2019

# Coteachers' Perceptions About Collaborating to Implement Instructional Strategies for Students With Disabilities

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by


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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

Claudia Beverley Morgan-Morris

MA, Touro College, 2010

BS, Fordham University, 1987

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Walden University

April 2019

Abstract

During 2012-2016, students with disabilities (SWDs) in Grades 3-5 in an urban elementary school in New York City did not meet the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) standards. The scores had been consistently low for SWDs when compared to their nondisabled peers. SWDs are placed in the inclusion classrooms with an Individual Education Plan that consists of the necessary accommodations that each student requires to access the general education curriculum. The purpose of this case study was to determine if the low ELA test scores for SWDs relate to lack of collaborative practices between coteachers in the inclusion classroom, and to answer the primary research question of how coteachers collaborate to implement students' Individual Educational Plans and devise instructional strategies to accommodate SWDs. Cook and Friend's conceptual framework was used for this study because it directly supports collaboration and coteaching. A purposeful sampling was used to select 4 coteacher pairs (1 special education teacher and 1 general education teacher) from Grades 3-5. Qualitative data were collected from open-ended interviews and lesson plans were analyzed by using provisional and pattern coding. Four major themes emerged from the analysis: coteachers' strategies used when planning lessons for SWDs, classroom accommodation for SWDs, coteachers' instructional strategies, and collaborative relationship in inclusion classroom. The study findings positively influence social change by showing coteachers' need for ongoing professional development that provides effective instructional strategies and collaborative practices for teaching SWDs, with the goal of increasing the percentage of SWDs who meet the ELA state standards.

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Dedication

First and foremost, let me take this opportunity to glorify the Awesome God that I worship for keeping me healthy. This dissertation is dedicated to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for it was His wisdom, knowledge, and understanding that inspired me to begin and end this doctoral degree. It is to Him that I offer this degree, for without Him I never would have made it. He promised me that if I "*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding and in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths* (Proverbs 3:5-6). Thank you Lord, for your word has never returned to me void and I am forever grateful.

Special dedication to my mother Venetia Morgan who will be 102 years old in October. Mom, your prayers, love, and support encouraged me to persevere and never give up. Thank you for your faith in God that taught me how to love and give unselfishly. I have watched you over the years as you have loved and given of yourself to so many others. May God continue to richly bless and keep you.

To my only child, my lovely daughter, Paula Mills, her husband, Anthony Mills, and my beautiful granddaughter, Chrishnah Mills, I hope my academic journey will motivate you to reach your academic goals as I have. God Bless You All!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Students with disabilities (SWDs) in Grades 3-5 at Urban Community Elementary School (UCES; pseudonym) in New York City are part of the growing population of students who are serviced in inclusion classrooms by general and special education teachers as coteachers. This Title I elementary public school, consists of over 560 PK-5 students who are serviced in 18 general education classrooms, 5 integrated coteaching (ICT) classrooms with general and special education coteachers, and 3 self-contained classrooms with approximately 36 students. Some classes may have a paraprofessional to serve students who require additional help such as: crisis or health situations.

According to the New York State Education Department (NYSED; 2016), during the 2016-2017 academic year, the UCES student population consisted of approximately 22% special education students and 29% of those students were SWDs being served by coteachers. The demographic make-up of the student body was: 2% Asian, 36% Black, 57% Hispanic, and 3% White (NYSED, 2016). The population of SWDs equates to approximately 22% of the students in this elementary school. These students are diagnosed with varied disabilities such as: learning disability, emotional disturbance, speech/language, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), other health impairment (OHI), and a small percentage of autism.

The educators at UCES collaborate to plan, teach, and assess general education curriculum to meet SWDs learning styles and needs (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). According to NYSED (2016), SWDs in UCES are unable to compete with their nondisabled peers to meet the expected proficiency level in the

English Language Arts (ELA) assessments to lower the proficiency level achievement gap. In this case study I examined how coteachers collaborate and implement students' Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) and devise instructional strategies to accommodate the SWDs.

Chapter 1 includes sections of the study that focus on the local problem in UCES. The sections are the introduction and background, problem, the purpose, the research questions, and the conceptual framework. There are also additional sections that guide this research: assumptions, limitations, and summary. In addition, there is a list of definitions that are in this section to give clarification to the reader about words or terms used in this study.

**Background**

Since 1990, the configuration of the public school has changed in numerous forms. It has been an arduous journey starting from segregation and inequities to receiving free and appropriate education (FAPE) for all students (Nichols, Dowdy, & Nichols, 2010). Nichols et al. (2010) posited that prior to numerous reforms, students who were mentally and physically challenged were institutionalized in homes and remained in isolation and seclusion from their nondisabled peers. Advocate groups, court rulings, and national and state mandates were persistent in making changes that resulted in the amendments to the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the latter act reauthorized in 2015 to become the (ESSA), focus on improving U.S. schools.

McLeskey, Landers, Hoppey, and Wlliamson, (2011) stated that these amendments enabled SWDs to be educated in the least restricted environment (LRE).

During the 1950s, SWDs were more likely to be educated in mental institutions (Friend et al., 2010). During the 1950s and 1960s, disabled students frequently did not have the same accommodations as their nondisabled peers and were not permitted into the same learning environment (Friend et al., 2010). Instruction has changed immensely since the 1970s. Until the late 1980s, some SWDs were allowed to participate in some general education classrooms. This educational practice is called mainstreaming, whereby SWDs are placed in general education classrooms to address the requirement of "least restrictive environment" directed by the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975 (Public Law 94-142; now the IDEA).

SWDs had more opportunities to take part in general education classrooms than ever before because during the early decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, SWDs were able to be educated through inclusion. Inclusion is when SWDs are given services and support in general education classroom instead of receiving services in a self-contained classroom (Nichols et al., 2010). When the IEP team decides on a placement for students who are recommended to receive service for the first time, the team must consider the LRE, which could be a general education classroom. Coteachers provide services in an inclusion classroom to SWDs who possess an IEP which is designed by an IEP team. This legal document serves as a guide to inform coteachers of the goals, modifications, and adaptations that are necessary for the success of SWDs in an inclusion classroom (Friend et al., 2010).

To comply with federal laws FAPE, LRE, and ESSA, schools have included SWDs in inclusion classrooms. In inclusion classrooms coteachers collaborate to provide high-quality learning for SWDs and, moreover these classrooms meet policies that are legislated to ensure that SWDs are taught in the LRE (McLeskey et al., 2011). Hence, it is required that coteachers meet the learning needs of SWDs. The IDEA of 2004 and McLeskey, Landers et al. (2012) argued that SWDs be given instruction, extra help, and services in the LRE. Interventions and accommodations are planned for all SWDs who require additional support with their academic IEP goals in the collaborative inclusion setting. Friend et al. (2012) characterized coteaching as two teachers collaborating by planning and conveying instruction that is adaptable for SWDs' learning needs to be met in the same classroom. The collaborative relationship of two professionals working together in the same classroom allows SWDs to be successful in the inclusive setting.

Several researchers have reported that issues exist within the coteaching model (Conderman & Hedin, 2014; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016; Pellegrino, Weiss, & Regan, 2015; Weiss, Pellegrino, & Anthony-Brigham, 2017). These issues include time for planning collaboratively, teacher training, teacher personality differences, support from administration, and roles and responsibilities of each teacher in the coteaching model. In contrast, proponents of inclusion posit that when students are placed in inclusion classrooms they benefit socially and academically from their peers (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, Orsati, & Cosier, 2011).

It was my intentions to conduct this case study to gather data to answer the questions related to collaborative practices in the inclusion classrooms. I hoped to

discover the different factors affecting the effectiveness of the coteaching instructional model. It was my hope that this study would reveal valuable information and resources that would benefit administration and coteachers. In addition, the results of the study might bring about changes in how coteachers collaborate to support SWDs and eventually close the academic achievement gap.

According to the NYSED (2016), the ELA scores for SWDs in Grades 3-5 at UCES have been consistently lower for 4 years: 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016. SWDs are integrated into the regular classroom setting with their nondisabled peers and are required to participate in the NYS ELA assessments, which measure students' abilities in Grades 3-5. Table 1 shows the number and percentage of SWDs and nondisabled students who met the expected proficiency standard for the years 2012-2016 at UCES. These scores are reported by grade levels and there is a difference between the scores for the SWDs and their nondisabled peers for each year. The percentage of students meeting the proficiency standard is higher for the nondisabled students for each year.

Table 1

*Grades 3-5 Individual Scores for Local School Comparison of NYS ELA Results for SWDs and Nondisabled Peers*

| Years tested and Grade Level | Total no. of students per grade level | Total no. of SWDs per grade level | Total no. of nondisabled students per grade level | Total no. of SWDs in Grades 3-5 classrooms who met standards | % of SWDs in Grades 3-5 classrooms who met standards | Total no. of non-disabled students in Grades 3-5 classrooms who met standards | % of nondisabled Grades 3-5 peers in classrooms who met standards |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2012-2013 | | | | | | | |
| Grade 3 | 71 | 10 | 61 | 0 | 0% | 9 | 15% |
| Grade 4 | 86 | 20 | 66 | 0 | 0% | 16 | 24% |
| Grade 5 | 55 | 9 | 46 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 11% |
| 2013-2014 | | | | | | | |
| Grade 3 | 67 | 11 | 56 | 1 | 9% | 19 | 34% |
| Grade 4 | 68 | 14 | 54 | 0 | 0% | 8 | 15% |
| Grade 5 | 87 | 23 | 64 | 0 | 0% | 10 | 16% |
| 2014-2015 | | | | | | | |
| Grade 3 | 83 | 17 | 66 | 1 | 6% | 10 | 15% |
| Grade 4 | 65 | 11 | 54 | 1 | 9% | 19 | 35% |
| Grade 5 | 68 | 12 | 56 | 0 | 0% | 9 | 16% |
| 2015-2016 | | | | | | | |
| Grade 3 | 105 | 27 | 78 | 5 | 19% | 25 | 32% |
| Grade 4 | 81 | 17 | 64 | 3 | 18% | 19 | 30% |
| Grade 5 | 67 | 10 | 57 | 0 | 0% | 14 | 25% |

*Note*. From the New York State Education Department. (2016). *New York State Education Department/report card/ ELA*.

In the 2015-2016 school year UCES enrolled over 560 Pre-K students and of those 22% (*n* = 125) were SWDs. These SWDs are serviced in five ICT classrooms with coteachers and three self-contained classrooms. SWDs are equipped with an IEP, with

their own goals and objectives to meet their individualized needs and are taught by coteachers with their nondisabled peers.

During years 2016-2017, during the months of October, 2016 through February, 2017, UCES school administrators focused on addressing the problem of low ELA achievement scores for SWDs, particularly for SWDs in ICT classrooms, and improving ELA scores for Grades 3-5. The administrators and literacy coach at UCES planned monthly professional development meetings with teachers who taught SWDs, coteachers, IEP team members: school psychologist, speech pathologist, and school counselor to address academic achievement of SWDs. These meetings were planned in the earlier part of the school year because the administrators wanted to provide support to teachers who were preparing students for the NYS, ELA exam in April, 2017 (UCES Professional Development Binder 2016-2017).

These monthly meetings were held over a five-month period (October 2016 through February 2017) with each meeting focusing on collaborative practices related to coteaching. The ICT teachers were grouped together with their colleagues from Grades K-5 to discuss topics related to SWDs academic achievement (UCES Professional Development Binder 2016-2017). At the end of the fifth month (February) the feedback for the five meetings from each group was summarized and analyzed. The group members mainly reported concerns related to finding adequate time for collaboration among coteachers when planning instruction for the individual needs of SWDs.

The coteachers in the professional development sessions over the past 5 months, provided feedback to UCES administrators and the literacy coach. I used pseudonyms to

protect the anonymity of the UCES teachers. Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C (personal

communication, October, 2016) reported that although they are assigned planning time

once weekly, they had little or no time to plan together due to the great abundance of

paperwork that they must complete daily, weekly, and monthly. Additionally, coteachers'

planning was normally done before class starts, during lunch, afterschool, or on the

weekend by phone if both teachers are available (Teacher B, Teacher E, Teacher F, and

Teacher G, personal communication, November, 2016). Gallo-Fox and Scantlebury

(2015) stated that "common planning time was a significant challenge for many

coteaching groups so coplanning is done between classes, during preps, and during

instructions" (p. 334). Similarly, Shamberger, Williamson-Henriques, Moffett, and

Brownlee-Williams (2014), posited that "a need to make time for coteachers to share

instructional planning is a high priority in order to facilitate effective coteaching" (p. 7).

In addition, the teachers discussed that there are scheduling conflicts that are

caused from excessive teacher absences, causing the class to operate with a substitute or

sometimes one teacher (Teacher D and Teacher E, personal communication, December,

2016). Teachers also expressed that they do not have enough training on how to

determine instructional strategies to teach SWDs (Teacher A, C, D, & E, personal

communication, January, 2017). In a study by Pellegrino, Weiss, and Regan (2015) the

authors argued that "often, teacher educators have not prepared teacher candidates for the

personal and professional challenges of inclusion instructions" (p. 199). Similarly,

Allday, Nielsen-Gatti and Hudson (2013) stated that "most elementary education

preparation programs are not offering extensive course work on working in inclusive environments" (p. 308).

During the final professional development session in February 2017, teachers were asked to reflect on the past professional development sessions. The reflection session resulted with the same feedback in previous sessions. Teachers wanted adequate time to plan lessons for each student's needs and additional professional development to support collaborative strategies in inclusion classroom. Finally, a new concern from all the teachers was: having the opportunity to participate in the selecting of their copartner because of differences in personality traits (Teachers A, B, C, D, E, F & G, personal communication, February, 2017). Simpson, Thurston, and James (2014) argued that inquiry into which personality works best in coteaching classrooms may be a powerful vehicle to learning about coteachers differences individuals and team members. Based on the feedback from the teachers and information from researchers, the question to be addressed by this study is, does the low ELA test scores for SWDs relate to lack of collaborative practices in the inclusion classroom?

**Purpose of the Study**

To address the problem of low ELA achievement scores for SWDs, I conducted a case study to examine how coteachers collaborate to implement students' IEPs and devise instructional strategies to accommodate the SWDs. Blackwell and Rossetti (2014) estimated that with over 13% SWDs educated in U.S. schools "there are 6.6 million Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that have been developed and are being implemented at any given time" (p. 2). During the IEP process, members of the IEP team

design instructional guidelines for the coteachers who coteach and need to plan and implement instructional strategies in their inclusion classroom to meet the SWDs individual needs (Cantu, 2015; Murphy & Marshall, 2015; Rotter, 2014). Several studies have been done on the benefits of coteaching and collaboration in an inclusion classroom (Mackey, 2014; McHatton & Parker, 2013; Nichols & Sheffield, 2014; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016). The findings from these studies indicated that SWDs may not be able to succeed in inclusion classrooms where teachers fail to collaborate in planning instructional strategies. In this study, I examined how coteachers in inclusion classrooms collaborated to implement IEPs and ELA instructional strategies to promote students' achievement.

## Research Questions

The primary question that I examined was how general and special education teachers collaborated and devised instructional strategies in elementary grade level ELA to accommodate SWDs. The following questions framed the study:

RQ1: What types of ELA instructional strategies do general and special education teachers' use when planning lessons for SWDs in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms?

RQ2: How do general and special teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement ELA instructional strategies to promote students' achievement?

RQ3: How do teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement the students' IEPs to accommodate ELA instructional strategies for SWDs?

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on the research of Friend and Cook (2010). Friend and Cook defined coteaching "as two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space" (p. 9). The conceptual framework provided a lens to address research questions related to how coteachers collaborated to implement students' IEPs and devised instructional strategies to accommodate SWDs. The key concepts of the framework are related to collaboration and coteaching. Friend and Cook described the six types or models of coteaching: "one teaches, one observes; one teaches, one assists; station teaching; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; and team teaching" (p. 7). The above six coteaching models support general and special education students' academic and social needs. Each model is centered on maximizing student learning by using the classroom space, coteachers and student arrangements, and roles and responsibilities within the inclusive setting. Students in the inclusion classroom have unique needs that require the teacher to accommodate the IEP goals of students to make sure they attain certain measures of performance.

## Nature of the Study

The methodology that was used in this case study design was to comprehend the ways in which individuals experienced and constructed personal meaning through

analyzing reports, words, and participants' comments (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Yin, 2013). The case study design was appropriate because it allowed me to collect data to answer questions related to how coteachers used collaborative practices and implemented ELA instructional strategies to promote students' achievement. I used semistructured interviews, and lesson plans to gain insights from coteachers about what ELA instructional strategies they used and how they collaborated in an inclusion classroom to meet the needs of SWDs. Coteachers were selected purposely to answer open-ended interview questions from an interview protocol (see Appendix A), The data was collected and transcribed into text-based format using Microsoft software. Additionally, I used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to organize all the responses from the participants. I used Miles and Huberman (2013) three cycles (provisional coding, pattern coding, and narrative report model) to analyze and interpret the data to reveal themes, ideas, and patterns related to the research topic.

**Definitions**

For purposes of clarification, definitions of terms used throughout the study are presented below:

*Academic achievement:* The extent to which students achieve their short or long-term educational goals (La Salle, Roach, & McGrath, 2013).

*Achievement gap:* The gap usually comparing two different groups when educational institutions or other educational programs provide academic standards that both groups are measured by. The disparity in the results between both groups is the achievement gap (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

*Accommodation:* Minor changes in how instruction is delivered in the inclusion classroom without changing curriculum demands (Rotter, 2014).

*Collaboration:* The collaborative relationship of two or more teachers. This union allows teachers to collaborate to support students in the inclusion classroom (Friend & Cook, 2010).

*Coteaching:* Certified coteachers working together to promote the growth of student learning needs and styles in the inclusion setting (Friend & Cook, 2010).

*Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):* A state mandate that amended the IDEA of 2004 and the NCLB Act of 2001, to become the latter act reauthorized in 2015.

*Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):* A mandate from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) that states FAPE must be offered to all students who are qualified to receive special education and related (IDEIA, 2004; Nichols et al., 2010).

*General education teacher:* A K-12th grade certified teacher who is certified to teach students in a public, parochial, or private school (Friend et al., 2010).

*General education*: General education is a setting to provide students with a curriculum that will enable them to access grade level skills and knowledge to achieve success (Johnson, 2016).

*Individualized Education Program (IEP):* The IEP is a legal document that is prepared by a team, which includes general and special education teachers, related services professionals, and parents who collaborate on how SWDs will be able to receive FAPE in the least restrictive environment (Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014; IDEIA, 2004).

*Inclusion:* Two or more teachers providing instructions for SWDs in the general education classroom (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017).

*Inclusive setting:* A classroom that includes students of all learning abilities, needs, and exceptionalities. SWDs and their nondisabled peers are learning together with adaptations and modifications made to meet their unique learning styles and needs (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017).

*Integrated coteaching (ICT):* Coteachers providing services in an inclusion classroom in New York State use the terminology integrated coteaching (NYSED, 2013). UCES subscribes to the NYSED definition.

*Instructional accommodations:* How much time SWDs are provided to complete their assignments in the classroom, how they should participate in the classroom, and the intensity of educational support needed to succeed in their inclusive settings (Strogilos, Stefanidis, & Tragoulia, 2016).

*Interventions:* Adaptations and modifications of teaching and assessment strategies specifically designed to accommodate students in the inclusion classroom to meet the learning outcomes for each subject (Rotter, 2014).

*Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):* Providing opportunity to SWDs in public and private schools. IDEA regulated the LRE to ensure that each student is offered the general education setting first to allow to be educated with their nondisabled peers. (McLeskey et al., 2011).

*Mainstreaming:* Students receive service in a special education classroom full time and gradually move to a least restricted environment, the general education classroom. Students normally share their time in both setting (Friend et al., 2010).

*Modifications:* Changes made to the curriculum without changing what is expected from the students by adapting instructional strategies to the curriculum. In doing so, students will be able access the curriculum and may be successful in assessment of achievement (Rotter, 2014).

*No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB):* Standards and goals enacted to improve student outcomes. Provides assistance to schools with disadvantaged students (NCLB Act of 2001, 2002).

*Nondisabled peers*: Students without an IEP who are taught in a general education classroom with their disabled peers (Friend et al., 2010).

*Special education:* An educational program constructed to meet the unique learning styles and educational needs for SWDs (Johnson, 2016).

*Special education teacher:* Teacher who is certified in special education and provides services for students with an IEP (Friend et al., 2010).

## Assumptions

The assumption for this case study was that the coteachers will answer the open-ended questions honestly and accurately. Another assumption was that the coteachers do not have a choice in selecting who they would work with or whether they wanted to teach in an inclusion classroom. I also assumed that the coteachers have implemented instructional strategies to accommodate SWDs in inclusion classrooms. It was also

assumed that all teachers who participated in the study would have at some point taught

in an inclusion classroom and understood what it meant to be a teacher in that setting.

These assumptions were necessary because the results from this study needed to be

reliable to enable me to provide trustworthy data. I collected data by following ethical

procedures about how coteachers collaborated to implemented students' IEPs and devised

instructional strategies to accommodate the SWDs.

### Scope and Delimitations

All teachers who taught in Grades 3 to 5 ICT classrooms were invited to

participate in the study, but all coteachers in Grades K to 2, along with special education

teachers in self-contained classrooms were excluded from the study. In addition, I did not

evaluate the reading levels and abilities of the SWDs in Grades 3 to 5. This qualitative

case study was done in a K-5 school and might not be able to be generalized in other

levels. However, the information that resulted from this study may be beneficial to

individuals in similar situations because as stated by Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle

(2010), the reader reads the context, participants, resources, school, and policies. Lodico

et al. explained that transferability is determined when the reader of a study determines

that there is a degree of similarity between a study site and other sites by analyzing the

details and vividness described by the researcher.

### Limitations

Due to the nature of the qualitative case study, sample size was eight participants

from a single school in one geographical area. Another limitation was the various

teaching experiences of the coteachers regarding inclusion and collaboration. These

limitations from this study might make generalization difficult to generalize the findings from this study to a larger target population. My beliefs about collaboration in an inclusion classroom did not influence the teachers' behavior in how they conducted the interview different from the way they would report to an outsider.

One bias that was brought to the study is the knowledge that I have acquired being a special education teacher. Another bias was that I believe that when SWDs are provided with accommodations based on their IEP, they can achieve ELA academic proficiency. Additionally, I believed that SWDs could learn and meet their individual needs in an inclusion classroom when collaboration takes place by the coteachers. The reasonable measures to address these limitations were the use of different data sources such as interviews and data collected from lesson plans to attain credible results. I assumed that the data collected from lesson plans would be beneficial in triangulating the interviews to gain relevant and sufficient information that would positively affect the study.

## Significance

This case study to examine how coteachers collaborated to implement students' IEPs by devising instructional strategies to accommodate the SWDs, will benefit UCES and the local community and can influence the national educational system as well. On the local level, the results may positively affect how coteachers at UCES collaborate in inclusion classrooms by improving their collaborative practices. These research findings may also be used to enhance the collaborative practices of teachers outside of UCES, who share the responsibility in inclusion classrooms. Additionally, school administrators are often seeking best practices to use in their educational settings. This study may assist

administrators at UCES and other schools in learning about effective collaborative practices to improve students' achievement in inclusion classrooms. The findings may also assist educators and school administrators to prepare coteachers to meet demands of coplanning, coteaching, and the design of effective instructional strategies.

**Summary**

In Chapter 1, I introduced the study by describing the growing population of SWDs with IEP who are placed in inclusion classrooms in UCES. I discussed the local problem and rationale which relates to this case study to examine how coteachers collaborated to implement students' IEPs and devise instructional strategies to accommodate the SWDs. I also discussed the different national and state mandates that provide free and appropriate education for SWDs in a LRE. ESSA supports preparing students to be career and college ready and providing education in inclusion classrooms. The UCES data over a 4-year period showed the low achievement of SWDs on standardized ELA assessments when compared to their nondisabled peers. The conceptual framework that was used to guide this study is Friend et al.'s (2010) theory. The framework states how collaboration between coteachers benefits the students' unique learning styles and needs in the inclusion classroom setting. The research study can inform all stakeholders with the knowledge of relationship collaboration to improve teamwork in coteaching teams, both in K-12 settings and higher education programs. Chapter 1 ended with assumptions, significance and social change implications about the proposed study.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed sources of relevant literature on how coteachers collaborated to meet SWDs educational and behavioral needs. The following topics were discussed: (a) history of IDEA addressing access to education for SWDs, (b) collaboration as a model for school improvement, (c) teacher preparedness (d) supporting coteachers in inclusion classrooms, and (e) accommodating students in general education classroom.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To address the problem of low ELA achievement scores for SWDs, I conducted a case study to examine how coteachers collaborated to implement students' IEPs and devise instructional strategies to accommodate the SWDs. In the literature review I discuss evidence-based collaborative models for coteachers, practices for providing effective instructional strategies in the inclusion classroom, and instructional strategies that are effective when planning for SWDs. There were several studies done related to collaboration and inclusion in middle and high schools. However, there are few studies at the elementary school level. To address this gap, I explored the following topics: (a) history of IDEA addressing access to education for SWDs, (b) collaboration as a model for school improvement, (c) teacher preparedness (d) supporting coteachers in inclusion classrooms, and (e) accommodating students in general education classroom.

## Literature Search Strategy

I gained access to the Walden online library to obtain relevant literature for this case study from several education databases: SAGE, ProQuest, EBSCO host, Academic Search Premier, ERIC, Google Scholar Teacher Reference Center, and Education Research Complete. In addition, I included online website and books as sources for this study. I used the following search terms to locate peer-reviewed journal articles related to this study: *instructional accommodation and students with disabilities*, *special education and IDEA*, *student achievement and IDEA*, *general education*, *special education*, *collaborative planning*, *supporting coteachers*, *preparing coteachers*, *No Child Left Behind Act*, *co-teaching students with disabilities and reading*, *learning disabilities*, and

*teachers' perception and inclusion.* The literature review in this study relates to the local

problem and the broader problem that is related to the study, and the review of other

elements that are related to collaborative practices in inclusive classrooms. The search of

the above databases and search engines yielded over 116 peer-reviewed empirical

literature from peer reviewed journal articles that were published between the years 2012

and 2017. I also included seminal articles and documents related to laws and policies of

special education.

**Conceptual Framework**

I built my research on the conceptual framework of collaborative theory by Cook

and Friend (1995). I believe that this collaborative theory was a suitable framework to

address coteaching among teachers in an inclusion classroom. Over the past years,

coteaching has been an effective service delivery model for instructional achievement in

the inclusion classrooms (Allday et al., 2013). In this research case study, I examined

how coteachers collaborated to implement students' IEPs and devise instructional

strategies to accommodate the SWDs. Cook and Friend (1995) defined coteaching as

special and regular students receiving instruction from two or more professionals

working in the same room to deliver the general education curriculum to students in the

inclusion classroom. Coteaching is normally experienced by trained and experience

coteachers who both collaborate to provide academic and social needs to SWDs (Cook &

Friend, 1995). In addition to coteachers, there is sometime a need for additional

professional expertise to provide support to SWDs learning needs (Cook & Friend, 1995).

The evolution of coteaching was derived from cooperative teaching based on the seminal work of Bauwen, Hourcade, and Friend (1989). During the early 1990s, the thrust for integration of SWDs in inclusion classrooms, and the need to create a well needed relationship between coteachers, brought about the coteaching instructional delivery method (Bauwen et al., 1989). In 1995, Cook and Friend used the cooperative teaching model to develop the coteaching instructional delivery method. Cook and Friend (1995) stated that "coteaching increases the emphasis on the collaboration of general education and special education teachers while supporting the education of SWDs in general education settings" (p. 12).

The coteaching instructional delivery model has six different components that can be used individually or together during instructions based on the subject being taught, the creativity of the teachers and the age or maturity of the students (Cook & Friend, 1995). The different models that address the coteaching service delivery relationship between the coteachers are: "one teach, one assist; station teaching; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; team teaching and one teach, one observe" (Friend et al., 2010, p. 12). Other researchers (Friend, 2013; Friend, 2014; Friend et al., 2010; Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & Mcculley, 2012), supported the coteaching service delivery model.

Cook and Friend (1995) first model discussed how both teachers who have different roles, provide instruction to students in inclusion classroom. One of the teacher delivers instructions to the class, while the other teacher acts in the capacity of an assistant teacher. The special education teacher may perform other jobs such as: monitoring students, assisting students with difficulties in completing class work, and

maintaining the behavior issues in the classroom (Cook & Friend, 1995). In this model, the support teacher is frequently viewed in a subordinate role (Friend, 2014; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007; Solis et al., 2012).

The station teaching model which is divided into sections and each teacher teaches a different group. Each group rotates to meet with the teacher who did not teach them in the first rotation (Cook & Friend, 1995). The station model is usually divided into three to four groups based on the maturity of the group. When the groups are divided, the students in groups three and four are usually working independently (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Parallel teaching, the third model, is divided heterogeneously and coteachers teaches the material to the students they are with (Cook & Friend, 1995). Teaching during the parallel model is sometimes very difficult for students to focus on the lesson because of several distractions from the two groups being taught in the same room. These groups are normally very loud and the lessons could become ineffective because of the noise level and distractions from each group (Cook & Friend, 1995).

The fourth model, the alternative model, is similar to the parallel model. During this teaching model, both teachers administer instruction. One teacher is normally working with a large group of students, while the other teacher works with students who need remediation through pre-teaching and re-teaching strategies. The teachers decide which group of students each teacher will teach, based on the topics that will be taught to the students (Cook & Friend, 1995; Friend, 2014).

Team teaching is the fifth model. Coteachers collaborate to teach the entire class simultaneously (Cook & Friend, 1995). The fifth model, team teaching, seems to be an effective collaborative model for students in inclusion classrooms (Friend, 2014). However, it was difficult to determine its effectiveness during the early 1970s, because there were many different approaches to team teaching. During the latter years, team teaching has become more effective in inclusion classrooms (Friend, Reising & Cook, 1993).

Cook and Friend added an additional model (Friend, 2013). This model involves one teacher providing instructions while the other is documenting observations. Coteachers use the data that is collected from the detailed observations to perform analysis that's based on each students' needs to plan appropriate instruction (Friend, 2014). SWDs in inclusion classrooms are equipped with an IEP which outlines the individual goals. Teachers are accountable to provide instructions to meet the needs of each student. This additional model, enables coteachers to assess the data and make decisions about what will be beneficial for SWDs access to the curriculum (Friend, 2013; Friend, 2014).

Through my investigation of each model, I found out that there was a seventh model which is the, combined seventh model (Kurtz, 2015). This seventh model is used to address the collaborative instructions in an ICT classroom in New York City (NYSED, 2013). The combined seventh model was developed by two teachers who used a combination of all six models (Friend et al., 2010) to create the seventh model. The New York City schools use the following instructional delivery process in the ICT classrooms

(NYSED, 2013). The teachers thought by combining some of these models into one will lead to the ICT model, which entails: (a) "I Do" for the "Introduction to New Material" (b) "We Do" for "Guided Practice" (c) "You Do" for Independent Practice" They combined ICT models was planned and timed lessons to transition from one model to the next (Kurtz, 2015).

Coteaching allows coteachers opportunities to deliver instructions to students in inclusion classrooms (Cook & Friend, 1995). Coteaching allows SWDs to access the general education curriculum and receive instructions from professionals who provide academic and social support (Cook & Friend, 1995). Coteachers are able to use flexible models to plan, teach, assess, and support SWDs. Cook and Friend (1995); Friend et al. (2010); Friend (2013); Friend (2014); and Solis et al. (2012), state that by using all or a few of the coteaching service delivery models, coteachers can collaborate to plan lessons for part or all day based on the curriculum material, age group, or level of maturity of the students. Friend et al. (1993) explained that, "when the two teachers truly perceive that they are equal partners in coteaching, they report it as a tremendously energizing experience" (p. 4). Coteachers who are equipped with varied experiences, ideas and skills must be committed to educating all students to achieve success. This can only be a successful union if each coteacher is committed to bringing out the best in each other to result in a strong teaching relationship and partnership.

There are many benefits in using each of these coteaching models. These models can be use independently or grouped with one or two other models. Coteachers have the opportunity to use these models with part or the entire lessons. The

coteaching models are not only design for elementary teachers, these models can also be delivered to the students in middle and secondary schools (Cook & Friend, 1995; Friend, 2013; Friend, 2014; Solis et al., 2012).

This qualitative case study could benefit from the conceptual framework of the collaborative theory by Cook and Friend (1995) because it addresses several instructional delivery models that coteachers can use to address the needs of SWDs. The coteaching model enables coteaching professionals to adjust their lessons for students' needs. The lessons are planned to address the instructional goals and maturity level of the students (Cook & Friend, 1995; Friend, 2013; Solis et al., 2012).

**Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable**

This chapter provides valuable resources from current research studies related to my research study which focuses mainly on collaboration, inclusion classrooms, and instructional accommodations to SWDs. The literature is arranged in five different categories with subheadings to organize the report. The categories are (a) history of IDEA addressing access to education for SWDs, (b) collaboration as a model for school improvement, (c) teacher preparedness (d) supporting coteachers in inclusion classrooms, and (e) accommodating students in inclusion classroom. The following category relates to IDEA's history and how SWDs were able to access the curriculum. The historical literature data revealed articles that are reported in subheadings: EAHCA, 1975; IDEA 1990, 1997, 2001, 2004; Least Restricted Environment (LRE) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) 2015.

**History of IDEA addressing access to education for SWDs**

The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS; 2007) reported that over the last 40 years, the IDEA, formerly known as the Education for All Handicapped Students Act (EHA), has been ratified on numerous occasions. According to McLeskey, Landers, et al. (2012), policymakers amended IDEA for two reasons: (a) to ensure that SWDs were educated with their nondisabled peers, and (b) to ensure that SWDs would participate in the curriculum and state assessments as their nondisabled peers. The following will include the historical journey of how IDEA influence how SWDs are educated in an inclusion classroom. In addition, the review will outline how federal laws were enacted to allow access and monitoring the academic achievement of SWDs.

**EAHCA 1975.** SWDs endured a long journey to gain acceptance in inclusion classroom. The struggles began during 1960s with over 15 years of exclusion and discrimination of SWDs from the general education classroom. The EAHCA PL 94-142 was created as a response to the years of exclusion and discrimination. Several litigations and state legislation to protect the civil rights of SWDs have been documented. Before 1975, public schools were not obligated to educate children with disabilities (McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012). Most children, especially those with severe disabilities, did not attend public school and if they did, they were segregated from their nondisabled peers. EAHCA Act PL 94-142 that was enacted by Congress in November of 1975, was the first federal law that enabled SWDs to receive services in

a free and appropriate education (FAPE; McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012; OSERS, 2007).

In 1975, EAHCA Act PL 94-142 mandated that all students in the public-school setting, especially special education students, should have their learning needs met (Keogh, 2007). PL 94-142 mandated that SWDs and their nondisabled peers should learn in the same classroom to the greatest extent possible, which created the beginning for federal support for special education. PL 94-142 required public schools to have FAPE for SWDs and the LRE was also mandated in the law (ED, 1996). LRE is when students with special needs are serviced with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent possible.

The EAHCA brought about many changes in public education to individuals based on ability. The EAHCA required that SWDs receive FAPE in the LRE (Blewett & Kaufman, 2012) by implementing different guidelines to the individual education program (IEP) for all SWDs. An IEP is a legal document which is designed to provide instructional support and accommodation to access the general education curriculum. The IEP which is prepared by an IEP team, is comprised of annual goals and objectives, the placement and assessment criteria (Conderman, 2011; Yell, Rogers, & Rogers, 1998). The IEP is individually designed to document SWDs' academic and social and emotional development. In addition, the IEP is developed to include the personal needs and learning styles for each SWD and secondly, to inform teachers of the instructional supports and testing accommodations that are required to

accommodate SWDs in general education classroom (Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014; Cook & Friend, 1995; La Salle et al., 2013; Rotter, 2014; Yell et al., 1998).

EAHCA required that the IEP team members, which is normally comprised of coteachers, related services members and parent, to collaborate and create students' IEP goal. However, until 1997 there were not any safeguards responsible for documenting and being accountable for the success of SWDs (Yell et al., 1998). In 1997, IDEA was enacted by Congress to guarantee that accountability measures were in place to ensure that SWDs were learning (Lingo, Barton-Arwood, & Jolviette, 2011). To attain this measure of accountability, many school administrators implemented inclusion classrooms to meet the guidelines of IDEA and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001(Conderman, 2011; Nichols et al., 2010; Nichols & Sheffield, 2014).

**IDEA 1990.** IDEA and its amendments of 1990 replaced the EAHCA 1975 (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Marx, Hart, Nelson, Love, Baxter, Gartin, & Schaefer, 2014; McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012). IDEA 1990 brought about several necessary changes. The first change, although may seem minor, was the replacement of the term *handicapped* with the term *disabled* which enabled the expansion of educational placement options for SWDs (OSERS, 2007). Secondly, the IDEA 1990 law required that states provide a plan for educating SWDs in a LRE. This setting is normally the general education classroom (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Marx et al., 2014; McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012). Some supporters of inclusion argued that including SWDs in the inclusion classroom could be beneficial socially and academically (McLeskey, Landers, et al.,

2012). Additionally, supporters of inclusion argued why SWDs should be taught in their

regular home school districts, even if they required more support staff, resources to help

SWDs to access the curriculum, along with additional funds for training (Kavale &

Forness, 2000; Marx et al., 2014; McLeskey, Landers et al., 2012).

  **IDEA 1997.** The IDEA 1997 replaced IDEA of 1990. During 1990s, there was a

reform movement to bring about changes in how SWDs were assessed in inclusion

classrooms (ED, 2007). Prior to the 1997 amendments of IDEA, SWDs were not required

to participate in statewide or national assessments to measure academic achievement.

Because of little information available about academic achievement, it was very difficult

to determine how SWDs were performing in comparison to their nondisabled peers

(McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012). There were several concerns by federal policymakers

about the educational achievement of SWDs in regards to standardized tests or other

assessments (McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012). The speculations and concerns from

federal policymakers resulted in the reforms in 1997 of standardized tests and

assessments (McLeskey et al., 2011).

  The SWDs community was the topic of concern because they are included in a

large proportion of U.S. public education system. Policymakers were concerned about the

level of standards that was acceptable from SWDs. They advocated for higher standards

(OSERS, 2007), because they thought that the schools in the district had very low

expectations for SWDs in regards to academic achievement. The policymakers posit that

if SWDs were expected to receive inclusion services, accessing the same general

education curriculum, they should be performing at the same level like their nondisabled

peers (McLeskey, et al., 2011). In addition, the policymakers argued that schools are responsible for ensuring that SWDs are progressive and successful in the inclusion classroom (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). They also thought that teachers' expectations about academic achievement for SWDs were very low and because of that, they would teach separate curriculum which resulted in low achievement (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act 2001.**The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was an important law that addressed educational funding and academic achievement for SWDs. The reauthorization of ESEA, also referred to as the NCLB, increased demands that SWDs perform to grade-level standards (Yell & Rozalski, 2013). In 2010, ED launched the Blueprint for Reform, which was developed for SWDs' world-class education. The major goal of ESEA was to improve student learning and achievement in the lowest performing schools in the United States, by assisting students to be college- and career-ready, through the development and use of a new generation of assessments. The two main laws were ESEA which was reauthorization to give additional support to SWDs in the inclusion classroom (ED, 2010). In 2009, the Race to the Top initiative was to provide funds to elementary and secondary education in States. This was a very competitive endeavor to provide innovation to improve failing schools (ED, 2013). The overall goal of Race to the Top was to provide funding and improve failing schools. The final report for Race to the Top (ED, 2013) showed a difference in the previous plan. It provided more funds to states that

developed a more comprehensive plan to improve the entire system instead of improving

a few needed elements of the plan (ED, 2013).

**IDEA 2004.** IDEA of 2004 was enacted by Congress and signed by President

George W. Bush. This enactment brought about changes that were beneficial to SWDs to

guarantee free and appropriate education that would yield favorable achievement. The

latter IDEA version included significant changes to aide SWDs to achieve higher

standards by (a) ensuring that the stakeholders who are responsible for the education of

each student be accountable for results, (b) making sure that parent or guardian are

involved in the process, (c) using instructional practices and materials that proved to be

effective, and (d) lessen the demands for preparation of paperwork required by local

school districts (Lee, Soukup, Little, & Wehmeyer, 2009; Whalon & Hart, 2011). The

IDEA law was instrumental in allowing SWDs to receive high standards free and

appropriate education. The policymakers ensured that the regulations and polices were

designed to accommodate all SWDs and was reflected in the ESEA of 1965, which was

amended by the NCLB (McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012; Yell et al., 2008).

**Least restricted environment.** Prior to 1975, the only options to educate SWDs

were pulling students from general education classrooms or being placed all day in

classrooms that were in seclusions (McLeskey et al., 2011; McLeskey, Landers, et al.,

2012). According to IDEA (1990), SWDs and nondisabled students should be taught in

LRE to improve their academic and social development. McLeskey, Landers, et al.

(2012) argued that the general education teacher plays an important part in the classroom.

One of the key factors for a successful classroom lies in the teachers' attitudes about

accommodating SWDs and their judgements about the students' abilities to make

academic progress. To meet the needs for each student, coteachers should be provided

with tools that will meet their demanding responsibilities and be given useful support

(McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012).

**Every Student Succeeds (ESSA) Act 2015**. The 50 years longstanding ESEA

law that was committed to equal opportunity, was replaced by ESSA (ED, 2015a). This

bipartisan accomplishment was signed by President Obama in December 2015. This act

will play an important part in the lives of students in U.S. schools by focusing on

preparing students to be college and career ready after high school graduation.

Blackwell and Rossetti (2014), La Salle et al. (2013), and Rotter (2014) described

IEPs as a legal document that is the "cornerstone of IDEA" which provides a binding

contract between school districts and the students (and parents) they serve. There is

another plan that is seldom mentioned or understood. The Section 504 of the

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a civil rights law that was designed to provide federal

financial assistance and to prevent handicap discrimination from programs and activity

(Madaus & Shaw, 2008). Students are eligible for Section 504, if they meet the following

requirement "(a) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or

more major life activities; or (b) have a record of such an impairment; or (c) be regarded

as having such an impairment" (ED, 2013, p. 76). When students meet the above

requirement, the IEP team meets to provide accommodations and support to meet the

student's needs (ED, 2013).

As SWDs enter classrooms across the United States, teachers should continuously prepare to gain new and current ideas and knowledge to meet these students' needs. Teachers are faced with many challenges and find themselves unable to effectively instruct SWDs successfully and prepare them to achieve academically and socially. Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, and Hudson (2013) conducted a study related to the perceptions of elementary school coteachers about preparing for the needs of SWDs. The authors found that coteachers felt that the courses in elementary teacher preparation programs did not prepare them to meet today's inclusion classrooms. In addition, the special education teachers believe that one or two courses may not adequately prepare them with the necessary skills to educate SWDs (Allday et al., 2013).

**Summary.** The enactment of the many IDEA's provisions has not been easy over the past four decades. The efforts and sacrifices by policymakers and proponents for successful inclusion of SWDs were persistent. Over the past 40 years, inclusion of SWDs continues to be a controversial topic in research done over the world. There were several arguments related to what is inclusion, why inclusion should be implemented, and how inclusion should be implemented (Eisenman & Ferretti, 2010; McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012). In addition, the federal guidelines of EHA (1974); IDEA (1990, 1997); IDEA (2004); LRE, and ESSA were established to show the importance of providing SWDs access to the curriculum. IDEA brought about several opportunities that were instrumental in SWDs being able to access the general education classroom (McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009).

These well needed laws and regulations were not only beneficial in SWDs gaining access to the general education curriculum, but also brought about expectations for how SWDs were served by teachers. Teachers' job responsibilities when serving SWDs were increased and they were now expected to modify the general education curriculum to accommodate all SWDs. Teachers were also expected to monitor and assess the progress of SWDs, and ultimately improve students' academic achievement (McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012). It is the goal of policymakers to use the combined regulations to help improve the performance of SWDs in their social and academic behavior in inclusion classrooms. In return, the implementation of the policies and regulations may reflect positively in the adequate progress and growth among all students in U.S. school districts.

**Collaboration as a Model for School Improvement**

Over the last 40 years, collaboration has been a strategy that is very popular in the inclusion classroom (Friend & Cook, 2007; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2002). The overview of the following section will focus on coteachers' collaboration and their relationship in the inclusion classroom. First, coteaching will be defined. Several authors have defined coteaching as a service delivery model (Bauwen, Hourcade, & Friend 1989; Cook & Friend, 1995; Friend & Cook, 2007; Villa et al., 2002). Next, the relationship between coteachers in the inclusion classroom will be explored. Effective coteachers' relationship is very important in the classroom and it is very important that teachers discuss any issues that may hinder success. Then, I will discuss the barriers that can hinder successful relationships. The last two areas that will be discussed are the benefits and challenges related to the implementation of collaboration

**What is coteaching?** During the 1980's in their seminal work Bauwen,

Hourcade, and Friend (1989) defined coteaching as "an educational approach in which

general and special education teachers worked together to jointly teach groups of students

in educational integrated settings…instruction that is to occur within that setting"

(Bauwens et al., 1989, p. 48). During the 1990s Cook and Friend (1995) defined

coteaching as "two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse,

or blended, group of students in a single physical space" (p. 2). Cook and Friend

elaborated on the meaning of coteaching by breaking apart the definition into four

distinct components. The authors clarified the definition by reporting that first, the two

professionals are one general educator and one special educator or another related service

professional. Secondly, they explained substantive instruction by emphasizing that

coteachers should be actively engaged in the instruction to students in their classroom.

Thirdly, they teach a diverse group of SWDs and their nondisabled peers. And finally,

coteachers share instruction in a single physical space.

During the late 1990s, the term cooperative classroom practices was shortened to

coteaching (Friend & Cook, 2007) to plan and deliver instruction, teach lessons, and

conduct assessments. Coteaching was also defined by Friend and Cook (2007) as two

educators, collaborating to share instructional and classroom management responsibilities

in a general education classroom. Coteaching was also defined as "two or more teachers

who are equal in status located in the classroom together, working together, and

providing instruction" (Dieker & Murawski, 2003, p. 7).

Coteaching is an instructional delivery model that coteachers use to provide instructions to SWDs. This collaborative instructional model allows two or more educators to use their expertise to plan, teach, and assess lessons for the individual needs of diverse learners in their classroom (Friend & Cook, 2007). Coteachers are able to bring the skills, knowledge, training, and expertise to collaborate and implement the general education curriculum by making accommodations for students who require help to access the curriculum (McLeskey, Waldron, & Redd, 2012). Previously, the general education teacher was responsible for handling the curriculum and the special education teacher supported the SWDs by providing accommodations to meet their learning style and disability. However, this is now challenged by collaboration and inclusion (McLeskey et al., 2012).

Coteaching looks different in classrooms, schools and how the curriculum is delivered. The coteaching service delivery model: "one teach, one assist; station teaching; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; team teaching and one teach, one observe" (Cook & Friend, 1995, p.7) are usually used in the inclusion classroom. Similarly, Villa, Thousand, and Nevin (2002) identified four coteaching models: a supportive teaching which is normally used when the teachers begin coteaching. One teacher teaches, the other gives supports. Next, is parallel teaching whereby each teacher uses the same lesson to provide instruction to two different groups of students simultaneously in the same classroom. The third model is complementary teaching model where the teachers support each other while one teacher teaches. Finally, in the team teaching model, which has

some similarity to Cook and Friend's (1995) model, both teachers share in all classroom responsibilities (Villa et al., 2002).

**Effective coteachers relationship.** The data from the review of literature regarding effective coteachers' relationship has revealed several necessary characteristics of coteachers that may lead to a successful relationship when implementing the coteaching service delivery model (Friend & Cook, 2007). It is necessary that each coteacher who works in the inclusion classroom be an active participant in the classroom. In doing so students will benefit from the knowledge and skills each teacher brings to the classroom (Friend & Cook, 2007). The essential characteristics that were reported in the literature are revealed in the following themes: sharing responsibilities and accountability, using different strategies and modification through the coteaching model, flexibility when planning and preparing lessons, and compatibility in teaching style and philosophy (Brown, Howerter, & Morgan, 2013).

Coteachers need to be open to using Cook and Friend's (1995) or Villa et al.'s (2002) coteaching service delivery models to allow SWDs to receive services in inclusion classrooms. In doing so, coteachers using strategies from the service delivery model may experience a successful relationship in the inclusion classroom (Brown et al., 2013). The use of the coteaching service delivery model may provide the opportunity to deliver different strategies and modifications that will accommodate all learners (Brown et al., 2013; Friend & Cook, 2007). The coteaching service delivery models also allow for flexibility when planning and preparing lessons for SWDs (Brown et al., 2013; Friend & Cook, 2007). Coteachers' compatibility in teaching styles and teachers' philosophies

attribute to success when choosing a model that will address academic and behavioral needs and will also provide support to the students who require more help (Brown et al., 2013; Friend & Cook, 2007). When coteachers are getting along and share mutual respect and trust for each other, SWDs may result in successful academic and behavioral outcome. Conversely, if SWDs experience a hostile environment with several issues, this may become very challenging for all students (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Norland, Gardizi, & Mcduffie, 2005).

   **Barriers affecting the successful relationship between coteachers.** It is evident that the report from the following data from several researchers indicate that coteachers in inclusion classrooms encounter several barriers. Oftentimes these barriers are detrimental to academic and behavioral success of SWDs in inclusion settings (Keefe & Moore, 2004; Simpson, Thurston, & James, 2014). In a case study that was conducted with three coteachers who were paired together, and two other teachers with different responsibilities from an urban high school, participants indicated that educators should address issues of compatibility before entering the coteaching relationship (Keefe & Moore, 2004).

   Coteachers' roles in the inclusion classroom is another barrier that affects successful relationship between coteachers. The collaborative relationship between professionals depends on the expertise that coteachers bring to the classroom. Students depend on each individual to bring their skills and expertise to the classroom, and to provide support to them. Oftentimes, both teachers seem to have a different understanding of their roles. The general education teacher usually assumes the role of

the instructor of the curriculum while the special education teacher assumes the subordinate role as an assistant teacher or paraprofessional (Bettini, Crockett, Brownell, & Merrill, 2016; Brown et al., 2013; Friend, Embury & Clarke, 2015; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017).

**Benefits of implementing collaborative inclusion classrooms.** Collaboration in inclusion classroom provides many academic and social benefits for students and teachers. The implementing of collaborative strategies in inclusion classrooms are reported for students and teachers in the following literatures. Academic and social benefits were reported in one seminal study by Walther-Thomas (1997) who conducted a 3-year longitudinal study. The study was conducted in 23 school districts. Walther-Thomas interviewed and observed 18 elementary schools and 7 middle schools with total participants of 143 educators. The findings revealed benefits related to SWDs, general education students, and coteachers (Walther-Thomas, 1997).

SWDs derive benefits such as self-confidence and self-esteem. The findings from the study indicated that SWDs entertained more positive attitudes about themselves, less critical and defensive, and they were motivated and confident to attempt new strategies. Many teachers expressed how the growth level of the academic performance of most students had improved. Words such as "blossoming," "soaring," and "taking off" were used to describe the academic performance of SWDs. Additionally, SWDs social skills showed improvement by demonstrating appropriate behaviors that are modeled by their nondisabled peers (Walther-Thomas, 1997).

In addition, general education students gain benefits from academic performance by participating in some of the service delivery models that are cotaught by teachers. Teachers reported that some students were not qualified for services but benefited from instructional strategies that are taught to SWDs. Because of the reduced ratio of students to teacher, students were able to receive more teacher time and affection. In addition, general education students acquired several strategies for reading comprehension and study skills instruction such as organization, homework, and time management to support their academic performance. Social skills were more prominent during class and out of class. Students' behaviors improved because there were fewer fights, less name callings, less verbal disagreements, more acts of kindness, and willingness to share materials were evident in the classroom (Walther-Thomas, 1997).

Coteachers benefit from teaching collaboratively in an inclusion classroom. One of the benefits that was reported, is coteachers feeling a sense of professional satisfaction when students demonstrate success academically and socially. Many teachers discussed that they were happy that they participated in the process. Teachers also expressed that working together with another professional allowed them to gain new ideas and to grow professionally. Personal support was one of the welcoming benefits. Teachers discussed how teaching was a lonely profession and having another teacher in the room for conversation and moral support was very rewarding. Finally, teachers benefit from increased collaboration among faculty members who had mixed feelings about teamwork. Participants in the study reported that other teachers and specialist were now

embracing teamwork and they were willing to share their professional skills in the building (Walther-Thomas, 1997).

In a more recent study, Lyons, Thompson, and Timmons (2016) conducted a qualitative case study in four inclusive elementary schools. These researchers sought to determine the benefits derived from inclusive schools when compared to traditional segregated schools (Lyons et al., 2016). The study included 68 participants from a pool of administrators, teachers, parents, paraprofessionals, and teachers to gain different perspectives from stakeholders who may benefit from the study. The findings resulted from semi-structured interviews demonstrated that commitment to team collaboration when planning instruction together, supporting colleagues' teaching, reflecting on current practices and strategies, sharing knowledge, ideas, and expertise, and addressing and solving problems together (Lyons et al., 2016).

Other researchers have shown that SWDs are more engaged in learning in the inclusion classroom than students who are educated in a self-contained classroom (Cosier, Causton-Theoharis, & Theoharis, 2013; Guise et al., 2016). According to Cosier et al. (2013) and Guise et al. (2016), the SWDs are usually participating in a variety of activities and ideas with two or more educators who are engaged in collaborative, planning, and instructing. SWDs and their nondisabled peers benefit from the daily interactions in the classroom by learning more about each other and providing support to each other when it is needed. General education teachers often experience years of teaching in general education classroom as the only teacher with over 25 to 30. Teachers benefit from having another teacher in the room who can share all the classroom

responsibilities, students' achievements and success (Cosier et al., 2013; Guise et al., 2016).

**Challenges faced in implementing collaborative inclusion classrooms.** The implementation of collaborative practices in an inclusion classroom has many benefits and challenges. I will use the word challenges in this study although many researchers have used words like barriers, hurdles, and obstacles to describe the types of problems coteachers encounter when implementing collaborative practices in the inclusion classroom (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Guise et al., 2016; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017). Da Fonte and Barton-Arwood (2017); Guise et al., (2016), and Scruggs and Mastropieri (2017) have indicated that the challenges coteachers encounter in the inclusion classroom can be grouped into six categories, philosophical differences and lack of different levels of expertise. These different categories are inadequate time to collaborate and plan effective instruction, lack of communication between coteachers, little or no support from administration, inadequate knowledge of content, shortage of professional development to learn instructional strategies, and lack of adequate resources to support SWDs (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Guise et al., 2016; Scruggs & Mastropieri 2017).

Lack of content knowledge is one of the major challenges in the inclusion classroom. Oftentimes, special education teachers are not equipped with adequate knowledge of the curriculum and similarly, general education teachers encountered problems using the curriculum to prepare instructional strategies for SWDs (Hogan,

Lohmann & Champion (2013). Both teachers are expected to coplan, coteach, and coassess students in the inclusion classroom to meet their individual needs.

In conclusion, collaboration as a model for school improvement is necessary to bring about success in learning for SWDs and their nondisabled peers. Collaboration between coteachers who are expertise in their field of education bring their personal and professional styles to the classroom. Oftentimes, most coteachers may have worked in a classroom without additional help from another educator, so working with someone in the same single space becomes a challenge. The four major themes that were related to successful collaboration in inclusion classrooms were, compatibility, communication, teamwork, and trust. When a coteaching relationship lacks any of the above factors, the relationship weakens and may affect the behavior and academic achievement of the students. In addition, several studies have indicated that training in preservice and inservice coteaching skills is very important for the success of collaboration as a model in school. The studies also indicated the need for training in the use of the coteaching service delivery models, how to plan, teach, and access effective instructions, and training in how to implement instructional strategies to SWDs and their nondisabled peers in the same physical space (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Guise et al., 2016; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017).

**Teacher Preparedness**

Coteachers require collaborative skills, strategies, and sharing of ideas through preservice and professional development preparation to improve their pedagogical and collaborative strategies (Grima-Farrell, Long, Bentley-Williams, & Laws 2014). When

teachers receive adequate preservice training and professional development to update their knowledge and skills, these additional training normally result in effective instructional service delivery in the classroom (Caputo & Langer, 2015). Teachers who work in inclusion classrooms are challenged with academic and behavioral complexities daily. Therefore, preservice and professional development training is necessary to meet the demands in planning effective instructional strategies for all students.

      **Preservice preparation.** Preparing general education teachers to teach SWDs has been a very low priority in the curriculum of colleges in the United States (Hamman, Lechtenberger, Griffin-Shirley, Zhou, 2012). Many researchers found disconnect in the research related to teacher preparation classrooms and teachers' experiences in classrooms with SWDs (DaFonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Hamman et al., 2012; Petersen, 2016 & Zagona, Kurth, & MacFarland, 2017). Most U.S. teacher preparation programs only require general education teachers to attend a few classes to satisfy their degree. Teachers in preservice programs often complete their degree with only completing few classes in special education (Hamman et al., 2012). Some states only require general education teachers to take an introductory class which does not provide information on instructional strategies on collaboration or differentiation strategies, only a description of all the different disabilities (Hamman et al, 2012). The teacher preparation curriculum is viewed as two separate disciplines the general education and special education systems (Hamman at el., 2012). This dual system allows teachers to be certified in one or the other discipline which is believed and viewed by educators that only special education teachers gain knowledge to teach SWDs (Hamman et al., 2012).

Inclusion has grown tremendously in other countries. This rapid growth has increased the number of general education teachers who are prepared to teach SWDs (Hamilton-Jones, 2014; Marin, 2014). Unlike the United States, since the 2000s teacher education programs in other countries have embraced inclusion in their degree programs. In the United Kingdom, the teacher education preparation programs have included inclusion classes in the curriculum; similarly, in New Zealand, all teachers take the same special education classes; in Norway, educators are required to take special education methods classes; and in Romania, teachers are required to take classes that will prepare them to teach all learners (SWDs and nondisabled students; Hamilton-Jones, 2014; Marin, 2014). Unlike other countries, many researchers in the United States reported that general education teachers' perceptions about preparedness were that they were not adequately prepared to teach SWDs (DaFonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Hamman, Lechtenberger & Zhou, 2013; Hedin & Conderman, 2015; McCray & McHatton, 2011; Petersen, 2016; Weiss et al., 2017; Zagona, et al., 2017)

Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, and Hudson (2013) conducted a research to examine 109 elementary candidates who were enrolled in the bachelor's degree teacher preparation program. Allday et al. were interested in finding out about the number of hours that are included in the curriculum of teacher preparation program that is related to inclusion. The findings revealed alarming data that indicated that most of the programs provided instructions about types of SWDs disabilities and classroom management strategies (Allday et al., 2013). The data revealed that less than 7 credit hours of coursework were related to preparing individuals to enter the inclusion classrooms. The study also

revealed that there were only a few teacher preparation programs offering classes that provided instructions for coteachers collaborative instructional practices (Allday et al., 2013).

In another study related to teacher preparedness, Chanmugam and Gerlach (2013) conducted a case study to provide a coteaching model to teacher preparation programs. This model was codeveloped and cotaught by the researchers who were also doctoral students. The results yielded many recommendations the researchers thought would benefit coteaching between new teachers and their peers when they enter the classroom with SWDs. The recommendations were for novice teachers, administrators, and teachers from the preparation program. The novice teachers were recommended to share their learning process with another teacher in the program, and to address any issues related to power-sharing, roles, communication, methods for feedback, responsibility sharing, and scheduling. Recommendations were provided for administrators to schedule ongoing discussions between coteachers, and to arrange coteachers' schedules to meet the demands of other responsibilities. In addition, recommendations were made for teachers from the teacher preparation program to have explicit discussions with novice teachers about the coteaching model, to discuss the time that is involved in effective collaboration, and to allow teachers to model the collaborative partnership before entering the inclusion classroom (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013).

School administrators can also help in teacher preparedness in many ways such as: (a) gaining partnership with teacher preparation programs to collaborate on how educators can be supported, (b) request teacher volunteers to teach in inclusion

classrooms, when teachers volunteer they usually are more effective in this position, (c) train teachers in coplanning, coinstructing, and coassessing, prior to entering an inclusion classroom, and (d) providing additional training for both teachers to learn the teaching philosophy, instructional practices, choice of coteaching models, preferred classroom management approaches, and other coteaching concerns they may need to be clarified (Conderman & Hedin, 2017).

**Professional development/Inservice preparation.** Coteachers need to gain new and additional knowledge through ongoing professional development to gain success in the inclusion classroom. Many researchers have conducted a plethora of research to reveal how professional development is of utmost importance and integral in the lives of teachers and students (Flannery, Lombardi, & Kato, 2013; Glazier, Boyd, Hughes, Able & Mallous, 2016; Grima-Farrell et al., 2014; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Saleem, Masrur, & Afzal, 2014; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). Coteachers need current and important information related to SWDs through formal and informal professional development to further improve their pedagogical skills. Coteachers can be kept abreast of new practices in planning, instructing, and assessing the general education curriculum that is administered to students in the inclusion classroom. Additionally, teachers who participate in regular professional development may be more productive in the classroom because, they feel more prepared and therefore, will exhibit confidence in collaboration. Teachers who work in an ever-changing environment with increases of SWDs daily, need additional support to prepare and guide them with effective instruction strategies to meet diverse learners (Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). With the enactment of No Child Left

Behind Act of 2001, many schools have incorporated inclusion in classrooms (Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). Therefore, teachers require learning opportunities that will bolster their knowledge and skills that they achieved in a teacher preparation program.

Shaffer and Thomas-Brown (2015) conducted a case study to introduce a new procedure in providing professional development on an ongoing basis to teachers who coteach in an inclusion classroom. The proposed professional model is Co-teaching Professional Development (CoPD), which includes embedded professional development for coteachers, was studied with two coteacher pairs. Researchers posit that the traditional way of providing professional development (part-day or full-day, or at a seminar) does not provide adequate support for teachers because most of the times the skills are not transferred to the classrooms (Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). The findings indicated that the CoPD model provides many academic and behavioral support for SWDs and their nondisabled peers. In addition, the coteachers also benefit from using this model because they are constantly increasing their pedagogy skills to improve how they instruct all students (Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015).

Other researchers, Grima-Farrell et al. (2014) discussed several traditional forums that teachers can attain pedagogical and collaborative strategies that will increase their knowledge to plan and deliver instruction. Grima-Farrell et al. explained that when teachers participate in educational seminars, formal or informal professional development, educational workshops, national and local conferences, they acquire additional skills that they would not have attained if they were not trained. Professional development is also necessary to provide support to coteachers in increasing their

confidence, attitude, and interest in inclusion classrooms. Teachers are usually teaching in a classroom without a partner so when teachers begin sharing their space, the adjustment period is sometimes difficult (Simpson, Thurston, & James, 2014).

Pancsofar and Petroff (2013) conducted a quantitative study in 5 districts with 129 participants. The researchers studied teachers' confidence, attitudes, and interests in inclusion classrooms by conducting an online survey. General and special education teachers answered questions related to teachers' demographics and coteaching experiences. Pancsofar and Petroff reported that when teachers were provided with ongoing professional development, they felt better able to plan, instruct, and assess the lessons for students. Similarly, in another quantitative study, Saleem et al. (2014) conducted a pretest and posttest with 28 participants from a teacher preparation education university to determine the effectiveness of professional development after preservice. The findings indicated that the participants who had received professional development after attending a preservice program were more equipped to work collaboratively in inclusion classrooms (Saleem et al., 2014).

School administrators and teacher education programs can improve the attitude of teachers by providing strategies that can help teachers to improve in inclusion classrooms. With the growing population of students entering the inclusion classroom, it is very important that administrators of education programs review their curriculum to include more educational courses such as classroom management, characteristics of the different disabilities, differentiating instructions, and collaborative strategies to be used in

the inclusion classroom (Allday et al., 2013; Chanmugan & Gerlach, 2013; Conderman & Hedin, 2017).

Many researchers have reported the common theme which is teachers' perceptions of not being prepared and feeling inadequate in the general education classrooms (DaFonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Hamman et al., 2013; Hedin & Conderman, 2015; McCray & McHatton, 2011; Petersen, 2016; Weiss et al., 2017; Zagona et al., 2017). Chanmugam and Gerlach (2013) provided several suggestions that may increase the pedagogical growth for new and experienced teachers and in the interim, be beneficial to the academic and behavior achievement of all students. Similarly, many researchers have made professional development suggestions that may be beneficial in supporting the knowledge and skills of teachers in inclusion classrooms (Flannery et al., 2013; Grima-Farrell et al., 2014; Miller & Oh, 2013; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Saleem et al., 2014; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015).

**Supporting Coteachers in Inclusion Classrooms**

Supporting coteachers in inclusion classrooms is very beneficial to the school, teachers, and students. The inclusion classrooms have increased in the number of SWDs who are participating in this setting daily (Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014). With increase of the number of diverse students accessing the general education curriculum, teachers welcome all the support they can receive to provide instructional strategies to meet their students' educational and behavioral interventions. Support is needed from administrators, teachers, other related services professionals, and paraprofessionals to acquire a shared vision to implement effective collaboration to achieve the educational

needs of all students. This shared vision fosters a commitment to working together, and guides the decisions about the resources that would be beneficial for all students. The following review of literature will report how different stakeholders, school administrators, related services professionals, and paraprofessionals, are a valuable and important parts of supporting teachers and students in inclusion classrooms.

**Administrators supporting coteachers in inclusion classrooms.** The administrators in a school are viewed as the leaders in all duties in the building. Therefore, it is very important that administrators create a supporting environment to build a school culture that supports collaboration and focuses on improving student achievement (Ketterlin-Geller, Baumer, & Lichon, 2015; Mackey, 2014; Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014). Administrators can provide support to coteachers in numerous ways by helping with the use of planning time, sharing of effective instructional practices, providing professional development, allowing for collaborative team meetings, and collaborating to design progress monitoring and assessment data intake (Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2015; Mackey, 2014, Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014). The need for extra planning time is one of the most talked about needs that are expressed by coteachers. Coteachers need additional planning time to prepare lessons collaboratively. It is very important for each teacher to collaborate to plan lessons that will allow students to be successful during instructions because when this is done, each teacher has a sense of ownership and shared responsibility (Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2015). Sharing of effective instructional practices are welcomed by new and senior teachers. Administrators can rearrange schedules to allow teachers to observe other classes to gain additional insight into how their

colleagues implement instructional strategies to SWDs. In addition, Ketterlin-Geller et al. (2015) stated that administrators should facilitate discussions about monitoring and implementing instructional practices for SWDs and provide professional development opportunities for teachers to design, deliver and share effective instructional strategies with their colleagues.

In addition, coteachers can gain access to current evidence-based research practices that will be beneficial to SWDs (Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2015; Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014). Collaborative team meetings with service providers with multiple members (e.g., coteachers and related services professionals) to discuss and monitor instructional accommodations and implementation of the IEP goals is highly important for successful collaboration. It is very important that each stakeholder participates in the discussion so that the collaborative team can determine if the SWDs are achieving their goals (Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2015). In addition, collaborating to design progress monitoring and interpreting assessment data for SWDs is a critical role of coteachers because some new coteachers who enter the classrooms have little or no experience about assessments and measurements (Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2015).

**Related services support.** Related services professionals are very supportive members of teachers and SWDs. The related services team, which consists of psychologists, social workers, school counselors, along with general and special educators are instrumental in preparing IEPs for SWDs. It is very important that the related services individuals collaborate with coteachers to provide instructional instructions to diverse learners. Researchers have reported findings of an instructional

strategy, Numbered Heads Together (NHT) that can be used by two or more professionals to provide support to SWDs in inclusion classrooms (Hunter, Dieker, & Whitney, 2016). NHT, is a strategy which includes teacher-questioning to actively involve students support in attaining academic success. NHT is usually provided by instructional consultants (IC) who are professionals who support coteachers in inclusion classrooms (Hunter et al., 2016). ICs collaborate with coteachers to deliver evidenced based practices. ICs play a vital role in providing support because, with the onset of high stakes testing, this support is critical to SWDs academic achievement (Hunter et al., 2016).

**Paraprofessional support.** Paraprofessionals, instructional assistants or paraeducators, are the names given to persons who provide support to disabled and nondisabled students in general education classrooms. I will use the term paraprofessionals to discuss these teachers who often gain remarkable trust from diverse learners. These providers play an integral part in supporting students, classroom teachers, and accommodating students in different educational programs, and the many special needs programs. In today's schools, paraprofessionals assist with instructional and behavioral needs of SWDs under the supervision of certified teachers, administrators, and therapists.

Paraprofessionals are the key supporters of students with varied disabilities. They deal with a broad spectrum of disabilities. Some of the disabilities are emotional and behavioral disorders (Krull, Wilbert, & Hennemann, 2014; Tsai, Cheney & Walker 2013), moderate disabilities (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007), down's syndrome

(Murphy, Robinson, & Cote 2016), severe disabilities (Ballard & Dymond 2016; Olson, Leko & Roberts, 2016), autism spectrum (Cardinal, Gabrielsen, & Young 2017; Feldman & Matos, 2013, Fleury & Schwartz, 2017), visual impairments (Bryne, 2014; Lieberman & Conroy, 2013), and intellectual and developmental disabilities (Ailey, Miller, & Fogg, 2014; Gallager & Bennett, 2013).

Paraprofessionals spend their time in various educational settings such as reading intervention groups (Allington 2013), art classrooms (Burdick & Causton-Theoharis, 2012), music classrooms (Darrow, 2010; Salvador, 2015; Walker, 2015), self-contained classrooms (Bettini, Cumming, & Merrill, 2017; Parker, Rakes, & Arndt, 2017), physical education classroom (Pedersen, Cooley, & Rottier, 2014; Scudieri & Schwager, 2017; Wilson, Stone, & Cardinal, 2013), vocational rehabilitation centers, residential centers, and sometimes hospitals (Haber & Sutherland, 2008). In addition, some paraeducators assist with students with behavioral problems, they are crisis paras (Tsai et al., 2013), and some students need assistance with health issues (Ballard & Dymond, 2016).

While paraprofessionals are there to support and assist SWDs needs and the program, the main responsibility of the paraprofessional is to make the necessary changes to the general education curriculum by modifying and implementing accommodations and modifications to the lessons that are planned by coteachers (Kurth & Keegan, 2014; Lee et al., 2010). Accommodations are changes made to the instructions or learning environment that do not change what the student is expected to learn. In contrast, modifications are changes made to the content, instruction or learning environment that change what the student is expected to learn (Kurth & Keegan, 2014; Lee et al., 2010).

Some of the modifications that are provided are: accommodating for specific teaching methods, monitoring student progress, reading materials and test aloud, instructional support for small groups, implementing behavioral management plans, providing note-taking assistance, and personal care assistance (Kurth & Keegan, 2014; Lee et al., 2010).

Inclusion classrooms are experiencing rapid growth of SWDs so, it is very important that administrators, related services professionals, and paraprofessionals provide additional support to coteachers in inclusion classrooms. Teachers benefit from the support provided by all these stakeholders by participating in a cohesive team of providers who shared a sense of responsibility for student academic achievement. Similarly, students benefit from receiving instructional strategies that are coordinated and designed to allow them to participate in the assignments which may result in academic and behavioral success. Finally, the cohesive bond between all stakeholders will be beneficial to everyone if consistent support is displayed throughout the collaboration and inclusion process.

**Accommodating Students in General Education Classroom**

According to NYSED Office of State Assessment (OSA; 2016), accommodation is defined as making changes to the instructions or learning environment with no change in the expectations for SWDs learning in the classroom. Instructional accommodations play a valuable life-changing experience for teachers and students in inclusion classrooms (Allington, 2013; Conderman & Hedin, 2013; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Many researchers Fuchs, Fuchs, and Capizzi, (2005), reported the importance of identifying accommodations that will meet the diverse needs of SWDs and their

nondisabled peers. Other researchers Ketterlin-Geller, Alonzo, Braun-Monegan, and Tindal, (2007), conducted specific research to determine which instructional accommodations would be beneficial to SWDs in the inclusion classroom. The researchers reported that when students work independently (student directed or seatwork activities) their achievement level is lower than when they participate in teacher-directed or cooperative group work (Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2007). There are four main research recommendations processes that will be discussed that may lead to successful accommodation of SWDs in general education classroom. They are: (a) accommodations for delivering instructions, (b) accommodations for delivering explicit instructions, accommodations from student performance, and (c) accommodations from IEP involving testing (Fleury & Schwartz, 2017; McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009; Whalon & Hart, 2011).

**Accommodations for delivering instructions.** The general education curriculum consists of the national and state standards to accommodate general education students. When SWDs are placed in this classroom, which is the least restricted environment (LRE) and the first setting that should be offered to SWDs, the instructional material must be redesigned to accommodate SWDs (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).

Students who are instructed in an inclusion classroom, sometimes spend most of the day accessing materials from textbooks, and instructional materials that they are unable to comprehend. Most of the instructional materials are designed for large groups with minimum activities for students to explore (McKeown et al., 2009; Whalon & Hart, 2011). To enable SWDs access and participation in this curriculum, coteachers can

integrate some instructional accommodations to the lessons such as: breaking the

instructional material into a smaller amount of work, ensuring that the written

instructions are clarified and simplified, and allowing students to practice various

activities pertaining to the lesson to reinforce what was taught (McKeown et al., 2009;

Whalon & Hart, 2011).

One type of accommodation is breaking the instructional material into a smaller

amount of work. Students in inclusion classrooms are sometimes required to produce the

same work as their nondisabled peers. Most assignments from the textbooks are written

in paragraphs with many words. When this material is presented to SWDs, they usually

become overwhelmed and they will sometimes refuse to complete the material. Teachers

who teach SWDs can also make other accommodations to the lesson by breaking up the

material into smaller parts to enable SWDs to access the same curriculum (McKeown et

al., 2009; Whalon & Hart, 2011). The second type of accommodation is ensuring that the

written instructions are clarified and simplified. Students sometimes get discouraged

when they are given the material when they find out about what they need to complete.

The teachers can take the necessary steps to clarify or lessen what needs to be completed

by rewriting the instruction, providing step-by-step instructions, such as completing the

even numbers or teachers can complete some of the questions and allow the students to

complete the rest of the assignment (McKeown et al., 2009; Whalon & Hart, 2011).

Allowing students to practice various activities pertaining to the lesson is the third

type of accommodation. Some SWDs require repetitive practices to ensure

comprehension of the material in the curriculum that is used in the classroom (McKeown

et al., 2009; Whalon & Hart, 2011). Coteachers are responsible for using supplementary material, encouraging peer-teaching, and providing access to the computer program to practice various activities pertaining to the lesson (McKeown et al., 2009; Whalon & Hart, 2011).

**Accommodations for explicit instructional delivery.** Teachers sometimes struggle to deliver effective reading instructions to SWDs in general education classrooms. Most of the reading curriculum is tailored to students who are nondisabled which makes the curriculum difficult for most SWDs especially for students with reading deficiency (McKeown et al., 2009). Teachers can help students to access the reading curriculum by building their background knowledge of the topic that is taught (McKeown et al., 2009).

The explicit teaching before the instruction is normally used as the first approach to introducing the lesson by previewing the lesson with students by sharing objectives of the lesson (McKeown et al., 2009). Oftentimes, teachers can use different organizers such as charts that gather previous knowledge of the topic (K-W-L) charts where the K stands for the student's prior knowledge, W the knowledge students want to gain, and L for what the student learns about the topic (McKeown et al., 2009). This before instruction activity is very valuable to SWDs because it allows them to activate and recall prior knowledge that will be beneficial to the comprehension of the topic that is being taught.

The explicit teaching during instruction stage helps to guide students through the understanding of the lesson that is taught (McKeown et al., 2009). The teacher uses directed and thinking strategies to answer questions about the topic that is being taught.

Students are able to use the data that they had gathered in the before instruction stage to help with answering the questions (McKeown et al., 2009). In addition, during this stage, the teacher will inform the students what they will learn, provide the students with guided practice, correct any errors they have made and finally prepare them for independent practice (McKeown et al., 2009).

The final stage is the teaching after instruction which helps students to organize and remember information by participating in different activities such as art projects, writing summaries for a report, or make and publish a video (McKeown et al., 2009). This phase also conducts an assessment to determine if students understand what was taught (McKeown et al., 2009). During this phase, the teacher monitors the students during independent practice, then review directions for students who may have had difficulty following directions. Finally, the teacher may provide different graphic organizer to help them with organizing what they had learned about the topic that was taught in class (McKeown et al., 2009).

**Accommodations involving student performance.** McLeskey and Waldron (2011) suggest that accommodations which involve SWDs' modes of reception and expression should be considered for performance accommodations. SWDs have varied ability which includes participation in oral presentations and discussions. Some students have problems processing visual and auditory information presented by coteachers in inclusion classrooms (Lee, Wehmeyer, Soukup, & Palmer, 2010).

Some changes can be made involving student performance to allow students to participate in the lessons that are planned from the curriculum. Changing the response

mode during instruction is very beneficial for most SWDs who sometimes encounter difficulty writing because of poor penmanship related to using their fine motor skills. Teachers can have students apply different strategies such as selecting answers from multiple choices, underlining details, sorting information, highlighting correct answers, using worksheets with extra space, or using their own individual dry erase boards (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2013), Secondly, SWDs are usually in classrooms with their nondisabled peers and in most cases, have developed a relationship with each other. Teachers can use this opportunity to provide a peer tutor for some SWDs student. Peer tutors can help their disabled peers by reviewing notes, reading aloud to each other, preparing for quizzes and test, or working on a class project (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2013). Thirdly, some SWDs have a difficult time completing their class assignments so teachers can allow additional time to complete written assignments (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2013). Finally, SWDs need repetition and several opportunities to practice and master skills, strategies, and content (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2013).

**Accommodations in IEP involving testing.** The ESEA states that teachers must teach the same curriculum, and expect participation in assignments and test requirement from SWDs and their nondisabled peers in inclusion classroom. NYSED (2016) informed us that testing accommodations must be done by changing the timing, formatting, setting, and scheduling to give SWDs equality with their nondisabled peers. Before ESEA, SWDs did not always participate in the assessment programs. However, SWDs are now required

to participate in assessment programs (ESEA) and take the same tests as students without disabilities.

During the initial meeting for the preparation of the SWDs' IEP plan, participants from the IEP team should collaborate to make decisions about the types of testing accommodations that each individual student will benefit from during instruction (Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2007; Rotter, 2014). The IEP teams consist of a group of professionals along with the parent or guardian of the student who participates in preparing an IEP that is aligned with the educational and behavioral goals of each student. It is very important that the team use their expertise in making the proper decisions related to the accommodations required because whatever decisions are made will impact on the learning and achievement in SWDs (Kotter, 2014).

Fuch et al. (2005) stated that coteachers normally have a class with students with varied disabilities and learning styles so it is very important that all students are accommodated in class and local tests. The authors state that some accommodations benefit some students, some accommodations are not useful for some students, and no one accommodation benefits all students (Fuch et al., 2005). Some of the recommended accommodations are setting/separate location, revised test directions, revised test format, change in the timing/scheduling, response, and/or presentation (NYSED, 2016).

The setting or separate accommodation is where SWDs receive instruction or the conditions of an instructional or assessment setting (NYSED, 2016). These settings are very important in providing accommodations for students who need a smaller setting (less than 12 students) and fewer distractions (NYSED, 2016). In addition, some students

need test directions, which include "directions read to the student, directions reread for each page of questions, language in directions simplified, verbs in directions underlined or highlighted, cues (e.g., arrows and stop signs) on answer form" (NYSED, 2016). Similarly, there are also test formatting accommodations to assist SWDs. These accommodations include making changes to the testing documents to accommodate students who are blind or having problems with the format of the test (NYSED, 2016).

The disability for each SWDs must always be considered when making changes to time and schedules. NYSED (2016) stated that some students encounter problems completing their classroom assignment so they are normally given extra time to complete their assignments, tests, quizzes, and activities because of processing problem. Additionally, changes in timing can be given to SWDs who have difficulties completing their assignments in a timely manner. NYSED noted that some students write at a slow pace and may need accommodations for written assignment but not the multiple-choice test.

The review of literature related to accommodation reported several resource strategies that can be used to meet the needs of SWDs and their nondisabled peers. The above-mentioned accommodations are of great value to the success of SWDs' academic achievement. The curriculum is often difficult for SWDs to access and most times students in this environment feel less than their nondisabled peers because the resources are difficult for them to achieve success (Allington, 2013; Conderman & Hedin, 2013; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). When accommodations are made for these students they feel a sense of belonging because they are now equipped with some strategies that will

allow them to access the curriculum that they perceived was impossible to achieve

(Bettini, Benedict, Kimerling, & Leite, 2016; McKeown et al., 2009).

**Summary and Conclusions**

In Section 2, I reviewed the timeline of historical data that mandated the inclusion

of SWDs in classrooms. I discussed the collaborative practices and the need for

coteachers to collaborate to implement instructional strategies to accommodate SWDs in

the inclusion classroom. Several researchers addressed different coteaching delivery

models that are available to coteachers when planning lessons to accommodate SWDs

and their nondisabled peers. In the review I also discussed how different stakeholders

such as administrators, related services professionals school psychologists, and

paraprofessionals can support coteachers in the inclusion classroom. Additionally, I

reported different accommodations that coteachers can use to support SWDs when

planning lessons to allow them to participate in the curriculum.

The review of literature provides vital information to support the 1975, EAHCA

Act PL 94-142 which mandated that all students in the public-school setting, especially

special education students, should have their learning needs met in the same classroom

with their nondisabled peers. However, some literature indicated that there are some

barriers that are related to the collaborative practices in the inclusion classroom that can

result in ineffective delivery of the strategies and therefore result in negative results for

student's achievement. For example, DaFonte and Barton-Arwood (2017), Hamman et al.

(2013), Hedin and Conderman (2015), McCray and McHatton (2011), and Petersen

(2016) reported that teachers' perceptions were that they were not adequately prepared to

meet the demands in an inclusion classroom. In addition, Da Fonte and Barton-Arwood, (2017) and Scruggs and Mastropieri (2017) pointed out that coteachers encounter several problems such as: philosophical differences, lack of different levels of expertise, inadequate time to collaborate and plan effective instruction, lack of communication between coteachers, little or no support from administration, inadequate knowledge of content, shortage of professional development to learn instructional strategies, and lack of adequate resources to support SWDs when implementing collaborative practices in the inclusion classroom.

Collaboration between coteachers is very important because SWDs need varied accommodations because they have different learning styles and are required individual support based on their disability. After several years of teaching SWDs in the public schools, teachers are still struggling with teaching effective strategies to students in inclusion classrooms. Although research shows that progress is evident in designing and implementing effective instructional strategies, coteachers are still encountering some challenges. It is the responsibilities of the administrators to review the collaborate practices of the coteachers to determine the effectiveness and make the necessary changes to attain success.  This study could provide the necessary steps that may support coteachers in planning and designing appropriate instructional strategies to meet the needs of each student in an inclusion classroom. The following Chapter 3 will be the report of the methodology of my case study. I will discuss how I will conduct the research, the recruitment and selection process for participants, the instruments that will

be used in the study, and how I will analyze the data. In addition, I will discuss the steps

that I will take to guarantee that the data that is collected is trustworthy and ethical.

Chapter 3: Research Method

**Introduction**

For this case study, I aligned the problem statement and purpose of the study to allow me to elicit responses that answered this study's research questions. The study emanated from the problem that UCES was experiencing low ELA achievement scores for SWDs. I conducted this study because there may be a direct relationship between how coteachers collaborate to allow successful student achievement. This research case study was conducted to examine how coteachers collaborated to implement students' IEPs and devise instructional strategies to accommodate the SWDs. Chapter 3 includes discussion of the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, instrument, data analysis plan, trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and summary.

**Research Design and Rationale**

The primary question that I examined was how coteachers collaborated and devised instructional strategies in elementary grade level ELA to accommodate SWDs. The following questions framed the study:

RQ1: What types of ELA instructional strategies do general and special education teachers' use when planning lessons for SWDs in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms?

RQ2: How do general and special teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement ELA instructional strategies to promote students' achievement?

RQ3: How do teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement the students' IEPs to accommodate ELA instructional strategies for SWDs?

The purpose of this case study was to examine how coteachers collaborated to implement students' IEPs and devised instructional strategies to accommodate the SWDs. To investigate my research questions, I conducted a qualitative research design approach. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research studies focus on the circumstances and experiences that are manifested in the lives of people, and how they interpret what is happening in their lives. This qualitative design allowed me to comprehend the ways in which individuals experienced and constructed personal meaning through analyzing reports, words, and participant comments (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

This design was chosen to address the problem because the research methodology involved data collection from participants directly experiencing the topic of inquiry (Glesne, 2011). This was the collaboration process used by coteachers to plan and implement ELA instructional strategies to promote students' achievement. In addition, the case study design was an inquiry design that allowed me to explore how coteachers provide instructions to SWDs. I used semistructured interviews, and lesson plans to gain insights from coteachers about what ELA instructional strategies they used and how they collaborate in an inclusion classroom to meet the needs of SWDs.

This case study qualitative approach provided valuable data to assist me in comparing the gap in the low ELA test scores for SWDs when compared to their

nondisabled peers. The coteachers in the inclusion classrooms were interviewed to answer the above research questions. I used different data sources from interviews, and lesson plans for triangulation of the data to gain insights (Yin, 2013) of how coteachers in inclusion classroom collaborate to plan and implement ELA instructional strategies to promote students' academic achievement.

**Role of the Researcher**

Teachers who teach in inclusion classrooms were recruited and invited to participate in the study and my intended goal was to gain acceptance from the participants. My role in this study was to interview, transcribe the recorded interviews, and review the audio recordings of coteachers. I followed Merriam's (2009) model when conducting interviews. I conducted semistructured interviews with questions related to the study topic. I have been working as a Special Education Teacher Support Service (SETSS) teacher at UCES over the past five years. My role as a SETSS teacher is to give support to SWDs in K-5 inclusion classrooms. I do not have a supervisory role or power over any of the teachers or potential participants in this study.

My previous work assignments were working in ICT and self-contained classrooms. I have gained a wealth of experience working with coteachers and sharing instructional accommodations that will benefit SWDs. I previously cotaught in inclusion classrooms, which may be perceived as if I exhibited researcher's bias. To maintain objectivity, I employed triangulation strategies, member checking, and peer debriefing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These steps also ensured the trustworthiness of

the data. It was my duty to use ethical strategies in my interaction with the participants when conducting this study. To instill confidence in the participants and ensure that the participants were comfortable I carefully laid out the purpose of this study, what it entails, and their responsibilities and adhered to the steps of Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) IRB process. I discussed the procedures for ensuring trustworthiness and maintaining ethical standards in later sections.

## Methodology

### Participant Selection

This local problem exists in an urban community Title I elementary public school, UCES, with over 560 PK-5 students who are serviced in 18 general education classrooms, 5 ICT classrooms with general and special education coteachers, and 3 self-contained classrooms with about 36 students. Some classes may have a paraprofessional to serve students who require additional help such as: crisis or health situations. During the 2016-2017 academic year, the UCES student population consisted of approximately 22% special education students and 29% of those students were SWDs being served by coteachers (NYSED, 2016). The demographic make-up of the student body was: 2% Asian, 36% Black, 57% Hispanic, and 3% White (NYSED, 2016). The population of SWDs equates to approximately 22% of the students in this elementary school. These students are diagnosed with varied disabilities such as: learning disability, emotional disturbance, speech/language, ADD, ADHD, other health impairment (OHI), and a small percentage of autism.

The participants who were selected for this case study were recruited from a total of 22 teachers from classrooms at UCES. Of the 22 teachers, there are six pairs of coteachers who work collaboratively in Grades K-5 for a total of 12 coteachers in inclusion classrooms. These 12 teachers were potential participants for this study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), it is important to have the necessary number of participants, sites, or activities that can answer the research questions to the extent that the information that is needed is exhausted and no other information is needed. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that the recommended sample size of 8-12 participants is adequate to obtain enough data to help provide information that would be beneficial to answer the research questions. I purposely recruited four coteacher pairs for a total of eight teachers from the pool of 12 teachers to participate in the study. This means that the participants were chosen intentionally to learn about their understanding and perceptions about a central phenomenon (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009). The participants of the case study included eight coteachers (four general and four special education teachers). I purposely choose the four coteacher pairs in Grades 3-5 because the ELA assessment is based on the students in those grades.

Prior to conducting the study, I completed and submitted the required documents to Walden University's IRB and New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) IRB. After I received approval from the Walden IRB and NYCDOE IRB, I gained access to the participants by requesting permission from the school principal. After I received the permission and approval, I sent an invitation to the coteachers who were eligible participants for the study. This invitation was sent through the school's email system that

gives each staff member access to all employees in the school. In the email, I introduced

the study by explaining the purpose of the study and what is involved if they decided to

participate. The email also included the informed consent form and information on how

they can opt out of the study. Participants were notified that if they had any doubt,

inconvenience, or discomfort about the study they have the option to withdraw from the

study. Participants were also informed that if at any time they should feel vulnerable by

the information that they provide, they have the option to request that the audiotape be

deleted at any time during the interview. Additionally, I placed a second copy of these

documents in the school's mailbox of all potential participants. I also sent a follow-up

email one week after the first email with the same information to participants who did not

respond. I received responses from 10 participants, six participants responded by email

and four participants responded by placing their responses in my school mailbox. I chose

8 participants who had served as a coteacher in a Grade 3, 4, or 5 inclusion classroom for

two or more years. After selecting the eight participants, I responded to the two

participants who were not chosen. The participants were told that although they had met

the requirement to participate, participants were selected based on the order in which they

responded to the request. Unfortunately, they were the last participants who responded to

the request.

**Instrumentation**

The data collection instruments that were used are one-on-one interviews, and

lesson plans. I used open-ended semistructured questions in the interviews to explore the

coteachers' experiences with collaboration and instructional strategies they use in their

classroom (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Yin, 2013). I also used lesson plans to corroborate the information provided in the interviews. Hancock and Algozzine (2006) and Yin (2013) reported the importance of triangulation and how it benefits the researcher in reviewing, assessing, and reconciling the data to ensure that there were no conflicts about what was collected from multiple sources.

**Interviews.** Interviews were collected using the one-on-one method to allow me to collect data from individual participants using the same interview protocol for each participant. The one-on-one interviews were digitally recorded for 45 to 60 minutes by using a self-developed interview protocol (see Appendix A). The basis for the interview protocol questions are the research questions, Cook and Friend's (1995) conceptual framework, and the literature review. Additionally, I used the articles from various authors (Bettini et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2013; Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013; DaFonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Friend et al., 2015; Hedin & Conderman, 2015; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016; Petersen, 2016; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017; Weiss et al., 2017) to prepare the questions in the interview protocol (see Appendix A).

I used semistructured open-ended questions in the interview protocol, which helped me to probe and explore how coteachers collaborated and devised instructional strategies in elementary grade level ELA to accommodate SWDs in inclusion classrooms. This process allowed me to gather the perceptions and personal feelings by having the participants express their experiences through one-on-one interviews (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Yin, 2013). The findings from the interview data were shared with each participant to ensure that I had received detailed and relevant responses.

**Lesson plans.** In this qualitative case study, I reviewed the coteachers' lesson plans to collect data about how the teachers collaborate, plan, and implement instructions for students in inclusion classrooms. I reviewed a total of 5 lesson plans for each coteacher pairs (total 20 lesson plans). Reviewing the lesson plans allowed me to gain an insight and understanding of each teacher's perspective of planning instructions for SWDs (see Appendix A., RQ1). In addition to collecting data related to collaboration, I also used the lesson plans to gather additional data such as: finding evidence that the SWDs' IEP goals and objectives are addressed; looking for evidence that the coteachers are using more than one service delivery model to address the needs of each student; analyzing the plans to determine if coteachers are using differentiated instruction to provide instructions that will enable each student to participate in the general education curriculum.

**Content Validity**

Researchers normally have concerns about ensuring that the data that is collected is reliable. Therefore, whether qualitative or quantitative research, researchers normally seek to conduct their research in an ethical manner. In this case study, the interview data and lesson plans data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted in the manner in which it was reported. Content validity was done through three different ways: (a) triangulation of data (b) member checking, and (c) peer debriefing. Content validity was done to measure how authentic the questions and scores of the instruments that were used in the study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

**Triangulation**

Triangulation was used to establish credibility and reliability in a qualitative study. This process is corroborating different data collection methods to determine the accuracy of the study (Glesne, 2011; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2013). For example, the combination information from the coteachers' interviews and the coteachers' lesson plans provided content validity. Additionally, triangulation is necessary to ensure that the research findings are well-developed and rich (Glesne, 2011; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2013).

**Member Checking**

I used member checking, which allowed me to gain feedback from the participants to determine if the data that were collected are accurate. In doing so, the results of the member checking allowed me to determine if I accurately captured the participants' "perceptions, viewpoints, attitudes, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences" in the transcripts (Glesne, 2011; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2013). Member checking is a valuable strategy that is normally used to establish credibility and to allow the researcher to share the interpretations and conclusions of the data that were collected. Member checking was done during the middle of the data analysis process. I provided a copy of the findings from the research to each coteacher to allow them to determine if the data presented was accurate. The member checking was done during one of the school's professional development periods (Mondays or Tuesdays) for over a 1-week period after the initial

interviews. When this was done, the participants were able to clarify, add additional information, and correct any noticeable errors that were evident in the report (Glesne, 2011; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); Yin, 2013).

**Peer Debriefing**

I used peer debriefing to obtain feedback about the interview data. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), when performing qualitative research, I can use a peer debriefer to review the data to determine the accuracy of the data that was collected from the participants who participated in the study. To establish authenticity, I asked a doctoral student from Walden University to review the data and codes to minimize any threats (e.g., researcher bias) to the validity and reliability of the data. (Glesne, 2011; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2016; Yin, 2013). In addition, the peer debriefer asked tough questions related to data collection and data analysis. The results of the peer debriefing will be reported in the Data Analysis component of Section 4.

**Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Participants in this study were recruited from a pool of 12 teachers who are certified in specific skilled area. Invitations were emailed to the proposed participants. After interviewing the participants, I created a table to identify each participant to provide background information that was reported in the interview protocol questions related to their experience and certification. The data collection was done by collecting data from interviews, and reviewing coteachers' lesson plans.

**Data collection by collecting interviews.** The first phase before collecting data

from interviews was to seek permission from the principal to gain access to the teachers.

Then I emailed the potential participants to invite them to participate in this study and

included the informed consent form. After I received agreement to participate in this

study, I coordinated a mutually agreed upon time and location to obtain the signed

consent form and conducted the interview. I suggested using the school's library because

there are private rooms in this location, which would give us privacy and comfort.

However, most of the interviews were conducted out of the school building. I used a

self-developed interview protocol (see Appendix A). The interview protocol allowed the

participants to answer questions related to the research questions (see Table 2). The

interviews were audiotaped over a 45-60 minutes period and each participant was

interviewed separately.

Table 2

*Research Questions, Instruments and Interview Questions*

| Research Questions | Instrument | Interview Questions |
|---|---|---|
| RQ1: What types of ELA instructional strategies do general and special education teachers' use when planning lessons for SWDs in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms? | • Interview protocol<br>• Lesson plans<br>• | 2-7 |
| RQ2: How do general and special teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement ELA instructional strategies to promote students' achievement? | • Interview protocol | 8-11 |
| RQ3: How do teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement the students' IEPs to accommodate ELA instructional strategies for SWDs? | • Interview protocol | 12-16 |

**Data collection by reviewing coteachers' lesson plans.** In this case study, I reviewed the participant coteachers' lesson plans to answer the first research question (see Table 2). The purpose of collecting data from the coteachers' lesson plans was to examine how the teachers collaborate, plan, and implement instructions in the inclusion classroom. Reviewing the lesson plans allowed me to gain an insight and understanding of each teacher's perspective of planning instructions for SWDs.

**Exit and follow-up procedures.** There were no exit or follow-up interviews but participants participated in member checking, which was discussed earlier in the paper. Member checking was done over a 1-week period after the completion of the interviews and played a vital role in establishing credibility. This process allowed me to share the interpretations of the data that were collected with all coteachers who participated in the study. Each person received a copy of the findings to determine if they are accurate representations of their perceptions.

**Data Analysis**

During qualitative data analysis, the researcher is able to accumulate the findings of the data by "systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that they gathered during the study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 159). After evaluating the data thoroughly, I followed the following steps: (a) organize the data to determine meaningful patterns, (b) immerse myself in the data to gain an understanding of what is reported, (c) code the data to ensure that the data can be easily documented, (d) generate themes and categories, (e) analyze the data and document information in written form, and (f) validate the data for accuracy (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The data analysis included the analysis of two different instruments, coteachers' interview and coteachers' lesson plans, to determine if the plans reflected collaborative approaches used and the service delivery models used.

The first instrument I will discuss is the interviews. I began the data analysis by separating and sequencing the data to prepare for a rigorous data analysis process. In addition, I transcribed the tape-recorded data into written report (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Next, I reviewed the data thoroughly to gain understanding of what was collected. Afterwards, I analyzed the interview data by reviewing the themes, ideas, and patterns to determine how the coteachers collaborated to prepare instructions, and examined their perceptions about having SWDs in their classrooms.

Miles and Huberman (2013) recommended that there are three cycles that are related to the data analysis process. This process can be efficient and successful if the following cycles are applied during data analysis. The cycles are the provisional coding

Cycle 1, pattern coding, Cycle 2, and the narrative report model, Cycle 3 (Miles &

Huberman, 2013). The provisional coding cycle relates to generating a predetermined list

of codes before conducting the data collection. Miles and Huberman (2013) stated that in

the provisional Cycle 1 "a start list, can range from 12 to 50 codes" (p. 58). I used the

review of literature and conceptual framework to generate these codes (see Appendix B)

to compare with the actual codes from the data collected during the interview. The next

cycle is the pattern coding, Cycle 2. During this cycle, I reviewed the emerging codes to

find major themes or patterns that are related to the findings. During the initial stage, I

engaged in coding the data to ensure that they are aligned with the problem and purpose,

and are appropriate to answer the research questions.

The final cycle, narrative report Cycle 3 relates to the qualitative case study

narrative report (Miles & Huberman, 2013). This report is necessary to allow the

researcher to provide detailed reports of the findings. I provided a narrative report from

the interview transcripts, and lesson plans data to address the research questions. I also

addressed the themes to better understand the data that were collected and finally

prepared a complete narrative report to provide relevant information to the reader.

The final instrument that I analyzed was the coteachers' lesson plans. The

following question addressed how coteachers plan and implement instructions for SWDs:

RQ1: What types of ELA instructional strategies do general and special education

teachers' use when planning lessons for SWDs in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms? The

purpose of using the teachers' lesson plans as an additional source of data was to gain

greater understanding and insight on the effects of teacher collaboration and planning.

The first thing I looked for was the time/date/location, names/positions. In doing this examination of the coteachers' plans it may be an indication of whether the lessons were planned by both teachers. When the names and positions are indicated on the plans it demonstrated that teachers have equitable roles in planning the lessons. I reviewed the plans to answer the following questions: (a) Is there evidence that there is input from the special education teachers regarding necessary accommodations or specialized strategies? (b) Were the goals from a variety of learners, including SWDs addressed in the lesson plans? (c) Is there evidence of the coteaching service delivery model or (models) that will be used to deliver instruction? (d) Is there evidence that differentiation instruction will be used to instruct diverse learners individually or in groups? The probing questions from the interview protocol was used to assist me in triangulating the findings in the study (see Appendix A).

**Data Management**

I used Microsoft software to transcribe the interviews into text-based format. After I was done transferring audio recordings, I used NVivo, which is a qualitative software that is recommended for organizing, coding, and labeling qualitative data. It is essential to conduct this type of data management to allow me to determine the themes and patterns that are needed to answer the research questions 1, 2, and 3 (see Table 2). I also used NVivo to organize the data that were collected from the coteachers' lesson plans. Additionally, I used Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to organize all the responses from the participants. The interview protocol includes 16 questions. I used 16 different tabs

that included columns with each coteachers' interview responses. To explain further, in tab with interview question 1, I included all the responses from Interview Question 1.

**Discrepant Cases**

During the data analysis process, I took all the necessary steps to guarantee that the data were free from discrepant cases by carefully examining the participant's response to each question. During the data analysis process, I worked to analyze the validity of the data by reviewing the patterns and the coding data to determine if the themes that were derived from the data were nonconforming data. I took the necessary caution to ensure that each question from the interview protocol was addressed appropriately (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985)**.**

<div align="center">

**Trustworthiness**

</div>

Merriam (2009) states that the researcher should follow many strategies to ensure that the data collection and its findings are trustworthy. Merriam explained that it is very important to follow strategies that will answer questions that demonstrate truthfulness and validity. Below are some guided questions that I used to challenge the trustworthiness of the qualitative research:

1. What is it worth to get the researcher's interpretation of the participant's interpretation of what is going on?

2. If the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, how can we be sure the researcher is a valid and reliable instrument?

3. How will you know when to stop collecting data?

4. Isn't the researcher biased and just finding out what he or she expects to find?

5. Doesn't the researcher's presence result in a change in participants' normal behavior,

thus contaminating the data?

6. If someone else did this study, would they get the same results? (Merriam, 2009, p. 212).

These questions that were suggested by Merriam (2009) helped me to gain trustworthiness within the proposed case study. I carefully designed and studied the data by analyzing, interpreting, what was presented to ensure validity and reliability of the study. In addition to questions suggested by Merriam to challenge the study's trustworthiness, I paid special attention to ensure that there was no researcher's bias. I developed a written statement that acknowledged my biases. Some other strategies that I used are triangulation by using the interviews, and lesson plans data; performing member checking, and peer debriefing. Additionally, communication and member checks were used to collect data, as well as checking the data thoroughly after the data collection phase in preparation for analysis of the data.

## Credibility

Researchers must take the necessary precautions to ensure that they have used all the steps that are required to gain credibility throughout the study. I used triangulation and member checking of the data that was collected to ensure credibility. The data that were collected are from coteachers' interviews, and lesson plan data. Most research is conducted to benefit a larger community or a specific group of individuals (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Transferability**

In this case study I sought to determine how coteachers collaborate to design instructional strategies to meet the IEP goals for SWDs. I believe that even if the findings are related to coteachers in other schools, state, districts, or even in other countries, the results may or not be transferable based on other factors. Factors that may affect the transferability are the sample size, the setting, and the type of service delivery model that is used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Dependability**

Dependability in this study was addressed by perceptions about how coteachers collaborate. The dependability of the study was addressed to determine the consistency of the results if the study was repeated by other researchers who use the same context, methods, and participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The application of different techniques to ensure that the study can be applicable to other researchers who may need to conduct the same work, will be beneficial to determine dependability.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability relates to how similar results are from different data sources used in a case study. I took the necessary steps to ensure that the information that was gathered from the participants are based on their ideas, experiences, and perceptions. I performed triangulation of the data source to reduce any bias that may exist (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition, I solicited feedback from the debriefer to ensure

that the questions that are developed in the interview protocol are free from bias and are related to the topic that was researched.

## Ethical Procedures

It is very important that the researcher adhere to ethical procedures when conducting a study to gain trust and to protect the participants in the study. I took the necessary steps to gain the confidentiality of the participants (Lodico et al., 2010) starting with approval from the Walden IRB and NYCDOE IRB. My intent was to examine how general and special educators collaborate in inclusion classrooms and identify themes and patterns to assist future teachers in implementing instructional strategies for SWDs. I took the necessary steps to obtain informed consent before the participants participate in the study. I also informed the participants that their participation was voluntary and they would be able to withdraw from the study if at any time they felt uncomfortable. In addition, necessary precautions were taken to protect the participants' identity. Taking these precautions were especially necessary because I was conducting research in my own school. I made every effort to protect the identity of the teachers who felt that their opinions might compromise their employment or reputation. I made every effort to ensure that the privacy of each participant was protected during data collection of the interview, or lesson plan document data. I used an alphanumeric system of identification to identify each participant. In that case, the data collected from the first participant was identified as: GE1 (General Education 1), and SE1 (Special Education 1) see Table 3.

All necessary precautions were taken to secure and protect all data that were collected during the data collection process. Transcripts, notes, and tape recordings were stored in a locked safe during the entirety of the study. All documents from the interviews, and lesson plans will be stored for a period of 5 years. In addition, audio recordings, and transcripts will be stored for 5 years. I will also protect any data that are stored on my computer by using a password that is only known by me thus ensuring that I am the only person who can gain access to the related files.

**Summary**

This chapter began with an introduction to the study, including the statement of the problem and the research questions used to guide the inquiry. It also included the methodology and design structuring the case study. A description of the proposed participants and setting were presented next, followed by the instrumentation, procedures for requirement, participation, and data collection. Data analysis plan was then presented. This chapter concluded with an explanation of four important topics: trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and how credibility and transferability will be handled in the study. Finally, the rigorous process of the Walden IRB, NYCDOE IRB, and the URR ensured that the rights and safety of the participants who were interviewed are protected. I also submitted the necessary documents to the school principal. The results of the case study will be reported in Chapter 4. The report will include the results of the data analysis that was completed in Chapter 3. In addition, in Chapter 5, I will explain the limitations, implications for social change. I will also offer recommendations for future research.

Chapter 4: Results

**Introduction**

The purpose of this case study was to examine how coteachers collaborate to implement students' IEPs and devise instructional strategies to accommodate the SWDs in inclusion classrooms. I was able to attain this goal by conducting one-on-one semistructured interviews and reviewing lesson plans from eight participants (four coteacher pairs) to examine how they planned lessons, conducted instructions, and accommodated SWDs in their classrooms:

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What types of ELA instructional strategies do general and special education teachers' use when planning lessons for SWDs in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms?

RQ2: How do general and special teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement ELA instructional strategies to promote students' achievement?

RQ3: How do teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement the students' IEPs to accommodate ELA instructional strategies for SWDs?

In Chapter 4 I describe the participants and setting, the data collection process, the data analysis, the results of the data collection, evidence of trustworthiness, and a summary of the findings. The chapter begins with a description of the study participants and setting. The participants were chosen because they worked as a coteacher in an

inclusion classroom for two or more years and they worked in classrooms that participated in New York State Exams for ELA in Grades 3-5.

A qualitative case study was used to conduct the research and data were collected from interviews and lesson plans during the month of September 2018 through October 2018. Data were analyzed to determine and identify common themes in relation to the research questions. Chapter 4 concludes with a summary of the chapter and transitions into Chapter 5.

## Setting

Eight coteachers (four general education and four special education teachers) participated in this case study. All participants worked in the same school and their identification was protected by using pseudonyms. The participants were paired by using the same number as part of their pseudonym. For example, GE1 and SE1 were coteachers in the same inclusion classroom. The demographics are shown in Table 3. All of the participants were females who possess a Master's of Education degree with 4-17 years of teaching experience.

Table 3

*Summary of Information for Participating Teachers*

| Teacher | Degree and certification level | No. of years of teaching experience | Total no. of students in class | No. of SWDs in class |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| General Ed. 1 (GE1) | Master's | 17 | 23 | 12 |
| General Ed. 2 (GE2) | Master's | 5 | 23 | 12 |
| General Ed. 3 (GE3) | Master's | 10 | 25 | 12 |
| General Ed. 4 (GE4) | Master's | 11 | 24 | 12 |
| Special Ed. 1 (SE1) | Master's | 10 | 23 | 12 |
| Special Ed. 2 (SE2) | Master's | 10 | 23 | 12 |
| Special Ed. 3 (SE3) | Master's | 4 | 25 | 12 |
| Special Ed. 4 (SE4) | Master's | 9 | 24 | 12 |

*Note:* *General Ed. indicates General Education Teacher and Special Ed. indicates Special Education Teacher.

The setting for this study was a Title I elementary public school, with over 560 PK-5 students who are serviced in 18 general education classrooms, 5 ICT classrooms with general and special education coteachers, and 3 self-contained classrooms with about 36 students. The teachers included in the study taught in classrooms that were inclusion classrooms with total students ranging from 23-25 students which includes 12 SWDs (see Table 3). When the study was conducted, there had been no recent major changes to the setting, personnel, budget, or organizational structure that should have affected or influenced the participants, their experience in the study, or my interpretation of the study results.

**Data Collection**

After receiving IRB approval #0716-18-0254388 from Walden University and IRB approval #2012 from NYC Department of Education, I began data collection. I started the data collection phase during September 2018 when teachers were just returning from vacation. The timing of the study was very challenging because teachers

are always inundated with numerous tasks during the school year and do not welcome

taking on a new task. The entire process of data collection and data analysis was done

from September, 2018 through October, 2018.

The participants were invited via a written invitation, which was hand delivered,

or placed in the mailboxes of each teacher who worked in an inclusion classroom in

Grades 3-5. The invitation also included the consent form. I received responses from 10

participants, 6 participants responded by email and 4 participants responded by placing

their responses in my school mailbox. All 10 teachers expressed their interest in

participating in the study. After receiving the 10 teachers' interest in participating in the

study, I sent a follow-up letter by email to inform participants whether they were selected

or not with reasons why they were not selected. I selected eight participants whom I

contacted by telephone to coordinate an agreeable time to meet face-to-face. During the

meetings, which were held in coffee shops, restaurants, or the library, I read over and

discussed the consent form that was delivered previously to each participant. The

document, which included the purpose of the study, the procedures, the risks and benefits,

and privacy was reviewed and signed by participants. After the signing of the consent

form, I conducted one-on-one open- ended interviews with each coteacher to learn how

they collaborated to plan instructional strategies to meet the needs of SWDs. The

interview data collection lasted no longer than 45 minutes for each participant, and was

collected by using an audio recorder and an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to guide

the process.

After all the interviews were conducted, I started the transcription process by

typing the interview responses into Microsoft Word. After this process was completed, I

uploaded the interview transcriptions on my personal desktop computer and personal

tablet. After uploading the documents in these password-protected computers, I placed a

copy of each participant's transcription in a sealed envelope, in their school mailboxes. In

addition, I emailed the participants to ask them to check the document for accuracy. The

participants returned suggested revisions in transcriptions through email and signed off

on approval of the documents. All participants reviewed the transcriptions and verified

the accuracy by making suggestions and changes where necessary. Two participants

requested changes to be made. One participant used the wrong name for the service

delivery model that was used in her classroom. The other participant asked to remove the

different "sighs" an "ums" when answering certain questions. I welcomed the suggestions

and made the necessary changes.

## Data Analysis

### Interview Data Analysis

During the data analysis process, the interview data, and lesson plan data were

organized, classified, categorized, and synthesized to search for patterns in the data

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data analysis included three different types of procedures

which allowed me to perform a thorough analysis to find out if the codes and themes

derived from the manual coding process were in alignment with the codes found using

the auto coding software. First, I manually analyzed the data by using Miles and

Huberman's (2013) recommended cycles, then I used the qualitative software NVivo.9.0,

and finally I conducted an informal analysis by using an excel spreadsheet matrix to

organize the interview data from the participants. The coding of all three procedures

(pattern coding, use of qualitative software, and use of excel spreadsheet) lasted about 5

to 7 hours each day over a period of 3 days, totaling 15 to 21 hours. After coding the data,

the data analysis lasted 7 days for approximately five hours each day resulting in

approximately 35 hours. The data analysis procedure was a tedious process and in total it

equates to about 56 hours.

I used Miles and Huberman's (2013) three recommended cycles that are related to

the data analysis process. The cycles are the provisional coding (Cycle 1), pattern coding

(Cycle 2), and the narrative report model (Cycle 3; Miles & Huberman, 2013). I used this

process because Miles and Huberman stated that this process can be efficient and

successful if the following cycles are applied during data analysis. I used the first two

cycles, provisional coding (Cycle 1) and pattern coding (Cycle 2) to begin the data

analysis process.

**Provisional Coding**

In Cycle 1, I conducted provisional coding and I generated 24 codes from a

predetermined list based on the conceptual framework and review of literature (see

Appendix B). I generated 14 codes from a provisional start list of 24 codes. The codes

and themes from my manual coding process, from the review of literature, and the codes

in the conceptual framework were in alignment with the codes and themes derived from

the auto coding software. This process allowed me to anticipate the codes that may

appear in the interview data before they were examined. The codes were: *collaborative*

*practices*, *differentiated instruction*, *preservice training*, *collaboration*, *coteaching*

*models*, *IEP goals*, *accommodation*, *teacher preparedness*, *reading instruction*, *lesson planning*, *coteachers' relationship*, *SWDs achievement*, *inclusion classroom*, and *IEP objectives*.

**Pattern Coding**

In Cycle 2, I was able to identify emerging themes by using pattern coding that was recommended by Miles and Huberman (2013). The pattern coding method was instrumental in using the participant's interview data to identify emerging themes and reduce large quantities of data into smaller units. The type of coding was used during data collection to narrow down the data related to the research question during research study (Miles & Huberman, 2013). I began the pattern coding process by reviewing the provisional codes from Cycle 1, to group the codes by similarity.

During this phase, I was able to compare pattern codes with provisional codes. After this process, I generated a final list of codes. Next, I assigned pattern codes to emerging themes from the interview data. Then I was able to describe major themes from all the data by using pattern codes. For example, I used a pattern code noting instructional strategies (IS) as a theme to describe this major theme or pattern of action and continued to identify themes and categories that were consistent in the data.

Finally, I used the final list of codes to search for patterns that were generated from the study. I used colored highlighters within the groupings of codes and was able to generate four themes: The themes are: coteachers strategies used when planning lessons for SWDs, classroom accommodation for SWDs, coteachers' instructional strategies, and collaborative relationship in inclusion classroom.

**Qualitative Software**

After the manual data analysis using Miles and Huberman (2013) pattern coding method I used NVivo 9.0, qualitative software, to manage and code the interview transcripts. First, I was able to import the transcribed interviews directly into the program software. This was very challenging because although my interviews began as audio recordings, I had to make sure that my data were in text-based electronic format. I used a word processing application to transcribe each of the interviews. The NVivo program allowed me to store, organize, and assign labels and codes that essentially helped me to formulate themes or patterns from the data. I was able to use the highlight feature that is embedded within the program to color code the files. During this process I was able to see various themes from the patterns beginning to emerge.

I used the NVivo software auto coding tool to scan the interview transcripts and lesson plans for important key words such as: *collaboration*, *accommodation*, *instructional practices*, *differentiation*, *inclusion*, *small groups*, and *reading instruction*, and automatically assign codes based on reoccurring words. By attaching labels to lines of texts and inserting that information into the automatic coding system for entering in structured data such as my interview transcripts, I identified reoccurring patterns and emergent themes within the data. The codes and themes derived from the auto coding software were in alignment with the codes and themes of my manual coding process. More specifically, I identified meaningful chunks of sentences and specific wording that often overlapped, such as a *lack of planning time* and *effective training*. When I concluded organizing the data with NVivo, there was no need to use it further.

**Excel Spreadsheet Analysis**

I used the excel spreadsheet from the Microsoft program to create an interview question response matrix. This analysis was not a formal data analysis. However, by using this matrix, I was able to organize the data from the participants' responses to the interview questions. The interview protocol included 16 questions that were answered by each participant. I created an Excel spreadsheet with 16 tabs to enter the responses from the interview transcriptions. For instance, I entered all responses to Interview Question 1 into the tab labeled Interview Question 1. I continued this process for Interview Questions 2 to 16. Although this was not a necessary process to conduct, I was afraid of not being organized and that I would not acquire the results that I desired from the data. I am a visual learner so being able to use multiple sources to analyze the data during the data analysis was beneficial. I was able to familiarize myself with the data and to start generating ideas.

Four major themes emerged from this study research questions. The four themes were: coteachers' strategies used when planning lessons for SWDs, classroom accommodation for SWDs, coteachers' instructional strategies, and collaborative relationship in inclusion classroom. These themes were further broken down into subthemes. The subthemes appear in the following paragraphs.

**Lesson plans Data Analysis**

I analyzed the teacher lesson plans by reading through them thoroughly and extracting and noting key informational data as they related to the research questions. To

ensure consistency of the data that I received from the interviews and the teacher lesson

plans, I began manually coding by way of an open coding process where I circled and

highlighted key reoccurring words. After coding and reducing the text to descriptions, I

then began to organize the coded data into categories that helped to identify emerging

themes (Yin, 2013).

**Introduction to Themes and Subthemes**

Throughout the data analysis section, I will discuss the four major themes that

were derived from my overall data analysis as they related to the individual research

questions. The themes are (a) coteachers strategies used when planning lessons for

SWDs, (b) classroom accommodation for SWDs, (c) coteachers' instructional strategies,

and (d) collaborative relationship in inclusion classroom (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Themes, Subthemes, and Research Questions*

| Themes | Subthemes | Research question connected to |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Coteachers strategies used when planning lessons for SWDs | • Use of IEP goals, and accommodations for SWDs<br>• Design instructions for SWDs in small groups<br>• Standardized test scores and classroom reading level assessment | 1 & 2 |
| 2. Classroom accommodations for SWDs | • Modifying and adjusting reading materials<br>• Provide one-on-one instruction<br>• Use of differentiated instruction<br>• Providing SWDs with multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery<br>• Using SWDs' learning style to access general education curriculum<br>• Developing personal relationship with SWDs to determine their learning needs | 2 |

| Themes | Subthemes | Research question connected to |
|--------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 3. Coteachers instructional strategies | • Modifying and adjusting reading materials<br>• Provide one-on-one instruction<br>• Use of differentiated instruction<br>• Providing SWDs with multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery<br>• Using SWDs' learning style to access general education curriculum<br>• Developing personal relationship with SWDs to determine their learning needs | 2<br><br>(*table continues*) |
| 4. Collaborative relationship in inclusion classroom | • Lack of appropriate instructional materials<br>• Lack of opportunities to collaborate with teachers, and resource room and related services personnel<br>• Need for more time for planning<br>• Need for more professional development<br>• Need opportunities to collaborate with teacher before starting a new | 3 |

| Themes | Subthemes | Research question connected to |
|---|---|---|
| | coteaching relationship <br> • Successful working relationship in coteaching classrooms | |

**Results**

**The Interviews**

This qualitative case study was related to how coteachers collaborate to devise instructional strategies in elementary grade level ELA to accommodate SWDs in inclusion classrooms. Four major themes emerged from the study research questions. The four themes were: coteachers' strategies used when planning lessons for SWDs, classroom accommodation for SWDs, coteachers' instructional strategies, and collaborative relationship in inclusion classroom. These themes were further broken down into subthemes. The themes and subthemes are discussed in the following paragraphs.

**Theme 1: Coteachers Strategies Used When Planning Lessons for SWDs**

Research Question 1: What types of ELA instructional strategies do general and special education teachers' use when planning lessons for SWDs in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms? Theme 1 was generated from coteachers' responses about the types of instructional strategies that they used to plan lessons for SWDs. Three subthemes were revealed from the participants' responses. The subthemes were (a) use of IEP goals, and accommodations for SWDs, (b) design instructions for SWDs in small groups, and (c)

standardized test scores and classroom reading level assessment (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Frequency of Theme 1 and Subthemes Related to Research Question 1*

| Participant responses: Coteachers strategies used when planning lessons for SWDs. | No. of participants |
|---|---|
| Use of IEP goals, and accommodations for SWDs | 4 |
| Design instructions for SWDs in small groups | 8 |
| Standardized test scores and classroom reading level assessment | 4 |

**Use of IEP goals and accommodations for SWDs.** Four of the participants, SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4, reported how they used SWDs' IEPs to plan goals and accommodations for each student. Participant SE2 stressed that "the IEP plays an integral part in helping us preparing instructional accommodations for SWDs". The participants asserted that the IEPs from each student helped them to develop instructional strategies that will meet the needs of each student. SE1 said that "the IEP provides support for general education teachers who are not equipped with the necessary training to support SWDs". Participant SE4 reported that, "SWDs' goals and accommodations are individualized on each IEP so it is very important that this document be used to meet the needs of each student". SE2 and SE3 stated that if IEPs were not available, their coteachers (who are general education teachers) would encounter problems when they are assessing students' strengths and weaknesses.

**Design instructions for SWDs in small groups.** All participants designed small groups of their SWDs to support them in constructing their understanding of what was taught during reading lessons. GE3 and SE3 reported that they normally create homogeneous and heterogeneous small groups for all subjects and the challenges they

encounter because of varied reading levels for SWDs. GE3 shared how she designs

instruction for small groups:

> When my partner and I plan lessons for reading instructions, we have to plan
>
> three to four small groups to accommodate students of varied reading levels.
>
> Normally, some of the reading levels are two to three levels lower than the
>
> appropriate grade level that each student should be reading. This process is very
>
> time consuming but necessary.

SE3 shared how she plans for different reading groups:

> Some students perform at a different level in most subjects and although it is very
>
> time consuming to plan different small groups, it is very beneficial for teacher and
>
> students. The lessons are designed to help students to understand the topic that is
>
> taught and learn from their peers in the small group.

The participants reported that because their students are reading below reading grade

levels it is very important that they design small groups for students to help them to

access the general education curriculum.

GE4 and SE4 reported that one of the most used coteaching model in the

classroom is the station coteaching model. SE4 stated how she and her coteacher used the

station model to teach small groups:

> We used different books that are based on the same topics but different reading
>
> level to conduct reading comprehension strategies to gain understanding of the
>
> lesson that is taught. For instance, if we are teaching about hurricanes, we will

gather books from different reading levels to be used in small groups that are

designed to meet the needs of the students in each group.

Additional information related to when the participants planned instructions and how

planning occurred for SWDs will be explained in the lesson plans section.

**Review SWDs standardized test scores and reading level assessment**. Half of

the participants (GE3, GE4, SE1, and SE4), discussed how they used the New York State

English Language Arts Test (NYSELAT) from the previous school year to review the

SWDs' scores to determine their reading deficiency. GE3 reluctantly shared "I usually

look at the previous year's data to determine what I need to work on with each student.

However, sometimes the data is useful, and sometimes not useful." The participants also

reported how they used the previous school year reading level of each student to

determine how to group the students to provide remedial support during reading

instruction. GE4 stated that "I usually use the student's previous year reading level to

form reading groups, but I often noticed that when they return from break, I find that

some students come back with 'summer slide' in reading," which is a decline in reading

ability over the summer. In addition, SE4 stated that she speaks to the different related

services personnel and classroom teachers of the SWDs to gain knowledge about their

performance during the previous year.

**Theme 2: Classroom Accommodations for SWDs**

Research Question 2: How do general and special teachers in Grades 3-5

inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement ELA instructional strategies to promote

students' achievement? Theme 2 related to the strategies the participants used to

accommodate SWDs in their classrooms to improve academic achievement in ELA. The

subthemes generated were (a) modifying and adjusting reading materials, (b) provide

one-on-one instruction, (c) use of differentiated instruction, (d) providing SWDs with

multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery, (e) using SWDs' learning style to access

general education curriculum and, (f) developing personal relationship with SWDs to

determine their learning needs (see Table 6).

Participants were asked questions related to the types of strategies they used to

support the SWDs in their classroom to promote effective student achievement. They also

answered questions about how students were grouped to receive instruction, the types of

instructional accommodations implemented to meet the needs of students, and how often

they would meet to discuss SWDs growth and development.

Table 6

*Frequency of Theme2 and Subthemes Related to Research Question 2*

| Participant responses: Classroom accommodations for SWDs | No. of participants |
| --- | --- |
| Modifying and adjusting reading materials | 6 |
| Provide one-on-one instruction | 4 |
| Use of differentiated instruction | 8 |
| Providing SWDs with multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery | 3 |
| Using SWDs' learning style to access general education curriculum | 6 |
| Developing personal relationship with SWDs to determine their learning needs | 3 |

**Modifying and adjusting reading materials.** Overall, six participants (GE1,

SE1, GE3, SE3, GE4, & SE4) used varied resources to adapt the instruction to

accommodate SWDs in their classrooms. Instructional adaptations are usually done by

making changes to the general education curriculum to accommodate SWDs in the inclusion classrooms. GE1, SE1, GE3, and SE3 used grade level books to read aloud to engage SWDs in class and help them to participate in class discussions. GE3 reflected on how she modifies reading materials:

It's very frustrating for the students with reading difficulties to focus on the lesson that is taught if the reading material is above their reading level. It is beneficial to make instructional adaptations to the curriculum to include all students because if not, these students lose focus and usually interrupt the flow of the lesson that is taught.

GE4 and SE4 reported that they used read aloud materials as an IEP accommodation because most of her SWDs perform better when they are able to hear the material. SE4 also said that SWDs gain a better understanding of the content when the reading material is adjusted.

**Provide one-on-one instruction.** Half of the participants (SE1, SE2, SE3, & SE4) reported that they provide instruction strategies by providing one-on-one support during classroom activities related to reading. SE1 noted that she increases teacher-student proximity for some students who are having a difficult time focusing on the topic that is taught. SE2 said that, "I often provide my SWDs with a peer tutor to help them with one-on-one peer intervention support." SE2 added that when she provides a peer tutor for students, this intervention is very beneficial for both students. The peer tutor gets the opportunity to share what he or she learned with a partner who has reading

difficulties, and the other student gains a better understanding of the lesson that was taught.

SE3 worked with students who are having difficulty with writing. She stated that some students have difficulty completing their writing assignments in class so "sometimes I bring these students to the classroom during lunch to provide one-on-one support." SE4 reported how she supports one of her students who takes a very long time to copy information from the white board or chart paper. She states that during lunch, she normally provides a copy of what the student needs.

All four participants stated that providing one and one instruction to students allow students to gain confidence in their work. The students sometimes report that they feel embarrassed when they are not able to participate in class. The participants reported that they have seen improvement in the students' work and the students appear less stressed during class activities.

**Use of differentiated instruction.** All participants reported that they used differentiated instruction strategies daily when instructing SWDs. These participants would design instruction based upon the SWDs' reading deficiencies and how they perceived each student would be able to complete their assignment. GE1 and SE1 create small groups for reading by using leveled readers that are assigned to each group. They stated that these readers are related to the SWDs' reading abilities. SE1 stated that "although all the students are in the same grade, we often have to create three to four differentiated groups in the classroom". GE2 and SE2 used a different method to allow SWDs access to the general education curriculum by pairing the SWDs who were having

reading difficulties with their nondisabled peers who were meeting their grade level reading standards.

GE3 and SE3 reported that they would plan lessons that were differentiated for students who were experiencing reading difficulties by modifying reading passages. GE3 explained how she differentiates instruction:

When we plan our reading lessons, we take into consideration the different reading abilities for each student, so we have to modify the reading passages. The students would be reading the same content from the material but using different methods to acquire understanding of the material.

SE3 also shared her differentiated strategies for SWDs:

My partner and I love to use differentiated lessons because although the students are reading at different levels, we can access the same content by differentiating the lessons. It is not beneficial for us to use the whole group "one size fit all" approach, because the students get frustrated and refuse to complete the assignments in class.

SE4 reported how she and her coteacher used strategies such as: shortening the passage, defining the vocabulary words from the passage or, matching the student with a peer who is able to read fluently because they find that when they do these accommodations, they get better results.

**Providing SWDs with multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery.** Three participants (SE1, SE3, SE4) mentioned that they encounter many challenges finding

time to provide SWDs with multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery during

instructional time. SE1 explained her challenges:

> I have students in my classroom with processing deficits and require additional
>
> time to participate in classroom discussions. During reading instructions, when we
>
> work in large groups, it is very difficult to give individual support. The students
>
> normally get frustrated when they are questioned because they are not allowed
>
> additional time to participate in class.

SE3 also explained how some of her students with speech/language disabilities

demonstrate mastery of what is taught by "attempting to respond when they participate in

small groups or one-on-one interactions". Similarly, SE4 stated that SWDs need

additional time in the classroom to demonstrate what they know to ensure that they were

proficient in meeting the learning targets.

**Using SWDs' learning style to access general education curriculum.** Six of the

participants used SWDs' learning style to access the general education curriculum. GE4

and SE4 adapted different modifications that relates to the assessment of their students'

learning styles. They reported most of their SWDs are auditory or visual learners.

However, they noticed that when the students are asked to demonstrate reading

proficiency, they feel overwhelmed if they are not read to.

Participants SE1, SE2, SE3, and SE4, who were all special education teachers,

reported that their students enjoyed working on classroom projects, hands on activities,

and creating dioramas at home. SE4 stated that "students enjoyed hands-on learning

experiences because they learn from each other." SE2 asserted that "the students who are

not able to read well enjoy this experience because they are good in art and love to show what they know to their peers." SE1 stated that "when students are able to demonstrate what they know by using varied approach to learning, they understand what is being taught and the lesson becomes more meaningful." SE3 also agreed that learning and using the learning styles of each student to plan instructions for her classroom, has been very helpful in allowing students to access the general education curriculum.

**Developing personal relationship with SWDs to determine their learning needs**. Approximately three of the participants (GE3, GE4, and SE4) reported that they have developed personal relationship with their SWDs over the years in and outside of the classroom setting to learn more about their individual needs. GE3 stated that "I have developed personal relationships with some of my students during afterschool programs by providing alternate ways of answering questions on ELA test". SE4 reported how she develops relationship with her students:

> I am fortunate to have worked with some of the students in my classroom in previous grades and during afterschool. I was able to develop personal relationships with them and I know their strengths and weaknesses. Knowing these students helped me when planning instructions to meet their individual needs.

GE4 reported that there are times during lunch that she sometimes brings some of her students upstairs to provide one-on-one conservations. The remaining participants did not express any feelings about personal relationships with students although most of them had worked in the local school over 5 years.

**Theme 3: Coteachers' Instructional Strategies**

Theme 3 was generated from Research Question 2: How do general and special education teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement ELA instructional strategies to promote students' achievement? Participants provided responses about the instructional strategies they implemented to promote students' achievement. Six subthemes were generated from the participants. They referred to (a) use of vocabulary instructions, (b) activation of students' prior knowledge, (c) use of graphic organizers, (d) use of text structure to teach comprehension skills, and (e) use of coteaching delivery models to support instructions (see Table 7). Participants were asked questions about the different ELA instructional strategies that were used to allow access to SWDs to general education curriculum and to gain achievement in their classroom.

Table 7

*Frequency of Theme 3 and Subthemes Related to Research Question 2*

| Participant responses: Coteachers' instructional strategies | No. of participants |
|---|---|
| Use of vocabulary instructions | 8 |
| Activation of students' prior knowledge | 5 |
| Use of Graphic Organizers | 8 |
| Use of text structure to teach comprehension skills | 4 |
| Use of coteaching delivery models to support instructions | 4 |

**Teachers use vocabulary instruction to prepare students for reading instruction.** Every participant discussed how vocabulary instruction plays a vital role in helping students during reading instruction. Each coteacher pair shared the same information about delivering vocabulary instruction in their inclusion classroom. All

participants stated that using vocabulary instruction before reading passages or books, boosts the confidence level of SWDs in their classrooms. GE1, SE1, GE2, and SE1, reported that they use the school's recommended vocabulary instruction model to teach instructional strategies to improve reading comprehension. They all discussed the Frayer's model, which is a four-square model graphical organizer used by students to think about and describe the meaning of a word or concept.

GE1 and SE1 discussed how they select a list of words from a reading passage and list them on the whiteboard before the students read the passage. SE1 stated that "by listing the unfamiliar words from the passage, students will not be seeing these words for the first time when they begin to read". They then arrange the students in pairs and assign each pair one of the words and have them read the passage carefully. The students complete the four-square organizer for the word they were given earlier in the session and share their conclusions with the entire class.

GE2 and SE2 reported that they had used the Frayer model to help their students when they are introducing new content vocabulary. GE2 reported that "by using the Frayer model for vocabulary instruction, our students are able to gain confidence when reading assigned passages that they would normally have problem reading". SE2 explained how she gets her students to write during vocabulary instructions:

I am so happy for the SWDs because they are able to use the four-square organizer to write what they know by using pictures to complete the organizers This process of repetition of words helps SWDs to retain and understand the meaning of words in the passages they read.

GE2 and SE2 reported how they plan five lessons weekly in their ELA periods to provide at least 15-20 minutes of vocabulary instruction daily. GE3 and SE3 both reported how they teach vocabulary words to their students by having them preview 8 to 12 vocabulary words from the passage that will be introduced at the beginning of every unit. They stated that students created their own list with the words that they have chosen from the reading passage. SE3 explained how she teaches vocabulary strategies. She stated that "students work in small groups to prepare a chart with words that they have chosen and label the words as "know it," "sort of know it," or "don't know it at all". In addition, GE3 and SE3 both reported that this strategy helps students to write a definition of each word without using a dictionary.

GE3 added that she encourages her students to turn in their pre-reading charts by assuring them that this is not about "being right" it is about helping us to prepare vocabulary instructions to help them with their reading. GE4 and SE4 stated that they use a six-step approach during vocabulary instruction because it helps the students to use the strategy of sequencing to reinforce the knowledge they are gaining from each step, which is very important during vocabulary instruction.

Coteacher SE4 explained how she and her coteacher use the six-step approach during vocabulary instruction:

> We would first elicit the definition of the word by using imagery and tapping into SWDs' prior knowledge. Next, students are asked to explain the new word during classroom discussions. Then, students would create a picture or a symbol to represent the words. Then, they would engage in activities such as comparing

words and classifying terms of the words. Next students would be paired with a

partner to discuss the new word. Finally, students periodically play games such as

Pyramid and Jeopardy to review new vocabulary.

All participants discussed how important it is to use vocabulary instruction to improve

the reading difficulties of SWDs. The coteachers expressed that vocabulary instruction is

taught daily in the local school and students are taught many strategies to help them with

reading the material that is taught in groups or individually.

**Activation of students' prior knowledge.** Five of the participants (GE1, GE2,

SE2, SE3, and SE4) discussed how they activated SWDs' prior knowledge during

reading instructions. GE2 and SE2 reported that during reading instruction, the students

are grouped in small group discussion to enable them to activate the students' prior

knowledge based on the topic that is taught. SE2 explained how she activates prior

knowledge:

When I activate prior knowledge of a topic, it helps students to recall the different

ways they can make a connection to the events in the passage. For example, when

I read a passage about the weather, I explain to students that sometimes after the

rain they may be able to see a rainbow in the sky. I then ask the students if they

had ever experienced this when it rains.

GE1 reported that she activated students' prior knowledge about books and/or passages

by taking the students on a picture walk by using the illustrations, charts, and diagrams.

GE1 said that "before I read the content in the text, I spend time with the students to

preview the text to help them to gain an understanding of what the passage is about". She

stated that she likes using the previewing strategy because it helps her students to use prior knowledge strategy when reading text. They will read in class or at home.

SE3 reported that before she starts a reading unit, she activates prior knowledge by using a brainstorming web to "write a word 'Christmas' on the whiteboard or poster paper, then I have the students write as many words connected to the word or phrase around it such as gifts, December, Santa Claus, reindeer, angels, tree, and carols". She added that when she uses this strategy it helps the students to make a connection and activate prior knowledge.

SE4 delivered her lesson by using a picture book to read aloud to the class or a video which related to the topic to activate the SWDs' background knowledge in reading. SE4 said "for instance, when I am teaching a unit on colonial times, I used picture books to introduce a lesson because most of the SWDs are unable to read the assigned text book for the grade". She asserted that her use of picture books and video clips provide background information and could help students to understand and learn from this strategy.

**Use of graphic organizers.** All of the participants used different modalities, especially visualization, to accomplish greater learning and reading comprehension in their inclusion classrooms. Participants reported that they taught their students how to use graphic organizers because the students are able to reinforce what is taught in the classroom through visual and spatial modalities to help students to internalize what they are learning. GE1 reported how she uses graphic organizers during instruction:

I am able to improve comprehension skills by using graphic organizers with my

students to allow them to gain a deeper understanding of the content. Most of my

students are visual learners and pictorial representations enable them to break

down bigger ideas or concepts into simpler and smaller illustrations that they can

easily understand.

Similarly, SE1 said the primary advantage of this visual learning tool (the graphic

organizer), is its effectiveness in facilitating learning among students with disabilities

because it has improved learning in the classroom.

GE2 and SE2 reported that they use different graphic organizers during writing

sessions. They expressed their concerns about the writing abilities of their students. GE2

stated that "some of my students who have reading deficiencies refuse to put anything on

paper during writing periods. I have to sometime provide sentence starters to help them to

write a paragraph". SE2 stated that "because of the student's reading difficulties, they

also have writing problems. They use the 'four-square' graphic organizer to plan and

organize their thoughts when addressing writing topics." This graphic organizer helps the

students to organize the topic with details for a two paragraphs essay with beginning and

conclusion.

GE3 and SE3 reported that their students use graphic organizers to provide them

with an opportunity to complete assignments by using a hands-on approach. GE3

reported how the use of graphic organizers seems to be very simple resources. But they

are very powerful tools, highly instrumental in helping teachers and students in the

classrooms. GE3 laughed and asked a question, "what would I do without graphic

organizers during writing? They are very useful tools". GE3 and SE3 both stated that

they incorporate graphic organizers when they plan differentiated lessons to help students to access the general education curriculum.

GE4 reported that she normally uses graphic organizers as an instructional strategy when introducing a topic, activating prior knowledge, and assessing student comprehension. GE4 reported that, "I noticed that using graphic organizers has helped my students to develop many cognitive skills". Some of the skills the students have acquired are organizing and prioritizing content, brainstorming, the generation of ideas, critical analysis, and reflection. She also stated that the visual representations also serve as visual cues that aid the recall and retention of concepts and their relations.

SE4 reported that the use of graphic organizers benefits her students in many ways. She explained one of the benefits:

> I incorporate graphic organizers in all my reading lessons. For example, when I am teaching a lesson that requires the students to use compare and contrast skills, I use a Venn Diagram. The Venn Diagram consists of two overlapping circles which depict an illustration of the relationships between and among groups that share something in common. When I read a passage about mammals and fish, student can use the diagram to show things that are alike and things that are different.

SE4 added that students can use the diagram to compare how they are alike or different such as: mammals warm blooded and have hair or fur but fish have scales and are cold blooded, however, they are all vertebrates and have skeletons.

**Use of text structure to teach comprehension skills.** Half of the participants (GE3, SE3, GE4, and SE4) used text structure to teach comprehension skills. GE3 and SE3 used different instructional strategies based on the subjects they are teaching. One of the strategies they used when teaching science and social studies is the text structure instructional strategy. GE3 stated that since she started using this strategy, "I have seen great improvement in the students' comprehension of reading passages that relate to science and social studies text". SE3 reported that she modifies the material to demonstrate how to identify specific structures. She stated that, "when I teach social studies, the use of text structure to teach some skills such as the cause-and-effect skill is very beneficial because of the many events in the social studies passages". Both teachers reported that they are successful in using text structure to teach comprehension and have shared this strategy with some of their colleagues who are encountering the same problem.

GE4 and SE4 used a different approach to teach text structure. This coteacher pair reported that they used text structure instruction during readers' and writers' workshop. GE4 stated that, "during lesson planning, we would select different articles that included the comprehension skills we were teaching that week. We would use the team-teaching model to allow the students to be taught in smaller groups (two groups)". In doing so, each teacher would present the same lesson to their group. SE4 shared how she uses the text structures of passages during instruction:

> I use text structure to help students with understanding the lesson. For instance, when I teach compare and contrast strategy, I would read passages with students

and identify the text structure of the passage in a large group. Then students are

given graphic organizers to use to identify the text structure of the passage. They

usually work in small groups with their peers to get an opportunity to read and

listen to similar passages read by their peers.

Participants confirmed that using the strategy of identifying how the text is structured,

allows the students in small groups to participate in a discussion related to the text

structure of the passage and also gain a better understanding of the material that is

presented.

**Using coteaching models for instruction.** Half of the participants (GE1, GE2,

SE2, and SE4) reported how they used different coteaching models (different strategies

used in inclusion classrooms) to enable SWDs to gain access to the general education

classroom. The other four participants (SE1, GE3, SE3 and GE4) said that they used

coteaching models in their classrooms but did not report how they were used. They

discussed how they used differentiated instruction in small groups but did not name any

of the coteaching delivery models.

GE2 and SE2 stated that they know through experience all the models are great to

use during instructions. However, they primarily focus on team teaching which has some

similarity to parallel teaching. In this model, both teachers share in all classroom

responsibilities. GE1 said that, "from time to time we used the one teach and one assist

model. However, we don't feel comfortable with using this model because my copartner

is just moving around the room correcting papers or tending to behavioral issues".

This model is sometimes effective when one person is teaching the other person walks around the classroom supporting students who may need help.

GE2 reported that she is quite familiar with all six coteaching models, but the school administrators recommended to use the parallel teaching model. This model is delivered by both teachers who use the same lesson to provide instruction to two different groups of students simultaneously in the same classroom. GE2 discussed the use of parallel teaching model:

I enjoy using this model because I teach the same lesson to a smaller group in the same classroom with another teacher. My coteacher and I manage the classroom by using this model. We set up the classroom in a "U" shape so students would be sitting back-to-back to avoid distractions, this also helps us to focus on a smaller group of students.

SE2 thought that the design of the classroom during the use of the parallel model was "fun" because during the lesson, she was able to see how far her partner was in the lesson.

SE4 thought that parallel teaching is pretty much the easiest way to go. She stated that, "I was also encouraged to use the station teaching but I believe that it should be used when children can follow instructions and work independently". She argued that "although station teaching is taught through modeling, it may not be the best practice for the classroom during the beginning of the school year so my coteacher and I use parallel teaching most times". The station teaching model is normally divided into sections and each teacher teaches a different group. Each group

rotates to meet with the teacher who did not teach them in the first rotation (Cook & Friend, 1995).

**Theme 4: Collaborative Relationship in Inclusion Classroom**

Research Question 3: How do teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement the students' IEPs to accommodate ELA instructional strategies for SWDs? Theme 4 was generated from the coteachers' responses about how they collaborate to accommodate the ELA instructional strategies in the inclusion classroom. The participants expressed concerns about the (a) lack of appropriate instructional materials, (b) lack of opportunities to collaborate with teachers, and resource room and related services personnel(c) need for more time for planning, (d) need for more professional development, (e) need opportunities to collaborate with teacher before starting a new coteaching relationship, and (f) successful working relationship in coteaching classrooms (see Table 8). Participants were asked questions about their perceptions and attitudes about being an effective collaborative teacher, and how they used various coteaching models to meet the needs of each student. In addition, they were asked about which coteaching model is used the most when they conduct instructions with their coteacher.

Table 8

*Frequency of Theme 4 and Subthemes Related to Research Question 3*

| Participant responses: Collaborative relationship in inclusion classroom | No. of participants |
|---|---|
| Lack of appropriate instructional materials | 8 |
| Lack of opportunities to collaborate with teachers, resource room and related services personnel | 6 |
| Need for more time for planning | 3 |
| Need for more professional development | 4 |
| Need opportunities to collaborate with teacher before starting a new coteaching relationship | 2 |
| Successful working relationship in coteaching classrooms | 5 |

**Lack of appropriate instructional materials.** All of participants reported that they needed more appropriate instructional reading materials for SWDs. GE1 and SE1 reported that they have students with varied reading levels in their classroom. For example, SE1 said, "some of my students are reading two levels below expected reading level, and some are reading two reading levels above expected reading level". GE1 did not give any specific details about the need for appropriate reading materials except she said that "the instructional reading resources that are recommended for the students are above the reading levels of some of the students. Some of my students are 3-4 levels below grade level". Most of the participants demonstrated levels of frustration about not having adequate reading resources for SWDs. They reported that the current reading curriculum provides resources that are not appropriate for their students, so teachers need to constantly research other resources and/or purchase resources from websites such as "Teacher Pay Teachers".

GE2, SE2, GE3, and SE3 stated that although teachers are provided with the necessary resources to be used in their classrooms, they spend many hours searching for appropriate materials to help SWDs with their reading deficits. GE2 stated that, "I spend a lot of time researching articles, reading passages, and leveling books to help students to understand the lesson that is planned for the class". SE3 added that sometimes she is very frustrated because she can see that the students who are having problems with reading are not understanding the material.

GE4 reported that she believes that one of the ways to solve the problem of appropriate reading instructional resources is to consider the following design she would love to present to the reading coach and principal. GE4 explained a proposed design to deliver reading instructions to SWDs:

I believe that SWDs would improve their reading skills if administrators create three reading groups with students from Grades 3 to 5 based on their reading levels (low, medium, and high). This process involves rearranging the students in Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students during the reading blocks. Grade 3 inclusion classroom should consist of students from Grades 3, 4 and 5 with the same reading levels (low). Similarly, Grade 4 inclusion classroom should consist of students from Grades 3, 4 and 5 with the same reading levels (medium), and Grade 5 inclusion classroom, students with the same reading levels (high).

SE4 was also concerned about having appropriate materials to help SWDs access the general education classroom because the classroom reading materials that are suggested were difficult for the students to read and comprehend.

**Lack of opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, special education resource teachers and related services personnel.** Five participants (GE2, SE2, GE3, SE3, and GE4) reported that they would love more time to meet with their other colleagues to collaborate and discuss learning needs and instructional strategies that would be beneficial for the SWDs in their classroom. GE2 and SE2 expressed how they have a great relationship with their colleagues outside the classroom and have collaborated in different ways to meet the needs of the students. For example, GE2 stated, "I found it very helpful when the librarian provided my coteacher and I with lower level reading books that they could use with SWDs in the inclusion classroom". GE2 expressed how they were appreciative with the support they got from the librarian because they and the librarian can collaborate when preparing for the period of library skills the students spend in the library.

GE3 and SE3 reported that some of their students spend time outside the classroom weekly with the resource room teacher, as indicated on their IEP. However, SE3 said, "I am concerned that most of the times I am not able to discuss how the students are doing, what is working, and what needs improvement, because of time constraint". GE4 expressed her frustration about collaborating with support teams:

> I would love to visit other inclusion classrooms to collaborate and observe what happens in their classrooms. This would help me to gain additional knowledge from my colleagues who are serving the same SWDs with similar disabilities. I believe that visiting other classrooms is a great way to learn from each other.

GE4 expressed that she and her colleagues have discussed how collaboration among them would help them to share more about the effectiveness of some of the instructional strategies they use with SWDs.

**Need for more time for planning.** Three of the participants (GE4, SE1, SE4) stated that although they have common planning time with teachers in their grade, they sometimes plan before school starts, or during their prep and lunch schedules. SE1 stated that "because of the abundance of paper work, it is sometimes very difficult to complete her lesson plans during common planning time". GE4 reported that "my partner and I do sometimes share ideas and plan at home after hours". Participants shared how they sometimes have to use common planning time to discuss other concerns and/or issues related to students' academic and behavioral achievement so planning time is sometimes neglected.

**Need for more professional development.** Half of the participants (GE3, GE4, SE1, and SE4) reported needing to attend more professional development workshops with their coteacher to help them to support the SWDs in their classroom. SE1 and SE4 stated that attending monthly staff development workshop with their coteachers would be very beneficial because they would be able to gain more support with strategies to support SWDs in their inclusion classroom.

GE3 stated that she has been teaching over 10 years and needs to get more professional development at the local school. She stated "during my preservice training, I only took a few special education courses. It's been many years and most of what I know, I learn from my colleagues". GE4 expressed, "I am in need for more ongoing

professional development to gain new researched based resources that can help my

SWDs". GE4 recalled that during her teacher preparation program, she took only one

course and it has been such a long time and she needs some new instructional strategies.

**Need opportunities to collaborate with teacher before starting a new**

**coteaching relationship.** Only two participants, GE3 and GE4, were concerned about

spending some time with their coteachers before the school year resumes. GE3 expressed

her feelings about collaboration:

> This is my third year working with a coteacher and I have mixed reactions about
>
> my coteaching experiences as it relates to personalities. I have worked with three
>
> different coteachers over the three years and in some cases I would have loved to
>
> share my plans and goals for the students before the school year starts.

GE4 stated that this was her first year working with another teacher. She reported that she

had few concerns when she was assigned to an inclusion classroom with another teacher.

GE4 said, "It is very different when you are working with another person in your

classroom. There are several things that you must take into consideration such as: respect,

trust, and communication". Similar to GE3, GE4 further discussed that having the

opportunity to meet the coteacher before the school year starts probably would alleviate

potential problems later in the school year.

**Successful working relationship in coteaching classrooms.** GE1, GE2, GE4,

SE3, and SE4, expressed how their experiences in the inclusion classroom are great

learning experiences for both teachers and very beneficial to students who learn from two

teachers who are experts in their unique way. GE1 reported that she believes that

coteaching is very effective. She said, "Sometimes I am at work and need to discuss my concerns about some students, just having another person in the room, allows my brain to think better". GE1 shared her feelings about collaboration:

Coteaching allows me to come up with more ideas and share it with another teacher. It also allows two teachers with the knowledge, two teachers with the ability to teach the children, two teachers with a creativity, and two teachers with the concepts necessary to meet the needs of SWDs.

GE1 continued to say that when there are two teachers in the room the children can experience the best of both worlds because they are gaining knowledge from two teachers who are knowledgeable in their educational training.

GE2 reported that as a teacher, she is not there for herself, she is there for her students. She shared her love for collaborate teaching:

Collaborative teaching is not only beneficial for both teachers but for the students we teach. When two teachers are in the same classrooms and they are the right mix and the right energy, it is like electricity between both teachers in that classroom.

GE4 expressed her love and feelings about her coteaching relationship with her partner:

The relationship in the classroom could be fabulous because students see unity in the classroom. They can read between the lines if there is friction. It is great when teachers in a classroom become one. It is like finding the right fit of a puzzle. This relationship could be the best thing that could ever happen in a school.

SE3 and SE4 shared similar sentiments about their coteaching relationship as coteachers in inclusion classrooms but did not give any specific details. Although I continued to probe the answers were not related to their coteacher relationship with the general education teachers.

**Lesson Plans Strategies**

I collected and analyzed 20 lesson plans. There were five collaborative lesson plans from four coteacher pairs (e.g., GE1 and SE1, had the same lesson plan and presented five copies). The coteachers' lesson plans were used as an additional resource data to determine how coteachers collaborate to plan instruction for SWDs' academic needs. Some of the mandates of the local school are that all coteaching lesson plans should include the following: differentiated instruction, small groups instruction, IEP goals for SWDs, the use of more than one coteaching delivery model (e.g., team teaching, parallel, or station), accommodation for SWDs, assessments used to determine mastery, and the use of integrated coteaching model should be evident throughout the plans. The ICT delivery model is used to drive instruction in the inclusion classroom. This strategy is usually used during whole group instruction by teachers and students (I do, we do, you do) instructional strategy. For example, "I do", during a reading lesson to introduce the main idea, the teacher reads the passage, discusses how students can find the main idea. Then "we do" includes teacher and student who will read a passage and find the main idea. The "you do" involves students working independently to complete questions related to main idea. Table 9 illustrates the various instructional strategies that should be

documented in the coteaching lesson plans and shows which strategies appeared in the

reviewed coteacher pairs' lesson plans.

Table 9

*Evidence of Weekly Lesson Plan Strategies*

| Participant | Differentiated instruction used | Small Group Instruction | IEP goals addressed | More than one coteaching model used | Accommodations used | Assessments | "ICT strategy used "I do, we do, you do" strategy used |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| GE1 & SE1 | X | X | X | X | X | | X |
| GE2 & SE2 | X | X | X | | X | | X |
| GE3& SE3 | X | X | | | | | X |
| GE4 & SE4 | X | X | | X | | | X |

*Note*. X means strategy appeared in plan.

It appeared that most of the lesson plans were developed by both teachers because

they did have common planning time. However, 10 out of 20 plans did not have the

names of both coteachers. Accommodations for SWDs were only demonstrated in 10 out

20 lesson plans. During the interview, all participants were asked about when they

planned instructions and how planning occurred for SWDs. The majority of the

participants disclosed that they do receive at least one common planning period weekly.

However, they described that planning with their coteachers varies in many ways. Some

of the coteachers' planning occurred after school hours, during the evenings, or on the

weekends (mostly by email or on the phone).

Differentiation instruction, which is offering students multiple ways of accessing the general education curriculum, was evident in all lesson plans. Teachers demonstrated that each coteacher used differentiation strategies to instruct SWDs during reading instruction by listing strategies that were used in differentiated groups. Small groups were designed by all coteacher pairs. The participants reported how students were grouped in small groups during ELA instructions to access differentiated lessons that were developed based on each student's reading levels. In addition, all lesson plans demonstrated that all participants planned lessons to incorporate the ICT delivery model (I do, we do, you do) to drive instruction in the inclusion classroom.

Overall, the data gathered from the lesson plans indicated that coteachers lacked planning strategies to meet the needs of SWDs, lacked the use of more than one service model, lacked the use of accommodations strategies and lacked the use of strategies to help students to meet their IEP goals. All participants neglected to show how students are assessed and how they used data to assess students in the plans. However, all participants planned differentiated lessons for students to work in small groups.

**Discrepant Cases**

Discrepant cases from the one-on-one interviews were not evident in the study. Miles and Huberman (2013) explained the complexity of breaking apart the data that are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and finally providing thick description of the result. This data analysis process was very thorough and tedious. The data that were provided by each participant was broken apart and segmented to determine individual responses to questions. The data was then put together carefully to ensure that it was an accurate

representation of each participant's thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. This process involving coding and themes during the data analysis process and all the data that were provided were considered and included in the qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 2013).

## Evidence of Trustworthiness

I was able to establish trustworthiness by using member checking, triangulation, and peer debriefing to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Member checking review allowed me to obtain feedback from the participants about the accuracy of the transcribed responses. In doing so, the results of the member checking allowed me to determine if I was able to capture accurate participants' "perceptions, viewpoints, attitudes, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences" in the transcripts (Glesne, 2011; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2013). I provided each participant with the interview transcript to allow the participant to determine if the data presented were accurate. When this was done, the participants were able to clarify, add additional information, and correct any noticeable errors that were evident in the report (Glesne, 2011; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); Yin, 2013). All participants reviewed the transcriptions and verified the accuracy by making suggestions and changes where necessary. Two participants (GE3 and SE4) requested changes to be made. One participant (SE4) used the wrong name for the service delivery model that was used in her classroom. The other participant (GE3) asked to remove the different "sighs" an "ums" when answering certain questions. After carefully reviewing their suggested revisions, I accepted all of them.

Triangulation was used to establish credibility and reliability in a qualitative study. I was able to corroborate data I collected from the coteachers' interviews and the coteachers' lesson plans (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2013). Triangulation was necessary to ensure that the content from the research findings are well-developed and rich (Glesne, 2011; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2013).

Finally, I established trustworthiness by conducting peer debriefing to obtain feedback about the interview data. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), when performing qualitative research, I can use a peer debriefer to review the data to determine the accuracy of the data that were collected from the participants who participated in the study. To establish authenticity, I asked one of the doctoral students from Walden University to review the data and codes to minimize any threats (e.g., researcher bias) to the validity and reliability of the data. (Glesne, 2011; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2016; Yin, 2013). The peer debriefer, who recently completed her study, asked me tough questions related to data collection, data analysis, and data interpretations. This process was completed over a 5-day period and I received candid feedback that helped me to gain additional confidence in the trustworthiness of the study.

## Summary

Chapter 4 focused on the results from the collection of data from one-on-one interviews and the reviewing of lesson plans created by coteachers in inclusion classrooms to address the research questions. This chapter includes four major themes

that emerged from the analysis of the data collected from the study participants. The themes are, coteachers strategies used when planning lessons for SWDs, classroom accommodation for SWDs, coteachers' instructional strategies, and collaborative relationship in inclusion classrooms. These themes were further broken down into subthemes.

In Chapter 4, I discussed how coteachers collaborated to devise instructional strategies in elementary grade level ELA to accommodate SWDs in inclusion classrooms. These teachers recounted how they planned instructional strategies for SWDs by developing personal relationships with SWDs, and working and observing students in small groups. Some participants planned instructional strategies by using SWDs IEP goals, and reviewing SWDs standardized test scores from previous ELA state exams and classroom reading level assessment.

Participants also discussed how the knowledge they gained from building personal relationships with students helped them in designing weekly instructional lesson plans with differentiated instruction to accommodate SWDs in the general education classroom. Some participants also mentioned some challenges they have encountered when planning instructions such as: appropriate instructional materials, more opportunities to collaborate with teachers, resource room and related services personnel, more time for planning, professional development, and opportunities to collaborate with teacher before starting a new coteaching relationship

In addition to the results, I also described the data collection process, the setting of the study, the demographics, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness. In Chapter

5 I will discuss the purpose of this study, interpretations of the findings, the limitations of the study, recommendation for further research, and implications for impact for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

**Introduction**

I conducted this case study to explore how coteachers collaborate to devise instructional strategies in elementary grade level ELA to accommodate SWDs in inclusion classrooms. I also gathered information from the coteachers to find out the types of resources and support they needed to provide effective instructional strategies to SWDs in their classrooms. The study emanated from the problem that UCES was experiencing low ELA achievement scores for SWDs during the years: 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016. Teachers from Grades 3, 4, and 5 were interviewed and asked specific questions about how they planned instructions to meet each SWD's needs, how they accommodated SWDs in their coteaching classrooms, what instructional strategies they used to serve SWDs, and how they collaborated to provide instructions for SWDs. Four major themes emerged from the analysis of collected data from participants' one-on-one interviews. These themes indicated gaps of practice at the research site. They were coteachers' strategies used when planning lessons for SWDs, classroom accommodation for SWDs, coteachers' instructional strategies, and collaborative relationship in inclusion classroom. Chapter 5 begins with the interpretation of the findings that I presented in Section 4. In addition, I analyze and interpret the findings in context of the conceptual framework, discuss the limitations of the study, suggest recommendations for further study, discuss the implications for social change, and provide a conclusion.

**Interpretation of the Findings**

During the interviews with the coteachers, all eight teachers shared how they collaborated to devise instructional strategies in elementary grade level ELA to accommodate SWDs in inclusion classrooms. In this section, I interpret the findings using the themes and research questions to describe the ways the findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend the research discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2. The themes are: coteachers' strategies used when planning lessons for SWDs, classroom accommodation for SWDs, coteachers' instructional strategies, and collaborative relationship in inclusion classroom.

**Interpretation of Theme 1: Coteachers Strategies Used When Planning Lessons for SWDs**

Theme 1 is connected to Research Question 1: What types of ELA instructional strategies do general and special education teachers' use when planning lessons for SWDs in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms? During the interviews with the coteachers, all eight teachers shared the type of strategies they used when planning instructions for SWDs. The data analysis generated many ways individual teachers used different factors when planning instructions for SWDs. The special education participants reported how they used SWDs' IEPs to plan goals and accommodations for each student. The participants stressed that the SWDs' IEP plays an integral part in helping them in preparing instructional accommodations for students. They asserted that the IEPs from each student helped them to develop individual instruction strategies for each student. However, I found this very alarming because during the participant interviews and the

analysis of the lesson plans, there was no mention of collaboration with the coteachers when planning accommodations for SWDs. These findings were inconsistent with the research discussed in the literature review when participants discussed the students' IEPs. In Rotter's (2014) study, the IEP team normally aligned the educational and behavioral goals of each SWDs to allow them access to the general education curriculum. However, in my research, the participants discussed different types of accommodations they used but did not refer to the student's IEP.

All participants reported how they used the student's reading levels to create small groups to gain an understanding about what is needed to support SWDs during reading lessons. According to the participants, planning for these students in small groups, allow students to gain a level of expertise in the reading level where they can demonstrate mastery. The participants also reported how they used the previous school year reading level assessment of each student and ELA standardized test scores to determine SWD's reading deficiency. Participants discussed how valuable these resources were in helping them to review data from the previous year to make decisions when planning reading instructions for SWDs. Researchers McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012, reported in the review of literature that SWDs were expected to be taught the same curriculum in the inclusion classroom with their nondisabled peers and participate in the same ELA state test.

These findings from the case study related to the use of standardized test scores to determine reading deficiency support the research discussed in the literature review, where researchers stated that prior to the IDEA of 1997, SWDs' academic achievement

when compared with their nondisabled peers was difficult to determine (McLeskey, Landers, et al., 2012). After several concerns by federal policy holders about standardized tests or other assessments to determine the educational achievement of SWDs, the reforms in 1997 were enacted (McLeskey et al., 2011).

**Interpretation of Theme 2: Classroom Accommodations for SWDs**

Theme 2, Classroom Accommodations for SWDs, is connected to Research Question 2: How do general and special education teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement ELA instructional strategies to promote students' achievement? All the participants described accommodations they provided to SWDs for access to the curriculum. They discussed how they modified and adjusted reading materials, provided one-on-one instruction, used differentiated instruction, provided SWDs with multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery, used SWDs' learning style to access general education curriculum and, developed personal relationship with SWDs to determine their learning needs.

Data analysis of participant responses established that coteachers in Grades 3, 4, and 5 use a wide variety of differentiated instructional accommodations due to the diverse and individualized needs of SWDs. All participants described how they used differentiation strategies to accommodate SWDs in the inclusion classroom. Strategies such as using varied reading leveled books, shortening the passages, defining the vocabulary words from the passage and, matching the student with a peer reader who is able to read fluently were used by most of the participants.

Most of the findings were consistent with the literature in regard to using differentiated instruction, making specialized IEP accommodations such as more time to complete assignments (Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2007; Rotter, 2014); alternative methods to complete assignments (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2013); and/or extended time on tests to accommodate all students, including SWDs (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2013). Prior researchers found that the curriculum is often difficult for SWDs to access and most times students in this environment feel less than their nondisabled peers because the resources are difficult for them to achieve success (Allington, 2013; Conderman & Hedin, 2013; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). By law (IDEA, 2004), SWDs should not only be provided with access to the core curriculum but also with accommodations corresponding to their IEPs (Brigham et al., 2011; Ciullo et al., 2014; Mason & Hedin, 2011; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Although all the participants reported that they used different strategies to accommodate SWDs in their classroom, there was little or no evidence of the use of tiered assignments that were differentiated to address the different reading levels in the classroom. In prior research, McLeskey and Waldron (2011) stated that the general education curriculum is designed for large group instruction and must be redesigned to accommodate SWDs. Other researchers recommended breaking the material into smaller sections, clarifying and simplifying written activities, and allowing students to practice strategies multiple times to reinforce the lesson that was taught (McKeown et al., 2009; Whalon & Hart, 2011). There is an indication that coteachers may need additional training on how to use differentiated strategies to accommodate the learning abilities and differences of SWDs.

**Interpretation of Theme 3: Coteachers' Instructional Strategies**

Theme 3, coteachers instructional strategies, is also connected to Research Question 2: How do general and special teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement ELA instructional strategies to promote students' achievement? Participants provided responses about the instructional strategies they implemented to promote students' achievement. The research study participants reported that they taught reading to SWDs in a variety of ways. Coteachers in inclusion classrooms reported using summarizing, questioning, predicting, and clarifying, along with other literacy strategies to teach reading in their classrooms. They reported using various strategies such as small group instruction and peer tutoring to deliver vocabulary instructions which allowed SWDs to read grade level books, activation of prior knowledge, using graphic organizers to reinforce what was taught in the classroom through visual and spatial modalities to help students to internalize what they are learning. using text structures and using coteaching models to provide instruction.

In this study, I found coteachers are implementing effective research-based instructional strategies in their classrooms. The strategies included: small group instruction, peer tutoring, vocabulary instruction, activating prior knowledge, and using various graphic organizers to differentiate instruction. The instructional practices, peer tutoring (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2013), and explicit instruction (McKeown et al., 2009), which were found in the literature review to be highly effective for SWDs were only mentioned by a few participants in this study.

Additionally, several researched-based instructional strategies that were discussed in the literature review such as changing the response mode during instruction, allowing additional time to complete written assignments, and providing needed repetition and several opportunities to practice and master skills, strategies, and content (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2013), were not common practices in the coteachers' classrooms. Using the practices that are mentioned above play an important part in helping SWDs to participate in the general education curriculum. Researchers (McKeown et al., 2009; Whalon & Hart, 2011) reported that most times when instructional material are presented to SWDs students become overwhelmed and sometimes will refuse to complete the material. SWDs become very frustrated because they are expected to produce the same work as their nondisabled peers, and they are unable to do so. In addition, McKeown et al. (2009) stated that normally the reading curriculum is designed for nondisabled students, so it is very difficult for SWDs with reading deficiency to comprehend the lessons and activities they need to be successful in the inclusion classroom.

None of the participants mentioned if they used formal assessment to determine the SWDs level of understanding and achievement. Similarly, participants made no mention of providing frequent monitoring, assessment, and feedback of student's progress after implementing instructional strategies to improve their reading level as suggested in prior research (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; McLeskey, Landers et al., 2012; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). This information is necessary because it would be beneficial to know what types of instructional strategies are most effective when

instructing SWDs in the inclusion classroom. Some of the participants also reported how the use of coteaching delivery models enabled them to use different strategies to deliver instructions. However, the findings in this study indicated that participants did not use all the models recommended by researchers (Cook & Friend, 1995). Some of them used coteaching models such as: parallel teaching, team teaching, and station teaching models with SWDs to help them to gain access to the general education classroom.

These findings from the study differ from the prior peer-reviewed literature because the participants reported the use of three regular used models but did not mention the use of the other three models (one teach, one assist; alternative teaching; and one teach, one observe). Many researchers reported that coteaching looks different in classrooms, schools, and how the curriculum is delivered. Cook and Friend (1995) discussed that because of the variations of coteaching models, the coteaching service delivery model: "one teach, one assist; station teaching; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; team teaching and one teach, one observe" (p.7) are usually used in the inclusion classroom. Similarly, Villa et al. (2002) identified four coteaching models: a supportive teaching which is normally used when the teachers begin coteaching, parallel teaching, complementary teaching model and team-teaching model.

Brown et al. (2013) also reported that coteachers using strategies from the service delivery model may experience a successful relationship in the inclusion classroom. In addition, Brown et al. and Friend and Cook (2007) stated that the use of the coteaching service delivery model may provide the opportunity to deliver different strategies and modifications that will accommodate all learners because it also allows for flexibility

when planning and preparing lessons for SWDs. In support of the research done pertaining to the effectiveness of the use of the service delivery model in inclusion classrooms, additional discussion about participants use of the coteaching models appears in Analysis/Interpretation of Findings in Context of Conceptual Framework section.

**Interpretation of Theme 4: Collaborative relationship in inclusion classroom**

Theme 4, collaborative relationship in inclusion classroom, was generated from the coteachers' responses about how they collaborate to accommodate the ELA instructional strategies in the inclusion classroom to address Research Question 3. Coteachers reported the lack of appropriate instructional materials to teach SWDs with reading deficits; and the lack of opportunities to collaborate with teachers, and resource room and related services personnel. In addition, they expressed the need for more additional planning time and professional development. Participants also discussed what made their working relationship in coteaching classrooms successful.

The majority of the participants disclosed that they do receive at least one common planning period weekly. However, they described that planning with their coteachers varies in many ways. Some of the coteachers' planning occurred after school hours, during the evenings, or on the weekends (mostly by email or on the phone). The common practice in the research site is for teachers to use the common planning allocated during the regular school hours to collaborate and plan lessons with the teachers in their grade. The data in the study revealed that the coteachers have limited time to effectively plan instructions for SWDs during the week while school is in session.

The findings from the study under Theme 4 are supported by research conducted by Gallo-Fox and Scantlebury (2015), who stated that common planning time is a significant challenge for many coteaching groups so coplanning is done between classes, during preps, and during instructions. Gallo-Fox and Scantlebury suggested that teachers should receive 2 hours of common planning time 5 days every week each afternoon outside of regular school hours. In doing so, teachers will be able to share ideas and plan instruction successfully. Coteachers are cognizant of the importance of collaboration when planning for SWDs and how collaboration can bring about success in the inclusion classroom if they are provided with the necessary time to plan effective instructions

The need for additional professional development and ongoing training were also concerns that were expressed by most participants. The importance of professional development was reported in many articles that were discussed in the literature review. Several researchers revealed that professional development is of utmost importance and integral in the lives of teachers who teach SWDs and students they teach in inclusion classrooms (Flannery et al., 2013; Glazier et al., 2016; Grima-Farrell et al., 2014; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Saleem et al., 2014; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). Shaffer and Thomas-Brown, (2015) posit that coteachers need current and important information related to SWDs through formal and informal professional development to further improve their pedagogical skills. In addition, they stated that by attending professional development activities coteachers are kept abreast of new practices in planning, instructing, and assessing the general education curriculum that is administered to students in the inclusion classroom.

Pancsofar and Petroff (2013) conducted a quantitative study by using online survey, found out that when teachers received ongoing professional development, they felt better able to plan, instruct, and assess the lessons for students. Similarly, in a quantitative study, Saleem et al. (2014) conducted a study with 28 participants from a teacher preparation education university to determine the effectiveness of professional development after preservice. The findings indicated that the participants who had received professional development after attending a preservice program were more equipped to work collaboratively in inclusion classrooms (Saleem et al., 2014).

Lack of support was another concern that the participants in this study emphatically reported. Some of the findings from my study indicated the need for support from all stakeholders who are involved in the students' academic and behavioral life. Coteachers expressed how they would welcome the participation of a cohesive team of providers (administrators, related services providers, and paraprofessionals) who share a sense of responsibility for student academic achievement. Some participants stated that students benefit from receiving instructional strategies that are coordinated and designed to allow them to participate in the assignments which may result in academic and behavioral success. They all agreed that this cohesive bond between all stakeholders will be beneficial to everyone if consistent support is displayed throughout the collaboration and inclusion process.

The literature review confirms the importance of providing support for students in inclusion classrooms. Administrators can provide support to coteachers in numerous ways by helping with the use of planning time (Mackey, 2014), sharing of effective

instructional practices (Baumer & Lichon, 2015), providing professional development (Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2015), allowing for collaborative team meetings (Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2015), and collaborating to design progress monitoring and assessment data intake (Mackey, 2014). Therefore, it is very important that administrators create a supporting environment to build a school culture that supports collaboration and focuses on improving student achievement (Ketterlin-Geller et al., Baumer, & Lichon, 2015; Mackey, 2014; Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014).

Prior researchers indicated that the related services providers are very supportive members of teachers and SWDs. The related services team, which consists of psychologists, social workers, school counselors, along with general and special educators are instrumental in preparing IEPs for SWDs (Conderman, 2011; Yell et al., 1998). It is very important that the related services individuals collaborate with coteachers to provide instructional instructions to diverse learners. Researchers have reported findings of an instructional strategy, Numbered Heads Together (NHT) that can be used by two or more professionals to provide support to SWDs in inclusion classrooms (Hunter et al., 2016). Supporting teachers in inclusion classrooms is a necessary need. In a qualitative study done by Lyons et al. (2016) in four inclusive elementary schools, the findings revealed that commitment to team collaboration when planning instruction together, supporting colleagues' teaching, reflecting on current practices and strategies, sharing knowledge, ideas, and expertise, and addressing and solving problems together (Lyons et al., 2016) lead to a success for SWDs and their nondisabled peers.

Participants in this study expressed how they were able to develop successful working relationship in their coteaching classrooms. They reported that they benefited from working with another teacher by sharing ideas that will also benefit the students in their classrooms. They expressed that working together with another professional allowed them to gain new ideas and to grow professionally. They expressed how their experiences in the inclusion classroom are great learning experiences for both teachers and very beneficial to students who learn from two teachers who are experts in their unique way.

These findings support prior literature that coteachers derive benefits from teaching collaboratively in an inclusion classroom. Teachers benefit from having another teacher in the room who can share all the classroom responsibilities, students' achievements and success (Cosier et al., 2013; Guise et al., 2016). Based on the findings from this study, it appears that there may be a need for professional development for coteachers to increase the range of instructional strategies to support every student in their classroom.

**Analysis/Interpretation of Findings in Context of Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this case study was built on the collaborative theory by Cook and Friend (1995) which was derived from cooperative teaching based on the seminal work of Bauwen et al. (1989). I believe that this collaborative theory was a suitable framework to address coteaching among teachers in an inclusion classroom and it has been an effective service delivery model for instructional achievement in the inclusion classrooms (Allday et al., 2013). Cook and Friend defined coteaching as special

and regular students receiving instruction from two or more professionals working in the same room to deliver the general education curriculum to students in the inclusion classroom. The findings of the study indicated that the coteachers in the inclusion classrooms both collaborated to provide academic and social needs to SWDs (Cook & Friend, 1995) as indicated by the framework, even though they did not use most of the six service delivery models.

The coteaching instructional delivery model has six different components that can be used individually or together during instructions based on the subject being taught, the creativity of the teachers and the age or maturity of the students (Cook & Friend, 1995). The different models that address the coteaching service delivery relationship between the coteachers are: "one teach, one assist; station teaching; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; team teaching and one teach, one observe" (Friend et al., 2010, p. 12). The findings from the study exhibit the use of some of the coteaching service delivery models (Friend, 2013; Friend, 2014; Friend et al., 2010; Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & Mcculley, 2012.

The findings from this case study indicated that participants used some of the coteaching models to enable SWDs to gain access to the general education classroom. However, participants primarily focused on team teaching which has some similarity to parallel teaching. It was evident through the findings that emanated from the questions related to the use of the service delivery model, that there was limited use of most of the models. In this study, coteachers mostly used the parallel and team-teaching service delivery models to provide instruction. Cook and Friend (1995), Friend et al. (2010),

Friend (2013), Friend (2014), and Solis et al. (2012), state that by using all or a few of the coteaching service delivery models, coteachers can collaborate to plan lessons for part or all day based on the curriculum material, age group, or level of maturity of the students. In this study, all participants reported that they used the seventh model, which is a combination of all six models (Friend et al. 2010). In addition to Cook and Friend's six service delivery models, the coteachers used a combination of the six models to create an instructional delivery process in the ICT classrooms. This model entails: (a) "I Do" for the "Introduction to New Material" (b) "We Do" for "Guided Practice" (c) "You Do" for Independent Practice" This combined ICT model planned and timed lessons to transition from one model to the next model.

This qualitative case study benefited from the conceptual framework of the collaborative theory by Cook and Friend (1995) because it addresses several instructional delivery models that coteachers can use to address the needs of SWDs. The coteaching model enables coteaching professionals to adjust their lessons for students' needs. The lessons are planned to address the instructional goals and maturity level of the students (Cook & Friend, 1995; Friend, 2013; and Solis et al., 2012).

## Limitations of the Study

There were some limitations of the study. One of limitation was that I collected interview data that were reported by participants and reviewed lesson plan data and did not observe participants. During the data analysis, I discovered that the data collected from the interview and lesson plans did not align. I believe that if the participants were observed in their classrooms, I probably would have been able to determine how the

coteachers used the accommodating and differentiated instruction strategies they mentioned in their interviews and lesson plans. I also believe that if I was able to observe the participants, the trustworthiness of my study would be more reliable because the observational data sources would be used to strengthen data triangulation.

Another limitation relates to the sample size of eight participants from a single school in one geographical area which was generated from New York to allow researcher to gain easy access. Although the sample size is small, it is normally the case in a qualitative case study. Base on the small sample size, the findings from this study cannot be generalized to a larger target population. In addition, the various teaching experiences of the coteachers regarding inclusion and collaboration, and the findings from this study might make generalization difficult to from this study to a larger target population. Furthermore, the research was based on a case study of coteachers in a single local school, the findings were applicable only to their own experiences and speak to the themes relevant to their perceptions and attitudes. I believe that the teachers' behaviors in how they conducted the interview were not different from the way they would report to an outsider.

The biases that I brought to the study: the knowledge that I have acquired being a special education teacher; my belief that when SWDs are provided with accommodations based on their IEP, they can achieve ELA academic proficiency; and my belief that SWDs could learn and meet their individual needs in an inclusion classroom when collaboration takes place by the coteachers did not negatively influence the study. The reasonable measures to address these limitations were the use of different data sources

such as interviews and data collected from lesson plans to attain credible results. I assumed that the data collected from lesson plans would be beneficial in triangulating the interviews to gain relevant and sufficient information that would positively affect the study. Each of these limitations made it difficult for the findings to be generalizable to a larger population.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were provided from the data analysis findings and current literature. I provided recommendations for the research site to improve the implementation of ELA instructional strategies and interventions for SWDs in the inclusion classrooms. In addition, I also provide recommendations for further study to be conducted in different settings and grade levels to determine effective instructional strategies for SWDs.

### Recommendations for Action

I have three recommendations for the local research site. These recommendations were determined from the data analysis of the interview and lesson plan data. The recommendations are as follow.

**Recommendation 1:** Some of the participants expressed that they would love to have opportunities to collaborate with their coteacher before starting a new coteaching relationship. I would recommend that the local school administrators develop a plan to be implemented before school starts. The administrators can develop an annual workshop to be conducted during the summer for general and special education (coteacher pairs) to learn about each other. This platform would be beneficial for both teachers because this

would serve as a platform for them to share their teaching styles, coteaching delivery model or models they will use during instructions, the instructional strategies to address accommodating the learning needs of their SWDs, and simple things like how they will design the classroom. The meeting of these teachers should help the coteachers to gain trust between each other.

**Recommendation 2:** Half of the participants in the study expressed their need for additional professional development. I recommend that administration and all stakeholders who are responsible for preparing teachers for the delivery of academic instructions provide adequate professional development for coteachers. I believe that an on-going professional development workshop about how to plan instructional strategies, provide IEP accommodations, and how to use the coteaching delivery models to instruct SWDs would be beneficial for coteachers. Some of the benefits would be providing teachers with opportunities to learn new research instructional strategies and learn how to plan these strategies for SWDs.

**Recommendation 3:** Based on the findings from this study, there was the lack of use of coteaching instructional delivery models to support instruction in classrooms. I recommend that the local school administrators design an instructional team of teachers who have worked successfully in a coteaching classroom. These teachers who are knowledgeable about Friend and Cook (2010) six types or models of coteaching: one teaches, one observes; one teaches, one assists; station teaching; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; and team teaching. This team will serve as a support team to new and current teachers. With this type of support, teachers could visit other classrooms to

observe how coteachers use these models to support SWDs. The use of these instructional

models during collaboration between coteachers will support teachers in providing

effective instructional strategies and accommodations to meet the needs of each student

in the general education classroom.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

There is continued need to understand what instructional strategies and

accommodations are effective in teaching SWDs at the elementary school level and

narrowing the gap between SWDs and their nondisabled peers. The findings from this

research suggest that many different types of studies (qualitative and quantitative), could

be conducted to better understand how coteachers in inclusion classrooms could help

SWDs to improve their reading to attain better grades in class and to achieve better test

scores locally and statewide.

**Recommendation 1:** I suggest that a qualitative case study be conducted at

several elementary schools in the research district with all K-5 inclusion teachers to

collect interview data. This study will allow researchers to determine the perceptions and

feelings from a larger data pool to gain a greater understanding of how coteachers in

inclusion classrooms plan lessons to include individual accommodations that are

designed by the IEP team for SWDs. The IEP is a legal document and the information

from the IEP supports the SWDs' academic and learning needs.

**Recommendation 2:** I also suggest that in future studies a mixed-methods design

be conducted with a larger sample to gain more insights about the experiences of general

education and special education teachers collaborating to plan instructional strategies for SWDs. This research could be done in several urban schools in the District.

**Recommendation 3:** Future researchers could conduct a qualitative case study with middle and high school level teachers to determine if professional development on improving SWDs ELA achievement scores is effective. This professional development would be beneficial for teachers and may result in continuous improvement when planning instructional strategies for SWDs.

**Recommendation 4:** The final recommendation would be to conduct a qualitative study to get lived experiences by interviewing and observing other participants who were not included in this study to determine how instructions are planned for SWDs. Some potential participants would be administrators, resource room teacher, coteachers from Grades K-2, and special education teachers.

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**Implications**

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There were no methodological, theoretical, and/or empirical implications for this study. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how coteachers collaborate to implement students' IEPs and devise instructional strategies to accommodate the SWDs in their classes. The population that was recruited for this case study were third, fourth and fifth grade coteachers. I was able to collect data which enabled me to use the literature review in Chapter 2 and the research questions to support the findings. After analyzing and interpreting the data, I was able to provide recommendations for social change to all stakeholders who serve SWDs. The data from

case study supports the literature review findings that these recommendations could increase the academic achievement in ELA for SWDs.

**Positive Social Change-Local**

I anticipate that the local site and district will encounter many positive social changes from this study. It is very important that the stakeholders who are the decision makers who can affect change for all students (SWDs and their nondisabled peers) accept the suggested recommendations from the research. The findings of this case study revealed many issues related to research based instructional strategies that can be taught correctly to coteachers to enable them to implement them at the local research site. To provide quality literacy instructions, teachers must meet this challenge by participating in ongoing research based professional development and training that will assist them to plan instructions that are aligned with SWDs' IEP goals. The third, fourth, and fifth grade coteachers would learn to work collaboratively with all support staff and specialists to plan appropriate lesson plans to meet the instructional and accommodation needs of each student's reading needs.

In addition, lesson plans would be created to include differentiated strategies and research-based practices that are aligned with classroom instruction to help every learner to access the general education curriculum. When teachers plan instructions that are aligned with researched based literacy interventions, SWDs will be able to experience success in their work and begin to gain confidence in reading. When this occur, their grades will eventually begin to improve, and this improvement will ultimately lead to

better test scores and ultimately narrow the reading gap between SWDs and their nondisabled peers.

Research-based professional development and training would train teachers on how to use the coteaching service delivery models based on Cook and Friends' conceptual theory. Teachers would become knowledgeable about all the different teaching models and would be willing to practice them to determine which ones are more effective when instructing SWDs in their inclusion classrooms.

I believe that school districts and school administrators may benefit from this case study by providing interventions for general and special education teachers to improve their skills in accommodating SWDs in their classroom. When students improve their academic achievement, they are able to perform effectively from elementary school through high school and therefore decrease the achievement between SWDs and their nondisabled peers, and eventually become career ready. Research reports from schools across the United States, show the number of SWDs who dropped out of high school in 2014 was 72,351 (18.5%); 259,036 SWDs (64.6%) graduated with a high school diploma (USDoE, 2015a). In New York City, 3,263 SWDs (15.8 dropped out of high school in 2014, and 4,706 SWDs (52.9%) graduated with a high school diploma (USDoE, 2015b). In New York City, the graduation rate of SWDs (52.9%) was lower than the national graduation rate of SWDs (64.6%). The high school dropout rate of SWDs in New York City (40%) was higher than the national dropout rate for SWDs (24%). The improvement of general and special education teachers' ability to accommodate SWDs could result in

an increase in the number and percentage of SWDs who graduate from high school in New York City and become productive members of society.

**Positive Social Change-Societal**

I believe that society will benefit from positive social change from the results of this research. The results from this study contribute to the adolescent literacy. In today's society, students in middle school must acquire more than just basic reading skills. The rate at which knowledge is generated and shared today, often through technology, is unprecedented in human history. To keep pace, today's children must become tomorrow's lifelong learners. They should be able to read, write, and use thinking skills to allow them to survive in this ever-changing society. Today's children must also become adults who are able to communicate and navigate an increasingly interconnected society – one in which literacy skills are routinely called upon. In other words, teachers must be prepared to support struggling readers in the ways that will support all students in United States classrooms.

Teachers who teach adolescent learners, especially SWDs must be equipped with the necessary effective researched-based accommodations and instructional strategies to meet the reading deficiencies of each student. When SWDs become literate adolescents and acquire effective literacy skills, they are better prepared to attain passing grades in middle school, in high school, college or trade schools become an option. When teachers are prepared to teach 21st century learners, they will be equipped with the necessary skills to prepare them to be college ready by developing the necessary reading skills to become career ready.

**Conclusion**

To address the problem of low ELA achievement scores for SWDs, a case study was conducted to answer the primary research question of how coteachers collaborate to implement students' IEPs and devise instructional strategies in elementary grade level ELA to accommodate SWDs in inclusion classrooms. The findings from four pairs of coteachers in an urban school district in New York reported that effective collaboration results in effective and successful preparation of SWDs. The research questions focused on coteachers' perceptions of how they collaborate to devise instructions for SWDs. The data analysis included three different types of procedures which allowed me to perform a thorough analysis to find out if the codes and themes derived from the manual coding process were in alignment with the codes found using the auto coding software. First, I manually analyzed the data by using Miles and Huberman's (2013) recommended cycles, then I used the qualitative software NVivo.9.0, and finally I conducted an informal analysis by using an excel spreadsheet matrix to organize the interview data from the participants.

Four themes emerged from data collection they were: coteachers' strategies used when planning lessons for SWDs, classroom accommodation for SWDs, coteachers' instructional strategies, and collaborative relationship in inclusion classroom. After interpreting the data from the interviews and lesson plans, the results revealed that coteachers were more concerned about receiving more professional development and training, and support from other stakeholders in fostering collaboration in the classroom. The limited time for planning instruction was also a concern from participants. Most

coteachers reported that they used evenings, weekends, and after hours to plan instruction. The new knowledge emerging from the study suggested that collaboration between all stakeholders who serve SWDs may result in designing successful instructional strategies to accommodate SWDs.

To design effective instructional strategies for SWDs, there are some measures that should be put in place. First, coteachers should plan instruction at the end of regular instructional time to facilitate uninterrupted planning. Second, coteachers should be trained on how to use the coteaching service delivery models when delivering instructions. Third, stakeholders who serve SWDs should collaborate to support coteachers in providing the best instructional strategies to accommodate each students' IEP s modifications and goals. Finally, school administrators need to provide relevant professional development and training for coteachers to support them in meeting the challenges of ICT.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

The protocol for conducting the interviews:

Inform the participants of the purpose and use for conducting the interview.

Assure the participants that all information discussed during the interview will be kept confidential.

Inform participants that the interview will be audio recorded.

Thank you for dedicating this time away from your busy schedule. I appreciate your participation in this interview. The educational research study that you are participating is very important in providing a better understanding of how general and special education teachers collaborate to implement students' IEPs and devise instructional strategies to accommodate the SWDs. In addition, we will be able to determine the supports and resources teachers need to improve the academic achievement of SWDs in ELA. I will provide a copy of the audio transcript and my notes after I transcribe your responses from the interview. When this is done I would like you to check for accuracy. Upon approval of this study, it may be published but your name will not be mentioned. Do you have any questions or concerns regarding this research and/or your participating in the interview?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: COTEACHERS

| Name: | School: | Date: |
|-------|---------|-------|
| Ethnicity: | Gender: | |
| Years in Teaching: | Years in Particular Grade: | |
| Degree: | Certification: | |

| Concentration: | |
|---|---|

**RQ1:** What types of ELA instructional strategies do general and special education teachers' use when planning lessons for SWDs in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms?

1. **Primary:** How many students are in your classroom? **Follow- up:** How many students with disabilities? How many regular education students? **Probe:** Tell me more about that.

2. **Primary:** What are your perceptions/attitudes about planning lessons for SWDs in your classroom? **Follow-up:** Why do you believe that you have developed those perceptions? **Probe:** Explain what you mean by that.

3. **Primary:** Please explain how lesson plans are developed for the collaborative classroom. **Follow-up:** Why do you believe it is done in this manner? **Probe:** What additional feedback can you provide regarding this matter?

4. **Primary:** When do you normally plan your lessons? **Follow- up:** How much time does it take? **Probe:** Do you have common planning time with your coteacher? **Explain:** Tell me more about that last part.

5. **Primary:** What are your main concerns when you plan your instruction for the SWDs? **Follow-up:** What is the reasoning behind your response? **Probe:** Please elaborate a little more on that.

6. **Primary: Please circle one of the following.**

Do you plan lessons daily, weekly, or monthly? **Follow -up:** Based on your answer**, w**hy do you choose to do so? **Probe:** What are the advantages and disadvantages creating your plans in that timeframe?

7. **Primary:** How did you choose your instructional strategies to meet the needs of the SWD students? **Follow-up:** Why do you believe those instructional strategies will be effective to meet the needs of SWDs? **Probe:** What makes you say that?

**RQ2:** How do general and special teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement ELA instructional strategies to promote students' achievement?

1. **Primary:** What types of strategies do you use to support the SWDs in your classroom to promote effective students' achievement? **Follow-up:** Were these strategies effective or ineffective when you assess students' understanding of what was taught? What could have been done differently? **Probe:** Tell me more about that.

2. **Primary:** Do you administer the same instructional strategies to each student, or group of students? **Follow -up:** Explain how you provide instruction. **Probe:** If the students are grouped, please explain the strategy that is used to group students.

3. **Primary:** How often do you meet to discuss ELA instructional strategies for SWDs? **Follow-up**: Explain how you arrange time to collaborate. **Probe**: If adequate time is not available, how do you ensure that you both collaborate to meet the needs of your students?

4. **Primary:** How often do you meet to assess students' achievement in ELA reading strategies? **Follow-up**: Explain how you arrange time to collaborate. **Probe**: If

adequate time is not available to assess students, how do you ensure that you both collaborate to analyze the academic achievement of your students?

**RQ3:** How do teachers in Grades 3-5 inclusion classrooms collaborate to implement the students' IEPs to accommodate ELA instructional strategies for SWDs? How many students are in your classroom?

1. **Primary:** What are your perceptions/attitudes about being a collaborative teacher? **Follow- up:** Why do you believe that you have developed those perceptions? **Probe:** Explain what you mean by that.

2. **Primary:** Discuss what you know about the various coteaching models. **Follow-up:** Explain why you like one model versus another. **Probe:** Give me an example/s of when you used that particular model.

3. **Primary:** Which coteaching model is used the most when you are instructing with your coteacher? **Follow-up:** Why do you believe this model is so widely used? **Probe:** What are some other examples of this?

4. **Primary:** Which coteaching service delivery model do you normally use? **Follow-up:** Do you use more than one model sometimes? **Probe:** Please provide me more details about that.

5. **Primary:** Describe how effective you believe you are as a collaborative teacher? **Follow- up:** Please provide me with one more attribute. **Probe:** Tell me more about that last part.

Appendix B: Provisional Code List

| Provisional codes from conceptual framework | Provisional codes from the literature review |
|---|---|
| | |
| Coteaching service delivery model | IDEA |
| Coteachers relationship | Least restricted environment (LRE) |
| Lesson planning | Instructional accommodations |
| Instructional materials | Coteachers instructional support |
| Preservice training | Collaborative practices |
| Collaboration | Teacher Preparedness |
| SWDs achievement in ELA | Preservice/Inservice training |
| Reading instructions | Inclusion classroom |
| IEP goals and objectives | Explicit instructions |
| IEP implementation | Differentiated instruction |
| | Testing accommodations |
| | Coteaching relationship |
| | Coteaching benefits |
| | Coteaching barriers |