. One limitation outlined in Chapter 1 was the transferability of findings. Readers of this study must be careful when generalizing the findings, ensuring their setting has a similar makeup as the district in which this study was conducted. Much of the findings from this study echo and confirm those discovered in the exhaustive literature review completed in

Chapter 2. The results do not appear to contain contradictory data that would challenge past coteaching research reviewed from the current and historical literature.

A second limitation addressed would be the potential dishonesty of participants. Prior to conducting the interviews, each participant was given an informed consent letting them know that everything shared would be kept confidential. Just prior to starting the digital recorder during interviews, I reiterated to participants that anything they shared would remain anonymous and any identifying information they may share during the interview including names of colleagues, students, and locations, would be removed. I felt that throughout interviews, participants were being honest with their perceptions and experiences. Many times during our discussions, participants would state something such as “I know that in an ideal situation it should be done differently,” or “It should be done this way, but in reality . . .”. This leads me to believe that participants were honest and felt comfortable describing how coteaching planning, strategies, and implementation truly existed in their setting.

Observations were the second piece of data collection and perhaps limitations existed. Observations were not random and were scheduled at each participant’s convenience, so they knew well in advance that they would be observed. It is possible that coteachers put in a greater effort preparing for and executing the observed lessons. For example, in interviews, when participants described the amount of direct instruction provided by the special education teacher during a cotaught lesson, both general education and special education teachers described that they do very little to no direct instruction. However, during observations, special education teachers took a leading role

or coleading role during 28% of the instructing. This is perhaps an inflated number from a typical day, due to the coteachers knowing I would be arriving and observing the parity between them.

Recommendations

The findings from this study can be extremely beneficial for all stakeholders in the district from which the participants were drawn. It is clear from historical and current literature that many benefits to students and teachers exist when coteaching is implemented effectively. Specifically, the use of team teaching, in which parity exists between coteachers throughout the cotaught process, yields positive academic and social/emotional student outcomes. Despite all of this, findings from this study show a clear dominance of the general education leader. Barriers to why this is occurring are outlined through both general education and special education teacher perceptions discussed in interviews and presented in the results. These findings can aide those leaders in the district when making decisions for their coteachers, determining which barriers can be removed. I recommend other districts and schools carry out similar interviews and observations to determine where issues exist in their settings. Getting a current view of teacher perceptions during interviews will allow leaders to hear feedback from those who co-teach on a daily basis. Observations of coteaching pairs will provide a snapshot of current implementation of coteaching and potential problems with parity.

I would also recommend further research in this area of inquiry to learn more about how and why decisions are made regarding coteaching. When looking over the findings of my study across interviews and observations, one thing stood out as eye-

opening. Table 15 presents a comparison of the percentages of planning times from teacher interviews to the percentage of time each teacher led instruction during observations.

Table 15

Comparing Interview and Observation Data

Teacher certification	Interview data – percentage of time spent planning	Observations data - percentage of time spent leading
Special education teacher	10%	12%
General education teacher	72%	72%
Coleading	18%	16%

Based on the findings from this study, a direct relationship is noted between the amounts of time teachers spend planning for a cotaught lesson and the amount of time each spends leading instruction or activities during a cotaught lesson. These numbers are almost identical. I would be interested in further research that takes a closer look into how and why educational leaders make decisions on coteaching, specifically, how master scheduling decisions are made. I would like to understand why, despite all the data that supports the importance of structured common planning time, minimal to no planning time is created for coteachers during the course of a school day with a school's master schedule.

Implications

The results from the study can promote positive social change by informing educational leaders to create appropriate professional development opportunities that would maximize use of effective coteaching models and strategies. These leaders can use findings to work towards overcoming discovered barriers and ensuring students with disabilities receive an appropriate education in their least restrictive environment. Results will inform leadership that an overwhelming majority of participants stated that they have not received any training from the district regarding coteaching, an implication that training on coteaching strategies and effective implementation is essential. It is hoped that this shows that professional developments regarding co-teaching practices and implementation are sorely needed for those in the district, both special education and general education teachers alike. Proper professional development and trainings can provide teachers with the knowledge and tools needed to effectively implement coteaching strategies in their buildings. Providing these opportunities to both the special education and general education teachers ensures each is hearing the same information and are on the same page when entering into a coteaching partnership. Implementation of effective coteaching can benefit students with and without disabilities, academically and socially, while educating students in an inclusive setting.

An additional implication of the study may be to help educational leaders make more informed decision regarding effective coteaching practices in their schools. Specifically, recognizing scheduling problems and related barriers discussed during interviews could be beneficial to a school's principal when creating a school's master

schedule. Principals and other administrators make many decisions that directly affect their coteaching staff. I hope the data from Table 13, showing a direct relationship between the amount of time teachers spend planning for a cotaught lessons and the actual time they spent leading instruction and activities in the classroom, punctuates the desperate need for time to be provided for coteachers to work together preparing for future lessons and analyzing past lessons. Thus, results of this study can help to support educational leaders when making important decisions regarding coteachers and their schedules.

Conclusion

Coteaching remains a popular way in which to instruct students with disabilities in their least restrictive environment. This study provided a closer look into coteaching practices within large school district in Southeastern United States, which serves over 50,000 students each year. The interpretation of results was provided for readers, educational leaders, and stakeholders to promote a positive social change of teachers' outcomes. Recommendations and implications of the study were provided to guide those reading the findings in making appropriate decisions regarding coteaching. I hope that the information provided in the study will help district level leadership, building level administration, and individual teachers to make informed decisions on coteaching practices and implementation. While coteaching has been shown to increase student academic and emotional outcomes, a lack of effective coteaching exists. Educational leaders should use the information in this study in order to make changes necessary for effective coteaching to occur.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Describe the training you have participated in on the topic of co-teaching?
2. Prior to a given lesson, describe what you do to plan, on your own?
3. Prior to a given lesson, describe what you believe your co-teacher does to plan for a co-taught lesson?
4. Prior to a given lesson, describe what you do to plan, together with your co-teaching partner?
5. How much time do you spend preparing for a lesson, on your own?
6. How much time do you spend preparing for a lesson, with your co-teaching partner?
7. During delivery of a lesson, what parts of the direct instruction are you responsible for, as a special/general education teacher?
8. During delivery of a lesson, what parts of the direct instruction is your partner responsible for, as a special/general education teacher?
9. After a given lesson, what do you do on your own to assess the lesson and prepare for the next?
10. After a given lesson, what do you with your partner to assess the lesson and prepare for the next?
11. What barriers have existed when planning for co-teaching?
12. What barriers have existed when delivering a co-teaching lesson?
13. When thinking of co-teaching implementation, what has worked?
14. When thinking of co-teaching implementation, what has not worked?

Appendix B: Observation Protocol

Adapted from Murawski & Lochner, (2011)

Date: _____ Time: _____ to _____

Brief summary of lesson:

Examples of Parity (note # of times and roles)

Special Education Teacher Leading	General Education Teacher Leading

Description of classroom routine:

What is happening?	How long does it happen for?	What role is the general (GET)/special education (SET) teacher playing?
Ie: Bell Ringer activity	7 min.	GET – displays activity/describes activity/sits down SET- walks around room/monitors student progress/assists students as needed

(check one)

LOOK FOR:	Didn't See	Saw an Attempt	Saw it Done Well
Two of more professionals working together in the same physical space			
Class environment demonstrates parity and collaboration (both names on board, sharing materials and space)			
Both teachers begin and end class together and remain in room entire time			
During instruction, both teachers assist students with and without disabilities			
The class moves smoothly with evidence of co-planning and communication between co-teachers			
Differentiated strategies, to include technology, are used to meet the range of learning needs			
A variety of instructional approaches (5 co-teaching approaches) are used, include regrouping students			

Both teachers engage in appropriate behavior management strategies as needed and are consistent in their approach to behavior management			
It is difficult to tell the special educator from the general educator			
It is difficult to tell the special education students from the general education students			
Co-teachers use of language (“we”; “our”) demonstrates true collaboration and shared responsibility			
Co-teachers phrase questions and statements so that it is obvious that all students in the class are included			
Students’ conversations evidence a sense of community (including peers with and without disabilities)			
Co-teachers ask questions at a variety of levels to meet all students’ needs (basic recall to higher order thinking)			

Additional Notes:

Appendix C: Observation Protocol Permission

Re: Seeking Permission - Leanne Ratcliff

Wendy Murawski <[REDACTED]>

Mon 11/6/2017 8:28 PM

PROPOSAL/ORAL DEFENSE

To: Leanne M. Henning Ratcliff <[REDACTED]>; Wendy Lochner <[REDACTED]>;

Cc: [REDACTED]

 2 attachments (3 MB)

Observing-Co-Teaching.pdf; MLFinalCover.jpg;

You have my permission. However, I recommend you cite the more recent publication of the work in Murawski & Lochner (2011) - attached - and check out our new book from ASCD that just came out called "Beyond Co-teaching Basics" which uses the protocol and describes how to collect data & use a new process. Best wishes on your dissertation!!
Wendy M

On Sun, Nov 5, 2017 at 6:27 PM, Leanne M. Henning Ratcliff <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dr. Murawski,

I am a doctoral student at Walden University working towards my EdD in Special Education.

I am currently in the process of having my dissertation proposal accepted by the IRB. My dissertation is on Middle School Teacher Perceptions of Co-Teaching.

I would very much like to use your Co-Teaching Observation Checklist protocol, adapted to include specific pieces to align with my research questions and conceptual framework.

With your permission, I plan to submit my proposal to our IRB with this adapted protocol.

I have attached your original checklist and my adaptation. I am happy to share my dissertation draft upon request. Please let me know if you need any further information.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration,

Leanne M. H. Ratcliff
Doctoral Student, Walden University