A phenomenological study of the perceptions of co-teaching through the lens of special education and general education teachers.

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF CO-TEACHING THROUGH THE LENS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education and Human Development of the University of Louisville In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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A Dissertation Approved on
June 23, 2021

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my son and husband who have been my constant cheerleaders and emotional support throughout this process. Without their love and encouragement, I am not sure how I would have been able to keep up my steam to complete this study.

For Jackson and Braydon
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Growing up I aspired to have the same achievements as my mother, Dr. Rhonda Tracy. My mother has been an inspiration to me my whole life by showing that a mother can work, be educated, and achieve her dreams with the love and support of family. This journey has shown me that I can achieve my dreams and I want to thank my mother in particular along with the strong woman in my life who have been shining examples. My grandmother Yow, the matriarch of strong woman; my mother; my sisters Shea and Ivie; my aunt Dr. Ashley Horner; and my two wonderful bonus daughters, Addyson and Brynlee.

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ABSTRACT

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF CO-TEACHING THROUGH THE LENS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Erin L. Seale

June 23, 2021

Co-teaching has become one of the most popular service-delivery models that school districts use to incorporate students with disabilities in the general education settings. This phenomenological study reports how special education teachers and general education teachers at one Central Kentucky high school describes their perceptions and experiences with co-teaching. This study uses semi-structured interview to explore general education and special education teachers’ perceptions of their experiences with co-teaching and being a part of a co-teaching team.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

It was my first year of co-teaching and after discussing the lesson, I inquired what I could do to help more, possibly teach part of the content. The response my co-teacher gave astonished and amazed me as she stated that she did not realize I wanted to assist in the lesson and was not comfortable with me teaching the content. As the years of my teacher career continued, I grew wary being a part of a co-teaching team because I was tired of being the wallflower, running copies, grading papers, and the primary disciplinarian. I wanted to teach, I wanted to be more involved with the classroom duties and be an equal partner. My interest in co-teaching and the benefits for educators and students grew over the years and sparked my desire to conduct this study.

Statement of the Problem

The No Child Left Behind Act legislation passed in 2001 requires all students, including those with disabilities, to have access to the general education curriculum; be taught by highly qualified teachers; and be included in professionals’ accountability for achievement outcomes (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). Due to the increased pressure to educate students with disabilities in the general education classroom, school districts are exploring service-delivery options for special education students (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). One of the most popular service-delivery models that school districts have
adopted in order to comply with federally mandated laws and to meet the needs of all students is co-teaching. Co-teaching is defined as two or more certified professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, blended, group of students in one physical space (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

Not all students with a disability enter a classroom with the same academic abilities therefore a student identified as a having a disability is given accommodations and modifications outlined in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (Birdwell, Kupczynski, Mundy, & Bain, 2015). According to research, students with disabilities continue to exhibit poorer academic skills than their peers without disabilities (Wei, Lenz, & Blackorby, 2012). Math and reading deficits can exist independently or along with other identified disabilities, such as specific learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, traumatic brain injury, and emotional/behavioral disabilities (Wei, Lenz, & Blackorby, 2012). Research findings have yielded mixed results on the effects of co-teaching with some students showing larger gains in math and equal gains in English when compared to students receiving pull out or resource services (Kohler-Evans, 2006). A resource setting is one special education teacher providing direct instruction to no more than ten special education students in a separate classroom (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Co-teaching provides an opportunity for students to be in the same classroom setting as their non-disabled peers with the support of a special education teacher to provide specifically designed instruction.
Several Kentucky high schools have started to implement co-teaching as an instructional strategy in their districts with the indication that research has shown increased retention of all students including those with special needs. Previous research indicates that all students, not specifically students with an identified disability, have increased academic scores due to co-teaching as an instructional strategy (Murawski & Swanson, 2010).

The perceptions of special education teachers and general education teachers of the implementation of the co-teaching model is an area of interest that has helped drive this qualitative study. Co-teaching allows special education teachers to provide direct instructional support to the general educator and students with disabilities (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Both teachers coordinate instruction to meet the needs of all students in the classroom, share responsibilities for all activities related to planning and the delivery of instruction, along with evaluating, grading, and disciplining students (Austin, 2001). Districts provide a variety of trainings for teachers that address co-teaching, however, I am interested in the special education teachers’ and general education teachers’ perception of this particular delivery of instruction for students with disabilities because more often than not, co-teaching teams have been put together without input from the special education or general education teacher. Because of this forced arrangement, both teachers must now confront social issues that teachers have not faced before such as the division of labor, parity, and turfism (Kohler-
Evans, 2006). These issues can directly affect a teacher’s perspective and behavior within the classroom and these behaviors can influence student learning and achievement (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perception of special education teachers’ and general education teachers’ experiences in the co-taught classrooms as both teachers work to meet the needs of all students including those students with a disability. Although districts provide training on co-teaching not all schools or districts implement co-teaching in the same manner. Research has begun to determine if the implementation, instruction, and effectiveness of the co-teaching delivery model for special education students has increased achievement test scores especially in the areas of reading and math (Murawski & Swanson, 2010). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) mandated those states develop and implement accountability systems and standards for reading and math, with the goal of all students obtaining proficiency in both subjects (Birdwell, Kupczynski, Mundy, & Bain, 2015). Many students with disabilities have failed to make sufficient progress in the general education classroom due to their combination of attention, memory, reasoning, communication, and physical and behavioral difficulties that can interfere with their ability to be successful in the general education setting (McLeskey, et al., 2017). Due to student lack of
progress, co-teaching has been implemented to determine if a team of general education teachers and special education teachers can assist in increasing special education students’ progress.

This study sparked my interest because of the increased effort for my district to implement the co-teaching model as an instructional aide to increase student achievement and meet the needs of all students. My research for this study was to determine special education and general education teachers’ perception towards co-teaching as an instructional model in order to meet the needs of all students.

**Context of the Study**

The research study was conducted in Fayette County, Kentucky focusing on one local high school, which has implemented the co-teaching model for the past four years. Fayette County has 42,559 students in grades K-12. Special education students make up 5,016 or 12% district wide. Fayette County demographics include 48.7% White students; 22.8% Black students; 17.8% Hispanic students; and 4.8% Asian students. Fayette County has six high schools that are currently implementing the co-teaching model as an instructional practice to meet the needs of all students including those with disabilities.

Tates Creek High School is the school where the research study was conducted. Tates Creek High School has 1,736 students in grades 9-12 with 194 students receiving special education services. This is 11% of the school
population. The demographics for Tates Creek High School are 51% White students; 29% Black students; 11% Hispanic students; and 3% Asian. There are 10 different co-teaching teams in the math, science, social studies, and English classes. The study focused on six co-teaching teams with three math co-teaching teams and three English co-teaching teams.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions for this study:

1. How do special education teachers describe and feel about the significance of co-taught classes to meet the needs of special education students?
2. How do general education teachers describe and feel about the significance of co-taught classes to meet the needs of special education students?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to help the reader understand the context of each term in this study.

Co-teaching: the partnering of a general education teacher and a special education teacher delivering instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): legislation that ensures students with a disability are provided with Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that is tailored to their individual needs. IDEA was previously
known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) from 1975 to 1990. In 1990, the United States Congress reauthorized EHA and changed the title and revised it to IDEA (Public Law No. 94-142). (Education U. S., 2019).

*Individualized Educational Plan (IEP):* a formal contract outlining the services and support the school will provide for the child to benefit from the educational program. An IEP must be developed before a student can begin receiving special education services and it must be reviewed and updated each year. This annual review is required for as long as the student remains eligible for special education services. (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

*Phenomenological study:* focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group and the fundamental goal of the approach (Creswell, 2013).

*Resource setting:* is one special education teacher providing direct instruction to no more than ten special education students in a classroom setting (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

**Theoretical Framework-Role Theory**

The theoretical framework for this study is role theory. Role theory developed by Ralph Linton (1936) seeks to explain the ways in which individuals act and how they expect others to act based on the particular positions they occupy (Lynch, 2007). Co-teaching teams are expected to work together effectively in order to deliver instructional content to meet the needs of all
students in the classroom. Co-teaching can provide effective instruction to all students; however, there are challenges that can hinder successful collaboration between two educators depending on their roles (Pratt, 2014).

**Overview of Method**

In a qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The issue or concern of this phenomenological study was the perception of six co-teaching teams, each of which includes a general education teacher and a special education teacher, on their school’s implementation of co-teaching and the impact it can have on meeting the needs of all students.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), social constructivism focuses on developing subjective meanings of experiences. A part of social constructivism is individuals seeking to understand the world in which they live and work (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal of social constructivism research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ view of the situation, which are typically formed through interactions with others and through cultural norms that operate in their lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In this phenomenological study, the perceptions of special education teachers and general education teachers on the implementation of co-teaching and its impact on meeting the needs of all students, especially special education
students, is what was explored. There has been a push from the district for special education teachers to participate in a co-taught setting in order to deliver instruction since most special education teachers are not highly qualified in the content subject area but more so in the areas of teaching strategies.

**Significance of the Study**

Special education teachers’ and general education teachers’ perceptions of co-teaching can assist districts with the implementation of co-teaching as an instructional model to meet the needs of all students especially those students with a disability. With this study, I am sharing the research with my district in order to improve the efficacy of implementing the co-teaching model and addressing specific concerns from the teachers’ perspective in order to increase fidelity of the instructional model and sustain relationships among co-teaching teams.

Effective co-teaching classes are defined as both teachers having common planning time, delivering instruction through one of the six co-teaching models, and having the opportunity to share their reflection of student data (Hang & Rabren, 2009). Non-effective co-teaching classes were defined as teachers not having a common planning time, special education teachers having to split their time between several classes, and not receiving any co-teaching training (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

Special education teachers have stated that they often feel like assistants, creating an imbalance in their use of expertise and skills that can hinder effective
instruction and learning for all students (Pratt, 2014). Special education teachers have stated that lack of planning time with general education teachers, administration support, and lack of content knowledge have all been contributing factors to an unsuccessful co-teaching relationship (Pratt, 2014). This study added to the existing literature about the perceptions of teachers assigned to co-teach and how their roles can affect student progress.

The general education teacher’s perception can assist in providing a team approach when developing professional developments at the district level. The general education teacher can also provide insight on ways to improve the implementation of the co-teaching model with the special education teacher.

**Implications of the Study**

Hang and Rabren’s (2009) study indicated that special education students, who received effective co-taught instruction for more than a year, obtained higher achievement scores than students in a special education resource setting and non-effective co-taught classes.

The implications for the school that I am sharing this data with is to focus more on the effective co-teaching delivery of instruction in order to provide students with disabilities a least restrictive environment with their similar aged peers that can increase their achievement scores. The setting for this study has sent several co-teaching teams to specific professional development trainings however, those teams changed and not all teachers who are assigned to a co-
teaching team have been trained on co-teaching or have been asked their input on being placed in a co-teaching team. Several special education teachers at the site are splitting their time between three different co-teaching classes within a 90-minute block.

**Organization of the Study**

This study was divided into five different chapters. The first chapter of the study includes the purpose, research questions, definitions of terms, and statement of the problem. The second chapter of the study includes a review of literature regarding teachers’ perceptions of co-teaching, analysis of special education practices, and quantitative and qualitative research conducted on co-teaching as an instructional model for special education students. The third chapter includes the methodology of the study, the participants, and the means of data collection and analysis. The fourth chapter includes the findings of the study along with the themes. The fifth chapter is a discussion of the findings and implications for further research.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Not all students with a disability enter a classroom with the same academic abilities therefore a student identified as having a disability is prescribed accommodations and modifications outlined in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (Birdwell, Kupczynski, Mundy, & Bain, 2015). According to research, students with disabilities continue to exhibit poorer math and reading skills than their peers without disabilities (Wei, Lenz, & Blackorby, 2012). Math and reading deficits can exist independently or comorbid with other identified disabilities, such as specific learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, traumatic brain injury, and emotional/behavioral disabilities (Wei, Lenz, & Blackorby, 2012). Gender, race, and socio-economic status (SES) have been identifying factors for differences in math achievement for students (Wei, Lenz, & Blackorby, 2012).

The increased use of the co-teaching model is an area of interest that drove this qualitative study to investigate the effectiveness of teacher instruction and different delivery models that are available to teachers. Students with disabilities have failed to make sufficient progress in the general education classroom and because of this, an emphasis on using practice based teacher education to improve instructional strategies both in general and special education have emerged and one of those strategies is co-teaching (McLeskey, et al., 2017). Co-teaching
allows special education teachers to provide direct instructional support to the
general educator and assist students with disabilities (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).
Districts provide a variety of professional development trainings for teachers that
address co-teaching; however, this study examines the perceptions of the general
education teacher and the special education teacher about the effectiveness of the
co-teaching model.

**Least Restrictive Environment**

In 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), formerly known as
the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, required all schools to provide a
free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students. To the
maximum extent possible a child with disabilities must be educated in the least
restrictive environment (LRE), and education is to be individualized and
appropriate to the child’s needs (Rozalski, Stewart, & Miller, 2010). FAPE
requires that students with disabilities be educated with peers without disabilities
to the:

maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children
in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with
children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling,
or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational
environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is
such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids
and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Department of Education,
2019, pg.12).
According to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (2019), 62.5% of students with disabilities spend more than 80% of their academic time in regular education classrooms. All public schools offer a continuum of services for students who are receiving special education services. The least restrictive environment (LRE) is a continuum of services provided to students with disabilities that range from the least restrictive environment, a general education classroom, to the most restrictive environment, which is a separate special education school or institution (Carson, 2015). (see Figure 1. Continuum of Services)

Moving along the continuum of services there are two factors that research suggests consideration. First, as you move from left to right across the continuum, fewer and fewer students are involved in the placement (Department of
Education, 2019). For example, in a resource classroom there is a certified special education teacher with no general education students in the class teaching no more than ten special education students. The second factor considered as you move across the continuum, is that the setting becomes more restrictive. More restrictive means students in those settings are more removed from being with their non-disabled regular education peers and then they become more segregated in their educational services (Department of Education, 2019). The goal in a placement decision for a least restrictive environment is to place students with disabilities in the regular education classroom, as much as possible, and still meet their educational needs (Carson, 2015).

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) team considers placement options after the present level of performance, goals, and modifications/accommodations are reviewed and deemed appropriate for the student. A key question posed to the IEP team determining placement options could be, “Where does this student need to be served to receive the maximum appropriate educational benefit for what has been developed in the IEP?” (Carson, 2015). The IEP team needs to be able to justify why the educational placement decision is the most appropriate placement for the student if the student is removed from the general education setting during any part of the school day (Carson, 2015).
Co-Teaching Practices

With the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997, Congress stated that the preferred placements for students with disabilities is in the general education classroom (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005). IDEA was reauthorized in 2004 to increased emphasis on educating students in the least restrictive environment in which the continuum of services starts with the general education setting (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). Due to the recent legislation, co-teaching has become one of the most popular staffing models for implementing inclusion for students with disabilities (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005). Research has just begun to address how co-teaching instruction is specifically designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

Co-teaching is defined as the collaborating of a general education teacher and a special education teacher delivering instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). The special education teacher and the general education teacher are both in the classroom during the lesson and both teachers participate in the delivery of the instruction (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Co-teaching allows the special education teacher to provide direct instructional support to the general educator in the modification and differentiated instruction for students with disabilities (Murawski & Swanson, 2010).
Co-teaching is further described as having four essential components: (a) two certified educators provide instruction, usually a special education teacher and a general education teacher; (b) delivery of instruction is provided by both teachers; (c) students with disabilities are taught with their non-disabled peers; and (d) instruction takes place in a single classroom that includes students with disabilities and students without disabilities (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

**Co-Teaching Models**

There are six different co-teaching models or approaches that general education and special education teachers utilize to address the students’ needs. (See Figure 2. Co-teaching models) The first model is *one teach, one observe* in which one teacher leads the large-group instruction while the other teacher gathers behavioral, academic, and social data on specific students in the classroom (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). The second model is *station teaching* in which instruction is divided into three parts where students rotate from two stations taught by each teacher and the third station is for independent work (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). The third model is *parallel teaching* is designed for two teachers to split the class in half and the content is taught by both teachers as the same time (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). This model was designed to foster differentiated instruction and student involvement. The fourth model *alternative*
*teaching* was designed for one teacher to teach a large group of students while the other teacher works with a small group of students in the delivery of instruction (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). The fifth model is *teaming* in which both teachers present the instruction to a large group by lecturing opposing views, illustrating two ways to solve a problem (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). The last model and the most widely used is *one teach, one assist* in which one teacher leads the instruction in the other teacher circulates among all the students in the classroom offering individual assistance (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010).

*Figure 2: Co-teaching Models (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010).*
According to a qualitative study conducted by Austin (2001), the research points to three specific models of inclusive teaching. Inclusive teaching is including students with disabilities into mainstream or general education classrooms (Austin, 2001). The three models that Austin (2001) describes in his study are the consultant model, coaching model, and teaming or collaborative model. The consultant model is where the special educator serves as a consultant to the general education teacher in the areas of curriculum adaptation, skill deficit remediation, and assessment modifications (Austin, 2001). The coaching model is when the special education teacher and the general education teacher take turns coaching each other in the areas of the general education curriculum and pedagogy in which they are certified experts (Austin, 2001). According to Austin (2001), the collaborative or teaming model is when the general education and special education teacher both work together to lesson plan, implement, and assess lessons. Austin (2001) conducted a study on teachers’ beliefs about co-teaching because the collaborative model is recommended for use in inclusive or co-teaching classrooms.

The one hundred thirty-nine teachers who participated in this study were employed by the public school system in northern New Jersey in elementary education (K-8), secondary education (9-12), or special education (K-12) (Austin, 2001). All of the participants were assessed using The Perceptions of Co-Teaching Survey (PCTS) which consisted of two major components; one being
demographic information and the other soliciting information according to four specific categories applicable to teacher perceptions of co-teaching (Austin, 2001).

The results of the study indicated that most co-teachers taught in social studies, science, math, and language arts at the secondary level (Austin, 2001). The study stated there was a significant correlation between the number of years teaching between co-teaching pairs. Co-teaching pairs that have taught together as a team for several years have a higher success rate for student progress than co-teaching pairs who change annually. Thirty-seven of the 135 co-teachers interviewed stated that they had volunteered for the co-teaching assignment while the others were placed without option to a co-teaching pair. During my twenty years of teaching special education and being placed in a co-taught classroom, I had not been asked prior to my placement or been given specific professional development in this area. With that in mind, I am interested in the amount of research that addresses this issue but have noticed there is very little research on how to combat the issues that special education and general education teachers have expressed.

Results of the surveys indicated that a significant percentage of teachers stated that they believed the general education co-teacher did most of the teaching in the class; they worked well together; benefited from working together; and that co-teaching was a worthwhile experience that assisted in their improvement of
teaching (Austin, 2001). Other findings from the surveys revealed that special education teachers think meeting daily to plan lessons is essential; however, general education teachers did not feel the same and questioned the effectiveness of such a practice (Austin, 2001).

Both special education and general education teachers stated that teachers should establish and maintain specific areas of responsibility and attend specific trainings on the effectiveness of co-teaching (Austin, 2001). General education and special education teachers also pointed to scheduled planning time, administrative support, and adequate supplies as the most important components for a successful co-teaching team to increase student achievement (Austin, 2001).

Research conducted by Strogilos and Tragoulia (2013) indicated that in order to develop a successful inclusive classroom, consideration has been given to the emerging relationships between general education and special education teachers. Shared planning time, training in co-teaching and good levels of collaboration by all participants are regarded as highly important factors for a successful co-teaching setting (Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013). Not a lot of consideration is given when assigning teachers to a co-teaching setting. Teachers are typically paired together depending on their class schedules. Both general education and special education teachers have indicated that little to no training occurs and general education teachers state their lack of training in working with
students with different disabilities can cause conflicts between roles (Strogilos & Tragouli, 2013).

Hang and Rabren (2009) conducted a study to examine co-teaching by investigating the perspectives and efficacy of this instructional delivery approach. Two objectives they were investigating are identifying the teachers of students with disabilities along with determining the effectiveness of co-teaching (Hang & Rabren, 2009). The participants in the study were 31 general education teachers, 14 special education teachers who were implementing co-teaching for the first year, along with fifty-eight special education high school students who attended at least one co-taught class during their instructional day (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

The results of their quantitative study indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the reading and math achievement scores of students with disabilities in a co-taught setting and students in a resource setting (Hang & Rabren, 2009). The students were assigned to a co-teaching setting based on the recommendation from their IEP teams and their area of deficits. After one year of co-teaching, no significant differences in academic achievement, as measured by a designated achievement test, were found between student participants and all students at the same grade level (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

Weiss and Lloyd (2002) conducted a study to determine the efficacy of the roles of special educators in a co-taught classroom at the secondary level and if
instructional actions differ in co-taught and special education classrooms. Observations and interviews were conducted with three special education teachers and 24 special education students (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

The results from that study indicated that special educators implemented co-teaching in a variety of ways based on their own definitions of co-teaching and the internal and external influences on the classroom (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Overall, co-teaching as reported in interviews was implemented to get students with disabilities into the general education setting and results from this study indicated that co-teaching should not necessarily be viewed as the right service delivery model for all schools, teachers, and students (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

A grounded theory framework study conducted by Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, and McCulley (2012) centered around the collaborative, co-teaching mandate from IDEA and NCLB and provided a summary of the research conducted to determine the efficacy and use of co-teaching as an instructional mode using open coding to analyze data. The researchers determined that the co-teaching arrangement was an expectation from administrators; however, the implementation of the co-teaching model was a broader effort that resulted in very little training as co-teaching teams (Solis, et al., 2012).

The special education and general education teachers stated that a critical factor in the success of co-teaching models is the professional relationship formed between co-teaching teams prior and throughout the co-teaching experience
(Solis, et al., 2012). The first step in a successful implementation includes both teachers establishing each person’s roles and responsibilities prior to engaging in co-teaching (Solis et al., 2012).

A review of the literature indicates the lack of control groups with participants who are typically only students with disabilities (Hang & Rabren, 2009). Another implication is that several studies have indicated that there is no significant difference in student achievement scores for students that participate in a co-taught setting (Birdwell, Kupczynski, Mundy, & Bain, 2015). Research suggests that instructional arrangement may not be a significant contributing factor to academic achievement for students with disabilities and that special education teachers need to make data based decisions on student placement (Birdwell, Kupczynski, Mundy, & Bain, 2015). There are some instances where students are placed in co-teaching classes to increase the social interaction between special education and general education students however, special education teachers need to make evidence based decisions when placing special education students in their least restrictive environment. Special education teachers use area of disability, progress data on IEP goals, and the student’s level of cognitive abilities.

Weiss and Lloyd’s (2002) research stated that teachers were splitting their time between several co-taught classes and therefore were unable to fully assist their general education co-teachers in an effective manner. The same study
indicated a barrier for co-teaching is that not all teachers have the same common planning time, there was little consistency in training, and few teachers change their instructional roles based on the instructional task.

According to research, it is suggested that formal assessments such as statewide exams provide valuable data regarding whether students with disabilities are achieving state content standards when compared to students without disabilities however, informal assessments such as IEP progress monitoring data should also be considered an important factor (McLeskey, et al., 2017).

The results of the study conducted by Birdwell, Kupczynski, Mundy, and Bain (2015) indicated that students who were instructed in a resource setting did not achieve higher achievement scores on state assessments than those students who were instructed in a co-taught setting. This study indicated that special education students are making progress in both educational settings.

**Role Theory**

Role theory was the theoretical framework for this study. Role theory developed by Ralph Linton (1936) seeks to explain the ways in which individuals act and how they expect others to act based on the particular positions they occupy (Lynch, 2007). Role theorists have concentrated on the way roles emerge in social settings and how individuals influence the character of behavioral expectations through the processes of social negotiation (Lynch, 2007). This
theory aligns with my study of investigating the perceptions of the special education and general education teachers when it comes to co-teaching. Role theorists have also noted that persons affect situations and situations affect how a person reacts with continuous changes in role identifications (Lynch, 2007).

Co-teaching teams are expected to work together effectively in order to deliver instructional content to meet the needs of all students in the classroom. Co-teaching can provide effective instruction to all students; however, there are challenges that can hinder successful collaboration between two educators depending on their roles (Pratt, 2014). Some of the factors that contribute to the hindrance of a successful collaboration are co-teachers finding it difficult to establish parity in classroom roles, special education teachers often act as assistants which creates an imbalance in use of expertise and skills, interpersonal differences, insufficient time for planning, and lack of administrative support (Pratt, 2014).

Thoughtful planning, either independently or with the co-teaching partner, is a vital part of designing effective instruction (Ploessl, et al, 2010). Due to the recent global pandemic, co-teachers finding common planning time is difficult but this is where technology can come in handy. Co-teachers can hold meetings, virtually or in-person, where they can exchange ideas, make decisions, and carry out everyday teaching tasks without interruptions (Ploessl et al, 2010). A suggestion from the research conducted by Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfield, and
Blanks (2010) states that before each co-teaching meeting; identify the purpose, goals, specific co-teaching model, and develop an agenda to keep within time constraints. This suggestion is similar to the study conducted by Austin (2001) which found that many co-teachers make instructional decisions based on subjective opinions rather than concrete data. Frequent joint review of repeated and multiple quantitative measures of student performance (i.e., test scores, formative and summative grades, curriculum-based measures, and progress data) can assist co-teachers in making sound judgements about their instruction (Austin, 2001). Special education teachers can offer guidelines for interpreting the data and general education teachers can work together with the special education teacher to determine appropriate grouping and accommodations that would benefit all students in the co-teaching classroom (Ploessl, et al, 2010).

**Summary**

Hang and Rabren’s (2009) study indicated that students who received effective co-taught instruction for more than a year, obtained higher achievement scores that students in a special education resource setting and non-effective co-taught classes where teachers. Effective co-teaching classes were defined as both teachers have common planning time, delivering instruction through one of the six co-teaching models, and reflection of student data (Hang & Rabren, 2009). Non-effective co-teaching classes were defined as teachers not having a common planning time, special education teachers having to split their time between
several classes, and not receiving any co-teaching training (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

According to Weiss and Lloyd (2002), co-teaching is the most popular and widely used instructional models of teaching students with disabilities in a general education setting. Co-teaching allows special education teachers to provide direct instructional support with the general educator to assist students with disabilities (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Research has indicated that co-teaching is not an effective model for instruction delivery if it is not done correctly by not allowing teachers common planning periods or professional development options (Austin, 2001). Throughout the research, general education and special education teachers interviewed for these studies, indicated that scheduled planning time, administrative support, and adequate supplies as the most important components for a successful co-teaching team to increase student achievement (Austin, 2001).

Purposeful and effective collaboration between general education and special education teachers should enlist support from district and school leaders, who can foster a commitment towards collaboration, provide professional learning experiences in order to increase co-teaching team members’ collaborative skills, and create schedules that support different forms of ongoing collaboration (e.g., co-teachers, IEP teams, teachers-paraprofessionals, and teachers-families (McLeskey, et al., 2017). Co-teaching research has found strong support among teachers but mixed results from students (McLeskey, et al., 2017).
Much of the recent research on co-teaching teams has focused on the importance of member independence, individual accountability, satisfaction of member needs, clarity of roles and expectations (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

Gaps in the literature that I identified during the review of literature is research conducted on specific co-teaching strategies that can increase student achievement and not how to increase role compliance within the co-teaching teams. There are six different co-teaching models and there is not research that indicates if a specific co-teaching model increases student achievement over the other models. There is research that indicates which model(s) the majority of teachers use but not how the co-teaching team decided on the specific model to use and if those models are interchangeable (Austin, 2001). Another gap in the literature indicates that the lack of continuous trainings, which include follow up trainings for specific needs; is not a primary focus for school administrators and instructional teams when it comes to determining if co-teaching is beneficial. Hang (2009) indicated that trainings that are conducted at the beginning of the school year and are typically not addressed afterwards. Due to the lack of continuous training, the perceptions of the co-teaching teams can be skewed with lack of follow through. Special education and general education teachers’ perceptions on co-teaching meeting the needs for all students in the class is not thoroughly discussed within the literature. There is a lot of discussion on how co-
teaching can influence students with disabilities but not their general education counterparts.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Overview

Qualitative research design and methods generate data that reflect the perspective of the participants along with a flexible structure of inquiry, which supports the ideals of inductive and deductive reasoning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is a way to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem, in this case co-teaching.

Framework

The epistemological framework for this research design is social constructivism. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), social constructivism focuses on developing subjective meanings of experiences. A part of social constructivism is individuals seeking to understand the world in which they live and work (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal of social constructivism research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ view of the situation, which are typically formed through interactions with others and through cultural norms that operate in their lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews from the special education teachers and the general education teachers offer a lens into their views of co-teaching and the impact of their roles to deliver instruction in order to meet the needs of all students.
According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological research is conducted with participants who have lived the experience. Moustakas (1994) stated that a phenomenological methodology is a form of inquiry, which seeks to understand a human experience. This study focused on the special education teachers’ and general education teachers’ perspective on co-teaching as an instructional model to meet the needs of all students. Phenomenological methodology was used to look at the phenomenon of co-teaching through the lens of those teachers implementing co-teaching as an instructional model.

This phenomenological study described the meanings of the experiences that have been valued by several people with respect to a certain concept, co-teaching (Moustakas, 1994). The type of phenomenology that I used was descriptive phenomenology, which is an interpretive, open, flexible, and responsive process allowing the researcher to deeply, thoughtfully settle into, and sit with the phenomenon under investigation (Vagle, 2014). This process was a reflective one in which the researcher deeply contemplates the concrete ways in which phenomena are lived (i.e., in this study, special education and general education teachers’ perceptions on co-teaching). Descriptive phenomenology, unlike other branches of phenomenology (e.g., hermeneutic, existential, and generative historicist), emphasizes describing human lived experiences to describe shared experiences (Vagle, 2018). Co-teaching has become universal in
the way of following federal mandates to include special education students in the
general education classroom.

The issue or concern of this phenomenological study was the perception of
six co-teaching teams of their school’s implementation of co-teaching. Data was
collected through semi-structured interviews, and a review of records. The
review of records was student IEP goals, area of disability, and least restrictive
environment placement to determine what data was used to place a student in a
co-taught setting. The teachers’ years of experience, their area of specialty and
background were records that were reviewed.

Researcher Background

As a special educator for close to 20 years, I have developed a passion for
equal opportunity for students with special needs and a desire to make sure that
the students can receive the best instructional strategies available to them to level
the playing field compared to students not identified as having a disability. When
I was in school, students with disabilities, often severe disabilities, did not attend
the same classes as I did and, in my opinion, did not receive ample peer
interactions. Students with disabilities who did attend my classes attended with an
aide or a para-educator and the aid worked specifically with that student. That is
something that led me into the field of special education. I feel that all people
despite any differences in race, socioeconomic status or ability level, should have
the opportunity to have the same appropriate education as a “typical, normal” person.

My personal characteristics that I embody that contribute to my identity as researcher are my drive and determination, inquiry, and strong work ethic. I have always had a curious mind and wanted to know or attempt to figure out why things work the way that they do. My father is an engineer, so I relate my inquisitive mind to his influence in my life. My father tried to figure out why something worked or did not work the way that it did. He would break ideas down into manageable parts, which is a strategy I utilize in teaching students with disabilities. A lot of time in education, content needs to be broken down into manageable parts for understanding and learning to occur. Special education is similar in the way Milner (2007) discussed his positionality of conducting research. When conducting research centered on the special education and general education teacher perceptions, it is important to consider whether the researcher has the cultural knowledge to accurately interpret and validate the experiences of the teachers (Milner, 2007).

The same personal characteristics that identify me as a researcher can also be the ones that could provide challenges of becoming an action researcher. My work ethic and my desire to do the best that I can, my own strive for perfection can hinder my research process by second-guessing myself.
My intention as a researcher is to allow my research to possibly inform and change my teaching practices in the future. Education is circular in the way that strategies and interventions recycle themselves and there is often not much intent of longevity behind the use of specific strategies. Strategies are typically intended for students without disabilities and are not often appropriate for students with disabilities. Milner (2007) stated that dominant and hegemonic notions of what is categorized and accepted as normal in education practices and because of that, students with disabilities are not often considered even though they make up roughly twelve percent of the student population.

The professional experiences that have contributed to my identity and role as a researcher have all been related to working with students with disabilities. During my years in the classroom, I have taught at the middle school and high school level in resource classroom settings and co-taught classroom settings. I have been a part of committees that have provided professional development to colleagues on a variety of educational strategies for students with and without disabilities. Working closely with other colleagues has provided me the opportunity to examine and assess my own educational practices. What prior knowledge and assumptions do I bring to the table? Do I allow those assumptions to affect how I structure trainings? Does the fact that all my experience has been embedded in special education cause me to have “blinders” to the perception of the general education teachers?
Creating professional developments for staff has allowed me the opportunity to select a focus for the school and collect data on any implementation of strategies. What I have found when collecting data on the implementation of different strategies that a district will roll out, is that after a year or two the implementation tends to wane, and the district will jump onto another strategy to implement without giving the original strategy ample time to develop into a structured practice. Districts typically do not provide training on how both teachers deal with role conflict when attempting to implement co-teaching. With that in mind, it has given me cause to reflect on why certain strategies are targeted by districts. What is the outcome that the district has in mind?

I am interested in learning more about the effectiveness of educational strategies and instructional models pertaining to students with disabilities. One is co-teaching and if that instructional model does have academic achievement benefits for students with disabilities compared to a resource setting.

**Study Design**

Information was gathered through semi-structured interviews and a review of records. Semi-structured interviews were conducted through virtual online interviews. Interviews can focus directly on topics and can provide insight into the perceptions and attitudes of the interviewees (Yin, 2018).
Interview questions were developed to compare the teachers’ perceptions of co-teaching and how it meets the needs of all students including those with a disability. The participants were interviewed separately and given the opportunity to choose the date, time, and location of the interviews in order to allow the maximum amount of comfort for each participant.

Research Site

One high school out of six in Fayette County was the setting for the study. The high school used in this research study implemented co-taught classes as an instructional setting for the past four years. The high school, Tates Creek High School, has an enrollment of approximately 1,736 students with 194 identified as special education students, and sixty faculty members. The specific co-teaching teams that were a part of the research study were three teams in English and three teams in math. English and math classes were selected because the special education students who participate in those co-teach settings have an identifiable deficit in those areas.

Prior to Tates Creek High School implementing co-teaching, special education teachers and general education teachers did not collaborate on lessons or instructional strategies to implement in order to differentiate instruction. In assisting in developing the master schedule in 2013 through 2016, special education teachers had to split their time between 2-3 co-taught classes. Since Tates Creek is on block scheduling, 90-minute classes, special education teachers
would spend 20-45 minutes in each class depending on instruction being delivered. The number of special education students in the co-taught classes were not balanced with some classes having four students with special needs to 15 students with special needs in a class.

**Participants**

With the implementation of career academies in 2016, scheduling classes not only for special education students has become more purposeful. Students’ schedules are aligned with their career academy pathway therefore scheduling co-taught classes has become more intentional along with special education teachers focusing on least restrictive environments when developing each student’s IEP.

As Fayette County started to implement co-teaching in a purposeful manner, Tates Creek has sent co-teaching teams to specific district trainings.

The participants were identified with purposeful sampling. Teachers were selected who have been a part of a co-teaching team for more than 1 year. Three co-teaching teams from math and English were participants in this study. Not all the co-teaching teams in this study attended the professional development trainings due to co-teaching teams changing annually and the district no longer providing district wide trainings for specific co-teaching teams. The past two years the district has not conducted a district wide professional development on co-teaching and neither has the school that is included in this study. Co-teaching teams are determined by the master schedule. Special education teachers are
placed with general education teachers depending on which general education teacher is teaching the class that is not an advanced placement class. Co-teachers are notified prior to the school year starting around July. This often does not allow teachers to attend trainings in time prior to the start of the school year. Special education teachers can have more than one co-taught class and in more than one subject area.

**Consent Process**

My research proposal was submitted to the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. Once approval was obtained then consent was obtained from the research subjects who were identified through purposeful sampling prior to the research study implementation. I discussed the potential risks (e.g., data may not indicate that co-teaching is successful, aggravated with the process of identifying teams, time consuming) with the participants prior to gaining their approval.

The school’s master schedule was reviewed to determine how many co-teaching sections each content area has and how the number of those sections were determined. I also reviewed the rosters of the co-teaching classes the teachers that I interviewed in order to determine the ratio of special education students versus general education students in a co-teaching class.
Data Analysis

During the data analysis phase, I maintained openness and did not side with any of the participants on the issues that were conveyed during the interviews. I was mindful that some of the answers during the interviews may present a negative picture of the implementation of co-teaching as an instructional model. Data collection was obtained through recorded semi-structured interviews that were transcribed digitally. Theoretical sampling, which will allow the researcher to general theoretical insights by drawing on comparison among samples of data, and concurrent data analysis was used through data collection and the coding of data, which included initial coding, intermediate coding, and then advanced coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

According to Saldaña (2016), coding is a way of analyzing qualitative data that includes words or short phrases that symbolically assign an attribute for a portion of language based on data. Data used for coding were the interview transcripts and fields notes from the interviews. During the process of coding the interview transcripts, I assigned codes to data chunks then further analyzed and reconfigured the codes. There are two different types of coding that I used during the data analysis process. The first is in vivo coding which kept data rooted in the participants’ language (Saldaña, 2016). The second was descriptive coding which categorized the multiple opinions stated by the multiple participants (Saldaña, 2016).
Ethical Considerations

Action research seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in collaboration with others, in the pursuit of solutions to concerns of people (Brydon-Miller, 2012). When one individual conducts research she can lose the benefit of ethical checks and/or feedback that might exist within a group setting (Brydon-Miller, Aranda, & Stevens, 2015). A structured ethical reflection was developed in order to conduct ethical checks throughout the research process.

The process of developing and going through the Structured Ethical Reflection (SER) was not only time consuming but also thought provoking. I was unsure how to begin this process and if I was structuring the responses correctly. I want it to be a flowing document throughout my research process but with that thought in mind, I was struggling to put together what I thought should go in each box. However, it did allow more thought and reflection about the ethical considerations for my research topic than I had originally anticipated. I focused on six values from the SER guide for this particular study that related to my ethics as well (Brydon-Miller, Aranda, & Stevens, 2015).

Of the six values that I chose for my reflection process, there are two that come from the values that are incorporated into positive behavior support lessons that are taught at my high school: respect and integrity. I am a part of developing and implementing those lessons, so it allowed for some easy reflection. Integrity is living by your highest values and standing up for what you feel is right. As I
conduct the research, I will keep in mind to stand by my values and be open and honest with my participants.

Flexibility, open-mindedness, and adaptability are what I use daily as part of my career path. Being in special education you must be flexible, keep an open mind, and be able to adapt to changes spontaneously. Although I did find it difficult to reflect on those values as a researcher. Looking through the lens of a researcher is unfamiliar territory for me, so I struggled with placing the appropriate phrases in each box. I am doing my best to reflect on my role as a researcher and place myself in the role of the participant.

The other two values of commitment and trust are values that are strong for me personally so I thought I would be able to reflect on those values easily. The only sections I really struggled to reflect on in the grid were member checking and sharing my conclusions. Member checking was used to determine the accuracy of the findings by taking the final themes back to the participants to determine whether the participants felt the themes are accurate (Creswell, 2005). I could not think of a way to establish and maintain trust along with commitment in those two areas so that is a part of the document that I am hoping will be more developed over time. My intentions were to go over the interview answers with the person in order to give them the opportunity to provide feedback on my interpretations.
I conducted the research within my own school therefore; I had to place myself in the position of an action researcher. I am in the same position as the participants in my study in that we are all classified as teachers although my responsibilities vary from theirs. I am open with the co-teaching teams that participated in my study about the purpose of my study.

Validity and Trustworthiness

In order to assure internal credibility I described the triangulation of my data, member checks, saturation, and peer review (Golafshani, 2003). The data that was triangulated was the review of records and semi-structured interviews. Member checking was done by providing the participants a copy of the transcribed notes from their audio-recorded interviews for them to review their responses and to provide an opportunity for an open discussion with the participants (Golafshani, 2003). Having the participants verify the interpretive accuracy provided a construct to test the validity of the interview questions.

A way that I built trustworthiness with the participants was to break the interview session into two different sessions for more flexibility, and provided them a copy of the questions to reflect prior to the interview. I was transparent by being clear and explicit with the interview questions, open with the participants about the procedures and methods used during the research process (Golafshani, 2003).
Assumptions

As in any research, multiple realties can exist among the participants, the researcher and even the audience interpreting the results of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although I work in the same district and school in the study, I worked to minimize my assumptions during the process and kept an open mind by not allowing my personal experiences with co-teaching to affect my perceptions. Another way to limit assumptions during the research process was to make sure my data was triangulated among the different sources of information being gathered (Yin, 2018).

Assumptions that I had going into this process was that special education teachers may not feel as utilized at they can be in a co-taught setting. Special education teachers may not have a say in which model of co-teaching is being used. General education teachers may not know how to fully integrated students with disabilities in their classes.

Limitations

Limitations of this study was the number of co-teaching teams that participated in the study. I decided to conduct the study with one high school as opposed to all of the six high schools in Fayette County due to not wanting to overwhelm the data collection. A limitation for this study was that not all co-teaching teams were trained or paired together for longer than a year. Another limitation was not being able to observe the teachers in a traditional classroom.
setting or to be able to interview teachers in person. Due to the recent global pandemic, interviews were conducted virtually and co-teaching practices varied due to the delivery of instruction being through an online modality.

Summary

IDEA was reauthorized in 2004 to increase emphasis on educating students in the least restrictive environment in which the continuum of services starts with the general education setting (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). Due to the recent legislation, co-teaching has become one of the most popular staffing models for implementing inclusion for students with disabilities (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005). Research has just begun to address how co-teaching is instruction specifically designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). This study contributed to the research of the perceptions of special education and general education teachers on the efficacy of co-teaching as an instructional model. Another contribution is to improve the professional development for not only general education teachers but also special education teachers by addressing the concerns noted in the research.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to report the perceptions of special education teachers’ and general education teachers’ experiences in the co-taught classrooms as both teachers work to meet the needs of all students including those students with a disability. The following chapter details the findings of this phenomenological study to answer my study’s research questions:

- How do special education teachers describe and feel about the significance of co-taught classes to meet the needs of special education students?
- How do general education teachers describe and feel about the significance of co-taught classes to meet the needs of special education students?

The organization of this chapter is in three distinct sections: textural descriptions of the twelve participants, a review of records, and the synthesis of these descriptions into the essence of the phenomenon, special education and general education teachers’ perceptions of co-teaching, articulated into three core categories that emerged from in vivo and descriptive coding.

The epistemological framework for this research design is social constructivism. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), social constructivism focuses on developing subjective meanings of experiences. A part of social
constructivism is individuals seeking to understand the world in which they live and work (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal of social constructivism research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ view of the situation, which form through interactions with others and through cultural norms that operate in their lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Certificate</th>
<th>Years of Professional Services</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Co-Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristen</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Participant names are pseudonyms.*

The demographics characteristics of the co-teaching English and math classes are in the table below. The table is separated into co-teaching teams, the number of students identified as having a disability, their disability category and the percentage when compared to the make-up of the class.
## Demographic Characteristics of the Classes

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Co-teaching Team</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Number of Special Education Students</th>
<th>Percentage of special education students</th>
<th>Disability Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English 2</td>
<td>Cathy/Kristen</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>OHI-6; Au-1</td>
<td>OHI=21%; Au=3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charles/James</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>SLD-5; OHI-2</td>
<td>SLD=19%; OHI=7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English 3</td>
<td>Andrew/Michael</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>OHI-2; OHI-3</td>
<td>OHI = 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charles/James</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>EBD-1</td>
<td>EBD = 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English 4</td>
<td>Stephanie/Kathy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>OHI-4</td>
<td>OHI= 31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra</td>
<td>Stephanie/Kathy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>SLD-3; OHI-2</td>
<td>SLD=13%; OHI=9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometry</td>
<td>Steve/Denise</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>SLD-1; OHI-5</td>
<td>SLD=3%; OHI=15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra 2</td>
<td>Jeremy/Melissa</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>SLD-2; OHI-3; OHI-3; Au-1</td>
<td>SLD=7%; OHI=10%; Au=3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Disability Categories  
AU=Autism  
SLD= Specific Learning Disability  
MMD= Mild Mental Disability  
OHI=Other Health Impairment  
EBD=Emotional Behavior Disability
Distant Interviews

In March 2020, schools across the nation transitioned from in-person learning to virtual learning due to a global pandemic, COVID-19. The district, in which the participants of this study work closed on March 16, 2020. Due to the global pandemic, the participants participated in the interviews via online modality and those interviews were recorded. Minor themes about co-teaching in an online manner emerged due to teaching moving to an online platform that did not warrant inclusion in this study, however references to those recent phenomena are found in some of the quotes that follow.

Textual Descriptions

Cathy

Cathy is a fourth year general education English teacher. Cathy described her first co-teaching experience during her student teaching years, “I had an excellent teacher during my student teaching that had a co-teacher therefore when I started teaching I modeled my co-teaching style after what I observed in her classroom”. Cathy stated that she has not attend any co-teaching trainings prior to or during her four years teaching English. Cathy has had a co-teacher for the past four years for two of her six English classes. Cathy’s first year teaching she had a different co-teacher than she is working with currently.
I think it is important for co-teaching teams to remain consistent over the years. If you have not worked with that co-teacher before or if you do not know them personally, I think it is important to know a little bit more them beyond just the professional sense. I feel that you need to know each other’s personalities so you can know what kind of role you are each taking on during that class.

Cathy expressed frustration with the lack of training for co-teaching teams in the district.

I have not been to a training on co-teaching although I have co-taught all four years of my teaching career. It was touched on in my undergrad but I do not remember specifics. I was lucky to have a student teacher experience where I was in a co-teaching class.

Cathy expressed her satisfaction with the co-teacher that she has now and has had the past three years. “We work really well together so we have not had any challenges other than challenging students. We figure out things together and we are very collaborative. We talk through things and try a couple of different strategies until we figure out something that works.”

Cathy feels that her co-teaching class is one of her favorite classes to teach because, “it really makes you think about different ways to reach these students and it grants us the opportunity to individually give them the attention they need and deserve”. Cathy shared that having the same planning time, as her co-teacher
has been beneficial when lesson planning and developing strategies for the students. Cathy stated there is support from the administration and the small learning communities (SLC), “in the SLC’s we are able to discuss the students and what strategies have worked and what have not worked with them”.

Due to the global pandemic, classes have been virtual since March 2020, which caused a shift in how co-teaching is being delivered. Cathy reflected on how she and her co-teacher handled the shift from in-person to virtual teaching.

It was a little bit of an adjustment at first just because we are both so mobile in the classroom. We were like, Okay, how can we make sure that we have an equal amount of presence on a computer screen? We both communicate with the students in the chat box. They are still not comfortable unmuting their microphones, very few speak in the class, but they are comfortable talking to us in the chat box. We both talk to them in the chat box and we both keep our cameras on the entire time. We're as present as possible. Right now, we're reading a novel and we are reading it to them. We take turns reading and take turns leading into discussions. So, even though we're in a smaller space, we are still both very present so the kids know that. We can both support them.

In terms of splitting responsibilities between the two teachers, Cathy stated that she and her co-teacher share responsibilities such as grading papers,
discipline, and contacting parents. Cathy does the majority of the lesson planning and delivering the core instruction since she is the content certified teacher.

**Kristen**

Kristen is a third year special education teacher and currently co-teaches in an English class with Cathy. Kristen not only co-teaches with Cathy, she is the special education co-teacher in US History, World History, and teaches a resource learning strategies class. The resource learning strategies class is a special education class with six special education students. Kristen stated that she and Cathy work well together splitting working cooperatively although neither of them have attended any co-teaching trainings either individually or collaboratively. Kristen did not realize there were different types of co-teaching models, “I did not know there were different types. Cathy and I both present the lesson together and it just flows. We look at the lesson together, Cathy presents the content and then I fill in the spots that need clarification.”

Kristen referenced that trainings on different styles of co-teaching and strategies for planning, time, and / or behavior management would be beneficial. Kristen stated that she feels that administration has been supportive of co-teaching teams and feels that the principal, “would allow Cathy and I to attend professional development on co-teaching if there were any offered in the district.”

Kristen enjoys being a part of a co-teaching team and considers herself lucky to have the same co-teacher for the past three years.
I have been co-teaching with Cathy for all three years that I have been at this high school and because of that, we have built a solid foundation for our co-teaching classes. We both get the opportunity to work with all of the students and the students cannot tell which one of us is the lead teacher.”

Although with the global pandemic, Kristen shared that as a co-teaching team they had to make adjustments. “Cathy has taken the lead with instruction and it’s more me answering questions in the chat room. It has been a challenge and certainly has affected our teaching style.”

**Denise**

Denise has been a special education teacher for over 20 years and has taught in Florida, Indiana, and Georgia prior to moving to Kentucky. Denise has taught math, English, and social skills in a resource setting and has co-taught in math, English, Science, Social Studies, and Arts/Humanities at the high school level. Throughout her career, she has co-taught in a math class the majority of the time however with different teachers each year.

This is the first year that I have co-taught with this teacher, which has been really difficult due to the pandemic. I have not met this teacher prior to this year and even though it is still math, it’s a new teacher. I think since I have been a co-teacher over the past 8 years, I have had a different
teacher each year. It has not been the same person, which makes
developing a good co-teaching team or system very difficult.

Denise went on to elaborate that she would recommend scheduling co-
teaching classes prior to the school year ending in order to “provide planning time
and time to meet the teacher if you have not yet”. In terms of dividing
responsibilities, Denise stated that it depends on the general education teacher.

I have had teachers that wanted to handle all of the grading,
communication with parents, teaching, and disciplining. They did not see
me as an equal or they did not know what do with an extra teacher in the
class. Other teachers preferred I did all the grading. It’s important to get to
know the teacher so you can see what their preference is with splitting
responsibilities.”

Denise shared a recent experience when she and a co-teacher dealt with a
conflict.

It was a geometry class. It was just the class from hell. It had a bunch of
special education kids and a bunch of behavior students, like three
P.A.S.S. [P.A.S.S. is a behavior support program for student with an
Individualized Education Plan.] kids in there, among maybe 10 or 12,
other kids with IEP s. Then other kids who were not even, you know,
identified, but just behavior problems. Our approach to all of the discipline
issues was very, very different. I was so frustrated in there. It just seemed
like anything, and everything went, if kids wanted to cheat on a test or a quiz, that was fine. They could sit wherever they wanted to everyday that was fine. That's not how I teach. So you know, I tried to make suggestions. He wasn't a first year teacher either. He’s a good teacher, and he knows his content. He's very smart, and knows his stuff. But, you know, discipline is just not his thing. I would make suggestions here and there. But I mean, to be honest, it didn't. They didn't work. He never tried them. He never cracked down on them. I eventually had to go to the principal, because one day, I just got up and walked out. I thought I can't, I'm not staying in here. I did go to him, the teacher. I don't know if the principal ever said anything to the teacher. I know he hasn't had a co teacher since then. There wasn't like a conflict in that we had an argument or a disagreement about something and then had to talk about it. It was just a very different style or approach to teaching that the two of us had. To be honest, it never really resolved itself. We just survived the year and moved on.

After that incident, Denise stated that if there is an issue or a conflict with a co-teacher, she is “honest in talking about the problem with the person”. She went on to state that she also meets with teachers, if she has the opportunity, prior to the school year starting in order to go over expectations for co-teaching the class together. Denise stated that she does not feel comfortable “sharing the class
or responsibilities”. She allows the general education teacher to lay the ground
rules and deliver the instruction. “If there is something I feel needs clarifying then
I will speak up,” however, she lets the general education teacher do all the
development of lessons and assessments then she will modify what is needed for
the student’s needs.

Denise shares the same frustration with virtual learning. “High school
students do not like to turn on the camera so instead of teaching to a classroom of
students, I am teaching to a black screen”. She shares her frustration with being
with a new co-teacher this year and trying to navigate how to co-teach virtually as
well as delineate roles with a new co-teacher she has not personally met prior to
this school year.

Steve

Steve is a general education math teacher who has been teaching for 21
years with one co-teaching math class this school year. Steve stated that he has
been co-teaching for the 21 years he has been teaching but has never attended a
co-teaching training. “I just do my best to include the special education teacher
during class discussions but it can be hard at times since we are usually just
thrown together.” Other than having a different co-teacher each year and a
different math content to teach, Steve feels that the administration is supportive of
co-teaching.
Steve stated that his frustrations with co-teachers over the years has been their lack of participation in the class. “I had a co-teacher one year that would come into class and stay for about 10 minutes then leave. Another co-teacher would sit in the back of the classroom and read the paper.” Steve expressed his appreciation for having another adult in the room but there is some hesitation to view the special education teacher as an equal partner due to previous experiences. “I have tried to share responsibilities with the special education teacher but it does depend on who you get. This year I have a great co-teacher so we have both been utilizing the break-out room during virtual learning and we are both able to assist students when giving assessments which is awesome.”

Steve stated that over the years that he has been teaching he enjoys co-teaching classes.

If you have a good co-teacher, you can split the responsibilities and make sure that all students in the class are receiving the assistance that they need and not just the special education students but assist with the general education students as well. I don’t think of myself as one of those co-teachers that does not welcome another teacher in my class, I can share control of the class, I just want the teacher to want to teach too and not just read the paper. I have been lucky since I have been at this school with my co-teachers. I have a different one each year but every teacher has been willing to work with me in the classroom.
Steve went on to state that he would suggest further training on co-teaching since he has not been formally trained. Steve expressed his astonishment that there were different co-teaching models. “I guess I would have known about the different models if I had attended trainings.”

Andrew

Andrew has been teaching high school special education for the past seven years. Andrew stated that he has been a co-teacher for math, history, science, and currently English. Andrew has not attended any co-teaching trainings prior to becoming part of a co-teaching team. He has been part of a co-teaching for the seven years that he has taught and with the same teacher for two to three years in a row however, this is his first year with the current co-teacher.

Andrew stated that he has not had many challenges with co-teachers in the past. However, he stated this year has been a struggle.

I would consider the virtual learning world a challenge in regards to how co-teachers need to interact to serve the needs of various students. At the beginning of the year I needed to learn Michael’s teaching style and how he was conducting class. The first portion of the semester it was a lot of watching, listening, and paying attention to how he was instructing his students. As the semester progressed we were able to blend our personalities and responsibilities to serve our students. Outside of class
we would talk about what objectives needed to be addressed and how our students were accepting our approach.

Andrew stated, “Being able to communicate with one another is vital in preparing for a co-teaching setting. Developing a rapport with the co-teacher allows the class to run smoothly and be more cohesive.” When discussing how responsibilities are split, Andrew discussed how there has been a bit of a role reversal due to the pandemic. “When delivering instruction, I would split that with the general education teacher almost 50/50. Now since we are primarily virtual the general education teacher does the instruction and I monitor the chat room for questions.” He continued to express his displeasure with the virtual set-up of co-teaching. He stated that he does not feel like he gets to provide input on the lesson planning and co-teaching has diminished “to me answering questions in the chat room.” Andrew handled the discipline in the classroom so that there would not be an interruption with instruction but there “have not been discipline issues with virtual learning.”

Andrew is the special education department chair and stated that he feels that the administration is supportive of co-teaching and the scheduling of the co-teachers. “I try to match up general education teachers with special education teachers that I believe will work well together.” If there is an issue with a teacher in a co-teaching classroom like not attending the class regularly or issues with
accommodations, the administration is supportive in facilitating a meeting with that co-teaching team.

**Michael**

Michael is a general education English teacher that has been teaching high school freshman and junior English for nine years at the same high school. Michael stated that out of his nine years, he has been a part of co-teaching team for seven years. He has attended one professional development that pertained to co-teaching but not with his current co-teacher. Michael stated that he has not experienced any challenges with his former co-teachers. This is his first year co-teaching with Andrew. “It has been hard this year to start co-teaching with a new co-teacher virtually. I know him from coaching but I have not taught with him prior to this year.”

Michael stated, “it’s important that you are on the same page as your co-teacher. I would recommend determining what roles each of you will be responsible for (planning, grading, instruction, discipline etc.) before the school year begins.” Due to COVID, he has not been able to do this as effectively as he has in years past. “This year, the co-teacher helps students in the chatroom and break-out room. If we return in person then the roles may change or may stay the same.”

Michael went on to describe sharing responsibilities with your co-teacher.
It depends on the pairing. If a co-teacher is comfortable enough with the content to provide instruction/assist with planning, I think that is great. I have had co-teachers in the past where this is the case and it makes for a unique learning environment because the students get to see multiple perspectives.”

Michael goes on to state that he does the grading and planning and splits the discipline and communication to parents/guardians with his co-teacher. Since Michael has attended co-teaching trainings, I inquired what model he used most often in class.

I think at one time or another I have used all of these models. Currently with online learning we have been sticking to the one teach, one assist model. I provide most of the instruction and my co-teacher monitors the chat and helps to answer questions. We have split the class up for testing purposes.

Mathew suggested, “doing trainings together with the co-teacher prior to the start of the school year would be beneficial so you can put a plan in place. Perhaps a training that demonstrates different methods for co-teaching and which ones typically have the most success.” Mathew enjoys his co-teaching classes due to another adult being in the room to assist with discipline and instruction as well as working with students that he would not have an opportunity to work with if he did not have co-teaching classes.
Due to not having the same co-teacher from year to year, Mathew states that his perception of co-teaching has changed over the years.

I have had a lot of different co-teachers. In fact, I don’t think I have had the same co-teacher two years in a row ever. Some co-teachers were less interested in being involved with the planning and instruction and only wanted to help kids on their caseload or kids with accommodations. I’ll be honest, I’m not a huge fan of that kind of co-teaching. I much prefer having a co-teacher who is willing to get involved and interact with all students. I very much enjoy working with co-teachers. Honestly, sometimes it just feels nice not being the only adult in a room full of teenagers. I think having a co-teacher makes me a better teacher. I’ve learned that when you have extra support in a classroom setting, it allows you to focus more on the content and instruction and less on some of the distractions that arise in a high school setting.

Stephanie

Stephanie is a general education teacher who has been teaching math and English for 21 years. She taught at the middle school level for 12 years before coming to high school. Stephanie currently co-teaches two Algebra 1 math classes with two different co-teachers. Stephanie had not attended any co-teaching trainings prior to becoming a co-teacher. “My first co-teaching experience was when I taught English and math at a local middle school. I co-taught at the middle
school for two years prior to coming to the high school. I have been a co-teacher at the high school for nine years.”

Stephanie went on to explain that each year she has had a new co-teacher in her class and that she usually has at least two co-taught classes each year. “I really enjoy co-teaching but it’s difficult because I do not have the same co-teacher year after year nor do I have the same co-teacher for each of the classes that I teach.” Stephanie stated that she did have the same co-teacher for two years in a row before the special education teacher transferred schools. “The district was in the process of going through a co-teaching initiative so they sent me and the special education teacher to all these trainings together. Since the trainings were over a two year span, we were able to co-teach together for both those years.” I asked Stephanie to elaborate on the trainings she attended with her co-teacher and how the district followed up with the co-teaching team.

The special education teacher and I both attended the trainings for two years. I was irritated when we attended the trainings because I do not like making sub plans and would prefer to be in the classroom. However, during the trainings they allowed time to plan and reflect with my co-teacher, which I found to be beneficial since we often do not have time to plan together or reflect on a lesson. The relationship between my co-teacher and myself became a strong teaching unit due to the trainings and time we spent planning and strategizing. During the two years, not only
did we attend trainings together, district personnel came out to observe us and provide feedback, which was helpful, and it made our team stronger. Not all the training was useful but it definitely gave us new insights. It exposed us to different ways to co-teach and it allowed us time to talk about how we could apply it to our life. So, I think that was really beneficial. After we left those trainings, then she and I would meet on our planning block for an hour once a week and talk about how do we want to approach this week? Or what do we need to change from last week? So when we were intentional with meeting weekly we were we were better for sure. You just had to sacrifice your planning. After we attended the trainings for two years that was it. No one has come to observe my co-teaching class, basically no follow up from the district.

Stephanie went on to discuss her relationship with her co-teachers over the years. She stated that she gets along well with people and has not had any issues that deterred her from wanting to be a part of a co-teaching team. She did state there was one time she and her co-teacher disagreed on how to teach to a lesson.

There was one time about two years ago that my co-teacher and I butted heads on a way to teach multiplying polynomials. I taught it one way that I had always taught it. She wanted to teach it a different way. I was not having it because I'm like, this is how you do it. I think we battled about it, but we talked it out. I finally realized, what she's trying to do might help,
especially kids in the room, I need to let her do it. I need to let go of my control. So it took it took a while and we had like a little argument about it and then we had to like step away. We both have strong personalities, you know, that's part of it. We were able to work it out but that is the only conflict I have had with a co-teacher.

Stephanie feels that sending both teachers to co-teaching trainings is beneficial because both teachers hear the information at the same time and can share thoughts and ideas on strategies to use in class. Preparation and allowing time to sit down and figure out specific roles prior to school starting is crucial for a co-teaching team to be successful. Stephanie went on to share that she feels the administration is supportive of co-teaching by allowing teachers to attend district trainings when offered.

**Kathy**

Kathy has been teaching special education for two years at the high school level. This is Kathy’s first year being a part of a co-teaching team. She is currently co-teaching Algebra 1 with Stephanie. Kathy is also co-teaching classes in Geometry, Introduction to Physics, and English as well as teaching two resource math classes. Kathy expressed her frustrations with having four different co-teaching classes with different subject material in each class.

I am unable to plan with four different teachers for four different classes due to my schedule. It is frustrating to walk into a class not knowing what
is going on that day. I figured I was given this schedule since this is only my second year teaching but it has been really difficult to be an active participant, teacher, in some of those classes.

Kathy has not attended any co-teaching trainings and although co-teaching was discussed in one of her college courses she stated, “it was only a chapter in one of my textbooks”. Kathy stated that she would “love to attend a training” if given the opportunity. She goes on to discuss that the classroom management and communication is split between her and the co-teacher but since she co-teaches four different classes there is not an opportunity to lesson plan with any of the teachers.

Kathy states that she feels that the administration is supportive but one complaint that she has is the number of co-teaching classes that she teaches.

Since I am with four different teachers there is no consistency, time to plan, and I don’t feel like I am truly a co-teacher in the class. I don’t feel like I am giving the students all that they need in terms of strategies and time to modify the content.” She suggested that one way the administration could be supportive is by being intentional when pairing special education and general education teachers together and assigning classes. One benefit from being a part of four co-teaching teams is that, “being in four different classes allows me to help students make cross-curricular connections to what they are learning in different classes.
The only conflict that Kathy has had in a co-teaching class is when the class starts to work independently; she would pull her students to her classroom for a “calmer environment”. Kathy stated that, “the general education teacher took offense to that not realizing that when the students were working independently that it would become noisy and difficult for some of my students to remain on task.” Kathy reflected that a conversation with the co-teacher prior to pulling her students would have been better so that there was no confusion. Kathy goes on to re-iterate that communication between the two teachers is crucial for a co-taught class to run smoothly.

Charles

Charles is a second year high school English teacher. This is his first year being a part of a co-teaching team. He stated that when he was student teaching, the lead teacher had a co-taught class so he was able to observe how a co-teaching model “is supposed to look. The special education teacher just walked around assisting students.” Charles has not attended any co-teaching trainings and the only exposure to co-teaching was during his last year of student teaching.

Charles stated that he was not excited about being a part of a co-teaching team this year “with two different teachers, teaching virtually, and I want to be in control of everything.” However, as the school year progressed, “my two co-teaching classes have become my favorite classes to teach. I like having a second teacher in the room to provide clarification and give me ideas on how to approach
a lesson. This has been a learning experience and I would welcome a co-teacher again in the future.”

Charles stated that if he were to continue co-teaching he would like to attend trainings so that he can learn strategies and the various types of styles used in a co-teaching setting. Since this was his first year co-teaching, Charles stated he was “not sure” what recommendations he could give in terms of preparation and splitting up responsibilities. “This year has been difficult not only with being new to a co-teaching team but also teaching virtually.”

James

This is James’ fifth year as a special education teacher. James has been a part of co-teaching teams for English, math, science, and social studies. This year is his first year being a part of a co-teaching team with Charles. James stated, “my co-teaching partners and what subject I co-teach in have changed from year to year. There has not been any consistency, at least for me.”

James stated that he has attended one-hour professional developments for co-teaching where an overview of co-teaching is given. He expressed his desire to attend further training on co-teaching. “A beneficial training might be strategies on how to plan together and how to make more than one model work in your classroom.” For recommendations for co-teaching, James echoed what the other teachers have all shared, “common planning time is important to work together as a team and discuss strategies and how to differentiate the instruction”.

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James went on to state that limiting the number of different classes that special education teachers have to co-teach in would allow special education teachers to be more knowledgeable in their content area. James pointed out that even if he did have common planning time with his co-teacher, he has four different co-teachers in four different classes so the logistics of allowing the appropriate planning time would be difficult.

James stated that the responsibilities in the co-teaching classes differ depending on who the general education teacher is and how comfortable they feel splitting roles. “If I was able to plan with my co-teacher, then we could sit down and discuss who should take on what role when it comes to communicating with parents, grading, and planning the lesson. I feel that I could do more other than just assisting students, if I was more involved in lesson planning.” James gets along well with his co-teachers and has not experienced any conflict in the five years he has been co-teaching.

Jeremy

Jeremy has been teaching high school math for nine years. He has been a part of a co-teaching team for five years but has not received any co-teaching trainings. “At first I was unsure about teaching co-taught classes since I am used to teaching general or advanced math classes that typically do not have any special education students enrolled in those classes.” Jeremy goes on to explain
that since he has not had any training therefore he was not sure what to expect of his co-teacher or how the structure of the class should look.

Over the years I have changed my approach. When I first started co-teaching, the special education teacher just walked around the room helping her students and I taught the content. Some of the co-teachers I have had, we were able to teach and provide strategies together. However, I have had different co-teachers each year which is difficult to figure out how to define each of our roles.

Jeremy recommends that co-teaching teams not only receive training as teams but also allow those teams to remain consistent from year to year as well as class to class. “I teach two Algebra 2 co-teaching classes and there is a different co-teacher in each class.” This makes it difficult for planning and does not allow for a true co-teaching setting. “The special education teacher in those classes just walks around the room and assist students. Neither one actively participates in teaching the content since we do not share common planning times.”

Throughout his time as a general education co-teacher, Jeremy has not had any conflicts with his special education co-teachers. “I am a pretty easy-going person so as long as the teacher shows up to class, stays the whole time, and does not sit in the back of the classroom reading the newspaper, then there is not conflict.” I asked Jeremy to elaborate on that statement.
My second year co-teaching I had a co-teacher that also was a coach. He was always late to my class, if he showed up and if he did show up he would just sit in the back of the classroom. There wasn’t any conflict as in arguing, he just didn’t do anything so it wasn’t a benefit to have in the class.

Jeremy feels like the administration is supportive of co-teaching. Jeremy also feels that his teaching has improved since being a part of a co-teaching team. “I have learned new strategies on differentiating instruction and I get the opportunity to work with a teacher and students that I would not have if I didn’t co-teach.”

**Melissa**

Melissa is a special education teacher who has been teaching for fourteen years. She has spent the last eleven years in a high school setting co-teaching in math and Science classes. Melissa stated that she has attended several co-teaching trainings over the years but has not attended one with a co-teacher that she has or is currently working with. Melissa is a co-teacher in math with Jeremy as well as two different science classes.

The only conflict that Melissa states she has had with a co-teacher was when she was teaching in middle school.

I had a difficult general education co-teacher that had a hard time identifying me as one of the teachers in the classroom. She treated me
poorly and was not respectful to any of the suggestions that I would give or try with the class. She would ask me to make copies, run get mail or coffee, or told me I didn’t need to be in the class that day. It made the students confused about my role in the classroom. That was not a good experience but the only bad one that I have had as a co-teacher.

A recommendation that Melissa gave was to send co-teaching teams to trainings together. “Listening to the same information being presented and being allowed to ask questions along with working through some strategies together would be beneficial.” Due to multiple co-teaching classes within her school day, Melissa stated that she does not get an opportunity to plan with her co-teachers.

Jeremy and Melissa have not co-taught together prior to this year, which has presented some difficulties in the co-teaching environment.

I have not taught a class with Jeremy prior to this school year and with school starting online we have not had a chance to discuss the best way to approach the class as two teachers. I do not feel that I am being utilized to the best of ability due to not being able to have that proximity with the students, time to plan and discuss lesson with teacher, and get to know the students in the classroom.

Summary

In this section of the chapter, I attempted to share the voices and experiences of the study’s participants. These textural descriptions relied on
verbatim quotes and my synthesis of data collected from interviews to provide a narrative of each teacher’s perceptions as it relates to the focus of this study, special education and general education teachers’ perceptions of co-teaching.

The section that follows provides composite textural descriptions of the review of records of the students in the participants’ co-taught English or math class. The section will discuss the number of special education students in the co-taught class and their disability label. A description of the disability categories and eligibility requirements are in the following section.

**Review of Records**

For this study, I wanted to inquire about the number of special education students who are participating in the co-teaching classes of the participants interviewed. The participants interviewed are a part of four English and four math co-teaching teams. In reviewing the class rosters for each co-teaching class of the participants, five different disability categories identified in the co-teaching classes are Other Health Impairment (OHI), Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Emotional Behavior Disability, (EBD), Autism (Au), and Mild Mental Disability (MMD).

A review of records indicated that Other Health Impairment is the primary disability in the co-taught English and math classes. Specific Learning Disability was the second leading disability in the co-taught classes. Not all students identified as having an Other Health Impairment have significant academic
deficits; however, their vocational deficits impair their ability to be successful in a general education class without the support of a special education teacher.

The section that follows provides composite textural descriptions as themes that identify the common experiences participants had with the phenomenon of co-teaching. The data was categorized representing the participants’ perceptions about co-teaching as an instructional strategy to meet the needs of all students including those students with a disability.

**Composite Themes**

<table>
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<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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| How do special education teachers describe and feel about the significance of co-taught classes to meet the needs of special education students? | *Professional Development* - teachers’ recommendations for co-teaching trainings  
*Role Theory* - How special education teachers deal with conflict within their role as a co-teacher.  
*Perceptions* - How the special education teachers feel about being a part of a co-teaching team. |
| How do general education teachers describe and feel about the significance of co-taught classes to meet the needs of special education students? | *Professional Development* - teachers’ recommendations for co-teaching trainings  
*Role Theory* - How general education teachers deal with conflict within their role as a co-teacher.  
*Perceptions* - How the general education teachers feel about being a part of a co-teaching team. |
Through this framework, the themes of Professional Development (teachers’ recommendations for co-teaching trainings), Role Theory (teachers’ description of how they work with colleagues in a co-teaching setting), and Perceptions (the effect of co-teaching on teachers’ professional lives and meeting the needs of the students) emerged.

**Professional Development**

The participants in this study all indicated that the lack of professional development has a direct relationship to their perception on the effectiveness of co-teaching. The six participants that have attended a professional development on co-teaching stated that the trainings did not go into depth of the different models or strategies that can be incorporated within co-teaching model. Out of the six participants that have attended co-teaching trainings, only two were general education teachers. Out of the two only one attended as a team however, she was only a part of that team for two years and does not currently co-teach with that teacher. The lack of training for both general education and special education teachers is a theme that has emerged throughout the interviews.

Michael stated that he would prefer co-teaching trainings with his co-teaching partner prior to the school year about different co-teaching models, strategies for planning and how to incorporate co-teaching into instruction. Michael went on to state that in the trainings he has attended there is little to no demonstration of methods or varying models discussed but lecturing. The
trainings that I have attended pertaining to co-teaching did not have
demonstrations of the different models of co-teaching but rather just defining and
suggestions on how to structure the classroom.

Stephanie attended trainings offered by the school district with her co-
teaching partner at the time. Stephanie stated that the trainings she attended with
her co-teacher were beneficial because it gave both teachers insight on effective
ways to communicate with each other and different ways to approach co-teaching.
Stephanie went on to explain that during the trainings, the presenters allowed the
co-teaching teams time to plan lessons together and reflect on lessons taught to
signify changes in instruction that would benefit all students. Stephanie explained
that the difference between these particular trainings as opposed to other trainings
were “they allowed us to practice each of the different co-teaching models as a
team.”

Stephanie stated that she mainly uses one teach, one assist and team
teaching models. The one teach, one assist is when one teacher teaches while the
other teacher walks around the room assisting students. Team teaching is both
teachers teaching collaboratively together. Stephanie stated that when she and her
co-teaching partner use one teach, one assist they both take turns teaching the
content while one of them walks around the room assisting students.

Several of the participants stated that they had modeled their co-teaching
framework from their supervising teachers while student teaching. These teachers
have not participated in professional development but had supervising teachers who had co-teachers. It was not indicated if their supervising teachers had attended co-teaching trainings. In discussions with the participants and throughout the interviews, it appears that the majority of teachers use the one teach, one observe and one teach, one assist co-teaching models.

Steve stated that over the years, he has not had the best experiences with co-teachers and would prefer to attend trainings with his co-teacher in hopes that this would better prepare both teachers. Steve stated that attending trainings together would provide him and the co-teacher with a “road map for success”. Steve stated that he would also prefer further training on the differing disabilities that you would typically see in a co-taught setting.

None of the participants in this study has attended trainings as a co-teaching team together nor have they inquired about attending co-teaching trainings together. Several participants noted that their perception is the administration is supportive of the co-teaching model being utilized throughout the school and would allow the teachers to attend trainings or professional developments however there is not direct indication or primary examples given within the interviews of specific times the administration has been supportive. This does not mean that the administration is not supportive, but rather that there is not any evidence provided throughout the interviews of administration offering specific trainings for co-teachers.
Role Theory

Role theory developed by Ralph Linton (1936) seeks to explain the ways in which individuals act and how they expect others to act based on the particular positions they occupy (Lynch, 2007). Co-teaching teams are expected to work together effectively in order to deliver instructional content to meet the needs of all students in the classroom. One theme that emerged within role theory was communication. The participants in this study stated that communication with your co-teacher is an integral part that can make co-teaching successful.

Kristen and Kathy stated communicating with the general education teachers prior to the school year about the specific needs of the students in the classroom could assist with accurate planning for the class. Communicating specific roles and duties for the class structure allows the lesson to flow with limited interruptions. Charles structures his classroom so that the special education teacher can supplement what he teaches if there is communication and planning beforehand. Andrew pointed out, “I believe the success of co-teaching is reliant on the relationship between the two teachers.”

The participants interviewed stated that if there is a conflict between the roles, communication and talking through potential issues before they arise is a way to keep a positive working relationship. Stephanie pointed out that when a conflict does arise, “talking to them is the biggest thing. Communication of roles need to be established if you are both teaching a class together and when there is a
conflict it can be easily resolved if there is a relationship built on respect.” Kristen pointed out that when having discussions with another colleague not to go into the conversation combative but instead to come with ideas on how to address an issue or to make changes.

**Perceptions of Special Education Teachers**

The perceptions of the special education teachers on co-teaching vary depending on their experiences. The special education teachers interviewed stated that overall they enjoy co-teaching although the majority of the teachers have several different co-teaching classes within a day. Several stated that co-teaching provides them an opportunity to work with colleagues, expand their knowledge of the content, and work with all students not just those with an identified disability.

Michael stated, at the beginning of my career, I was a little apprehensive about some of the content areas and not knowing the best ways to help, but once you understand the content area from a teaching perspective, then I think co-teaching can be a beneficial model for all.

Several other special education teachers mirrored his sentiments on co-teaching. The overall perception was positive and that co-teaching can be beneficial not just for students with special needs but for all students.

A weakness identified by the special education teachers, is that they have several different content areas that they co-teach in therefore it can be difficult to plan and assist in delivering instruction to the class.
Since I am co-teaching in four different classes, I am not able to actively plan with all of my co-teachers and it is difficult to form a relationship with those teachers since there is not time for us to plan together. For the most part, I find out what we are doing for the day right before the class. I am just there to provide support for the content and I don’t get the opportunity to teach.

The special education participants stated they feel that administration is supportive but scheduling can be an issue due to the number of co-teaching classes and not enough special education teachers to assign them just one content area for co-teaching. Several of the participants also discussed lack of training as teams was a hindrance for co-teaching. Melissa expressed the need for training for teams to establish structure and strategies along with general education teachers being more aware of the special education teacher’s role in the classroom. “Some general education teachers do not want to give up control in their class which can make being a part of that co-teaching team difficult.” As stated earlier, the majority of the participants in this study use the one teach, one assist model and the one teach, one observe model although they are not aware of the specific models due to not attending trainings.

Perceptions of General Education Teachers

The general education teacher participants in this study all indicated that they enjoy their current co-teaching classes and partners. Several participants
stated that they enjoyed having another adult present in the room to assist with supplementing the content. Several participants also stated their perception of co-teaching did depend on their co-teaching partner. Andrew reflected on his past and present co-teachers and how he has not had the same co-teacher consistently which can hinder the planning and instruction process each year. Andrew stated that he prefers a co-teacher who is an active participant in presenting the lesson and assisting with students.

Other participants stated that they would prefer to have more training on co-teaching and attend those trainings with their co-teaching counterparts. Stephanie acknowledged that some special education teachers do not like co-teaching because of how the general education teachers treat them but she has made an effort to relinquish control. “I feel like I have because it's better for my students, and the special education teacher is there to deliver instruction in a way that's different to meet the needs of all the kids.”

Charles and Cathy both stated in their interviews that at first they were apprehensive about having a special education teacher in the room along with special education students. Charles stated that he had not had any experience with special education students so he was not sure what to expect or how to assist them. Cathy and Charles both reiterated that the special education teacher in their classes assist with providing them with a synopsis of the varying disabilities and appropriate accommodations for the disabilities. Cathy stated that her co-teaching
classes have turned out to be her favorite classes to teach and that she would prefer to have the same special education teacher for more than one year. Charles echoed the same sentiment about his co-teaching classes. He stated that it has provided him and opportunity to step out of his comfort zone and work with students he may not have the opportunity to teach.

Jeremy stated that he enjoys co-teaching because he has found that having two teachers from two different disciplinary backgrounds provides an opportunity for students to experience two different teaching styles merging for a common goal. Stephanie stated that general education teachers should be more flexible and allow the special education teacher to take ownership of the class and not just the special education students. Stephanie also stated that throughout the years and with all the different co-teachers, she has had that there were some co-teaching classes that she did not like due to the personality conflict between her and the other co-teacher but that overall she does enjoy co-teaching.

Overall, the perceptions of the general education teachers on co-teaching reflect results. So much of the feelings and perceptions go back to the relationship with their co-teacher. Having a positive relationship and time to foster that relationship through meeting and planning time together is a crucial component stated throughout the interviews.
Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter reported how six co-teaching teams described their perceptions of co-teaching as an instructional model to meet the needs of all students. In this chapter, I provided textural descriptions of each participant to offer individual accounts of the teachers’ experiences and perceptions. I also offered the essence of these descriptions as three themes that I identified from the coding and analysis of meaning units from participant interviews along with a review of records.

In the next and final chapter, I offer conclusions from the findings including my advocacy for co-teaching as an instructional model to meet the needs of all students including those with a disability, professional development for co-teaching teams, and strategies for scheduling co-teaching teams along with the longevity of co-teaching teams. I share my reflections as a researcher and offer recommendations for improving co-teaching, and suggest the implication of this study for future research.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

In this chapter, the results of this study are discussed in terms of the special education teachers’ and general education teachers’ experiences and perceptions of co-teaching. In addition to these discussions, I draw on my study’s findings to provide implications for co-teaching practices and professional development as well as make recommendations for future research of co-teaching support and co-teaching readiness.

This study provided voices of special education and general education teachers as a means to explore the phenomenon of special education and general education teachers’ perceptions of co-teaching as an instructional model to meet the needs of all students. Although this study included 12 participants, three co-teaching math teams and three co-teaching English teams; common experiences with the phenomenon of co-teaching emerged and provide evidence of shared beliefs, experiences, and suggestions for professional development for all co-teaching teams.

Researcher Reflection

My journey for this study began over 20 years ago when I began teaching special education. My first co-teaching assignment was an English class;
however, I did not get the opportunity to “teach” with the general education teacher. At first, I thought maybe it was the teacher’s preference and my assumption is that my experience would be different in other classes that I was part of a co-teaching team. That was not the case. Throughout the years, I found that the special education teachers did not always get the opportunity to be a collaborative partner in a co-teaching class. I often wondered where the breakdown was in terms of co-teaching.

Special education teachers have stated that they often feel like assistants, which can create an imbalance in their use of expertise and skills, which can hinder effective instruction (Pratt, 2014). This study examined not only the special education teachers’ perceptions but also the perceptions of the general education teachers’ in navigating the phenomena of co-teaching. Themes emerged from the participants’ perspectives and experiences that led to suggestions of improvement.

**Implications for Practice**

Co-teaching is two or more certified professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, blended, group of students in one physical space (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Co-teaching allows special education teachers to provide direct instructional support to the general education teacher and students with disabilities (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Literature has suggested that a successful co-teaching class is defined as having both teachers having a common planning time,
delivering instruction through one of the six co-teaching models, and having their opportunity to share their reflection on student data (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

The majority of the participants in this study stated they enjoy their current co-teaching experience, however, they also indicated that they do not have a common planning time; were unaware of the six different co-teaching models; and do not review any type of student data such as behavior, grades, attendance, etc. The teachers in this study also indicated that they feel they have administrative support although there was not any specific evidence to support these claims. There is not consistency when aligning special education teachers with general education teachers within a co-teaching team; there are not annual trainings or professional learning communities designated for co-teaching teams; and special education teachers co-teaching in several different content areas. In order for the administration to be active in supporting co-teaching teams, the previous are recommendations for the administration.

**Professional Development**

The lack of professional developments for co-teaching was a prominent theme that emerged from the interviews. Only a couple of special education teachers and one general education teacher have attended co-teaching professional developments in the past. All stated that the professional development was one session with an overview of co-teaching and not revisited within the district after the one professional development.
Participants stated that they would prefer to attend professional
developments as a team in order to be able to put strategies into practice and
allow time to train together as a team. Stephanie was the only participant who had
attended a professional development in the past with her co-teacher. Stephanie
stated that was the “most beneficial training she had attended in her professional
career”. Incorporating district professional developments centered on co-teaching
with current co-teaching teams would be a benefit not only to the district to
increase student achievement but also to the teachers a part of the co-teaching
team.

The majority of the participants were unaware of the six different co-
teaching models and the benefit of each model. Professional developments need
to incorporate the six different models and allow the participants to not just see
the visual representation of the six models but also allow the opportunity to
practice the different models. Research has indicated that the different co-
teaching models not only benefit students with a disability but also general
education students (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010).
Knowledge of the different models will allow a co-teaching team to determine
which model is beneficial for the class. Not every co-teaching class is the same
therefore having different models to choose from can assist in increasing student
achievement.
According to the majority of the participants, they would recommend that professional developments for co-teaching teams conducted annually and revisited several times throughout the school year in order for teachers to review student data and determine if the current co-teaching model is effective in student achievement. In order for co-teaching to be successful, a district recommendation is to follow through on professional developments and support throughout the school year by providing opportunities for professional learning communities within the co-teaching teams. Implementation can be by level: elementary, middle, or high school; or within the individual school building. Co-teaching teams would benefit from meeting regularly to review student data, analyze the co-teaching practices and strategies they have put in place, and build personal relationships with each other. Previous research has indicated that a critical factor in the success of co-teaching models is the professional relationship formed between co-teaching teams prior and throughout the co-teaching experience (Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & Mcculley, 2012).

Another specific recommendation that came out of this study is to attempt to keep co-teaching teams the same for a couple years and not change annually. These teams can meet with other co-teaching teams for professional learning communities to provide support and discuss strategies that have been beneficial. Special education teachers who participated in this study also stated a negative aspect of co-teaching was having several different co-teaching classes within one
school day. Having multiple co-teaching classes does not allow time for the special education teacher and general education teacher to plan together. Kathy reiterated “having four different co-teaching classes does not allow me time to meet with the general education teachers in order to plan and strategize for the class”. Streamlining co-teaching classes to have the special education teacher remain in one content area, such as English or math, throughout the day would be beneficial and allow the teacher time to acquire the content. This will allow each co-teaching team to build sustainability within the school.

**Defining of Roles-Role Theory**

Co-teaching teams are expected to work together effectively in order to deliver instruction content to meet the needs of all students in the classroom. In this study, participants discussed their interactions and experiences with their co-teaching counterparts. Prior to the school year starting, the majority of the participants stated that meeting with your co-teaching partner and establishing or defining roles is critical for success however; several stated this does not often happen. Charles stated, “I did not meet my co-teacher until the first class of the new school year.”

A recommendation would be to have professional development prior to the school year starting for all co-teaching teams. This will allow each team to meet with each other and have the opportunity to define roles. Incorporation of role theory and assistance with defining specific roles needs addressing in the co-
teaching professional development. Strogilos and Tragoulia (2013) conducted research that indicated in order for successful co-teaching to occur shared planning time, training in co-teaching, and good levels of collaboration by all participants are regarded as highly important factors. Although ideal, shared planning time does not need to occur during the school day. Teachers can utilize time before or after school as well as meet virtually on their time in order to ensure a common meeting time with a specific agenda for the meeting in order to allow for efficiency.

Co-teaching can provide effective instruction to all students; however, there are challenges that can hinder successful collaboration between the general education teacher and the special education teacher depending on their roles (Pratt, 2014). Some of the factors that contribute to this hindrance of a successful collaboration are co-teachers finding it difficult to establish parity in classroom roles, special education teachers often feel as if they are treated as assistants, which can cause an imbalance, insufficient planning time, and interpersonal differences (Pratt, 2014).

Allowing co-teaching teams an opportunity to get to know each other and time to plan is a recommendation from this study. This is where the administrative support needs to occur by the administration providing this opportunity for teachers and provide support of developing professional learning communities for co-teaching teams. General education teachers have indicated that little to no
training in working with students with different disabilities can cause conflict between roles (Strogilos & Tragouli, 2013). Providing time for the co-teaching teams to plan together can assist in eliminating these conflicts. The special education teacher can train and advise the general education teacher on the appropriate modifications and accommodations for each special education student in the co-teaching classroom.

**Implications for Further Research**

**Co-Teaching Support**

The results of this study indicated that there is minimal to no professional developments for co-teaching teams prior to the school year starting. Weiss and Lloyd (2002) conducted research that indicated that special education teachers were splitting their time between several co-taught classes and therefore were unable to assist their general education counterparts in an effective manner. The same study did indicate a barrier for co-teaching is lack of planning time, little to no consistency in training, and few teachers changed their instructional roles based on the instructional task. This study indicated similar findings. All of the co-teaching teams stated that they desire to have scheduled planning time to meet and design lessons. Several of the special education participants stated that they have multiple co-teaching classes. Kathy, James, and Melissa all have more than three co-teaching classes with three different co-teachers. This makes it very
difficult for those teachers to plan and be active participants in the co-teaching setting.

The lack of continuous training, which include follow up trainings for specific needs, is not a primary focus for school administration and instructional teams when it comes to determining if co-teaching is beneficial. Hang (2009) indicated that trainings are conducted prior to the school year however are not addressed afterwards. Further research conducted on administrative support and how that support should look for a school district utilizing co-teaching would be beneficial.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study intended to provide an exploration of special education teachers’ and general education teachers’ perceptions of co-teaching as an instructional model to meet the needs of all students. The research questions included:

- How do special education teachers describe and feel about the significance of co-taught classes to meet the needs of special education students?
- How do general education teachers describe and feel about the significant of co-taught classes to meet the needs of special education students?
Ralph Linton’s (1936) role theory was the theoretical framework for this study. Role theory seeks to explain the ways in which individuals act and how they expect other to act based on the particular position they occupy (Lynch, 2007). The participants in this study shared their experiences with their current and previous co-teaching partners. Not all experiences were positive due to the lack of planning time and having the opportunity to establish roles.

The epistemological framework for this study was social constructivism, which according to Creswell and Poth (2018), focuses on developing subjective meanings of experiences. The goal of this study was to rely as much as possible on the participants’ view of their co-teaching situation formed through interaction with others and through the cultural norms that operate in their lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An educator’s primary goal is to teach the students in your classroom therefore each co-teaching team member’s perception of co-teaching was crucial for this study.

Overall, the participants of this study indicated they enjoy being a part of a co-teaching team however, they desired further training and the opportunity to plan together. Several of the general education and special education teachers stated they would prefer to be a part of a co-teaching team for longer than one year. This would provide consistency and allow for an effective co-teaching team. Co-teaching team feedback would be beneficial for the administration and
instructional team at the school and district level. The participants of this study provided insight on co-teaching that would be beneficial to share with the district.
REFERENCES


## Structured Ethical Reflection

### Table 1  “Special Education Teachers’ Perception of Co-teaching” - SER Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Developing Partnerships</th>
<th>Constructing research questions</th>
<th>Planning project/action</th>
<th>Recruiting participants</th>
<th>Collecting data/taking action</th>
<th>Analyzing data/evaluating action</th>
<th>Member checking</th>
<th>Going public (presentation and publication)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Respect</strong></td>
<td>Be aware of the time constraints of the participant</td>
<td>Develop interview questions that research participants can benefit from</td>
<td>Follow through with my responsibilities and timelines</td>
<td>Look for interested participants who already participate in the cadre</td>
<td>Take into account time constraints when scheduling interviews</td>
<td>Keep in mind that others may not hold the same values and opinions about the topic</td>
<td>Be flexible with time when member checking</td>
<td>Take into account the audience members when presenting the findings</td>
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<td><strong>Trust</strong></td>
<td>Develop a kinship with participants</td>
<td>Make sure the research questions are structured to allow trust</td>
<td>Ensure confidentiality with participants</td>
<td>Share safeguards put in place to ensure confidentiality</td>
<td>Keep agreements made to participants</td>
<td>Remember the participants stance</td>
<td>Review agreement of confidentiality and safeguards with participants</td>
<td>Be transparent about efforts made to develop trust with participants</td>
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<td><strong>Open-Mindedness</strong></td>
<td>Work with participants who have a vested interest in the topic</td>
<td>Keep in mind that the structure of the research questions may change during the research process</td>
<td>Take into account suggestions my committee may offer</td>
<td>Do not set limits on participants who want to participate</td>
<td>Keep an open mind when collecting data</td>
<td>Do not let my opinions/background interfere with analyzing</td>
<td>Remember that co-teaching can be delivered in a variety of settings</td>
<td>Keep in mind that the findings may not be well received by all audience members</td>
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Appendix B: Data Analysis

Data Collection Form

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Appendix C: Interview Questions

Interview Protocol

Participant: _________________________________

Interviewer: ________________________________

Date of Interview: ____________________________

Participant Interview Questions

1. How long have you been teaching? What levels? (High, middle, elementary)
2. What subjects have you taught?
3. Have you attended any co-teaching trainings prior to being a part of a co-teaching team? If so, approximately how many?
4. How many years have you been a member of a co-teaching team?
5. How many years have you been a co-teacher with your current partner?
6. Have you two attended trainings together on co-teaching?
7. Can you think of a specific time that you and your co-teaching partner faced a challenge? How did you solve those challenges?
8. What kind of preparation do you recommend for co-teaching to be successful?
9. In what ways do general education and special education teachers share responsibilities?
10. How is the workload divided?
   a. Discipline?
   b. Grading?
   c. Planning?
   d. Teaching?
   e. Communication with parents?
11. What types of co-teaching models have you used in the classroom? (one teach, one assist; one teach, one observe; station teaching; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; and team teaching)
   a. Which one are you currently using?
12. What kind of training would be beneficial for co-teaching teams?
13. How do you plan with your co-teacher? How do you feel about the planning process?
14. How does teaching in a co-teaching setting affect your teaching? How do you feel about your role?
   a. Do you feel that you are effective in this role? Why or why not?
   b. How have your feelings/ perceptions about co-teaching changed throughout your teaching career?
15. In what ways has the administration supported co-teaching?
16. In what ways do you feel that you have administrative support in the co-teaching setting?
17. What influences, if any, has co-teaching had on your professional growth as an educator? What have you learned from the experience?
18. If you have experienced conflict with your co-teacher, what are some strategies that you have found to beneficial for resolution?
19. Since COVID—how has your co-teaching practices changed?
   a. How has your co-teaching responsibilities changed with virtual learning?
   b. What are your feelings about those changes?
   c. What practices can be put in place to work better co-operatively in a virtual learning setting?
Appendix D: Recruitment Letter

Initial Email Participant Letter
Dear ________________________:

My name is Erin Seale and I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled PERCEPTIONS OF CO-TEACHING THROUGH THE LENS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS. So that you are aware, this study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the Ed.D in Educational Leadership and Organizational Development through The University of Louisville. I will be serving as the co-investigator in this study (859) 75-3388, erin.seale@fayette.kyschools.us or eltayl05@louisville.edu. My Doctoral Committee Chair and Principal Investigator is Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller (502)-852-6887, mlbryd01@louisville.edu. You are being invited to volunteer as a participant because you are co-teacher in a Fayette County high school/program and I believe that you could offer great insight into the perceptions of co-teaching. If you choose to participate in this study, it will include an interview conversation that should last approximately 60 minutes that will be conducted after school hours in an environment that is free from distractions. This conversation will most likely take place via an online video conference platform as long as the Covid-19 Pandemic is still active. I will record the interview via a video conference platform’s recording feature and record the interview with a voice tape recorder to ensure thoughts are captured. I will also be taking written notes during the interview. A follow-up conversation may occur via phone or e-mail of no more than thirty (30) minutes, which will allow me to check for the accuracy and clarification of my notes after reviewing the transcripts of our first meeting. Email may also be used to contact you throughout the study; however, clarification of information, as follow-up, will be done by telephone as needed. If a follow up is done by telephone, the conversation will be recorded with an audio recorder. Participation in this study is voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or for withdrawing from the study. If you agree to participate in this study, your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and school will not appear in the study. Your stories will be referenced by a pseudonym. All transcripts will be kept on a password-protected computer as well as an external hard drive that will
be kept in a locked safe in the Principal Investigator’s home. If you decide you are interested in learning more about participating in this study, please respond to this email. I will follow up by mailing you an informed consent form to review. Thereafter, I will e-mail or telephone you to review the next steps and schedule a time for us to go over the consent document together. If you decide to participate, we will then proceed to the interview. If you have any questions, you may contact either me or Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller as indicated above. Thank you for considering possible participation in this study.

Respectfully,
Erin Seale
Appendix E: Consent Form

Informed Consent

PERCEPTIONS OF CO-TEACHING THROUGH THE LENS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Summary Information

The purpose of this study is to examine the perception of special education teachers’ and general education teachers’ experiences in the co-taught classrooms as both teachers work to meet the needs of all students including those students with a disability. You may find it useful to share their experiences of co-teaching.

Interviews will be conducted after school hours in an environment that is free from distractions. This conversation will most likely take place via an online video conference platform as long as the Covid-19 Pandemic is still active. The interview will be recorded via a video conference platform’s recording feature and with a voice tape recorder to ensure thoughts are captured. Written notes will also be taken during the interview. A follow-up conversation may occur via phone or e-mail of no more than thirty (30) minutes, which will allow a check for the accuracy and clarification of the notes after reviewing the transcripts of the first meeting. Email may also be used to contact you throughout the study; however, clarification of information, as follow-up, will be done by telephone as needed. If a follow up is done by telephone, the conversation will be recorded with an audio recorder.

There are risks to this study that are described in this document. Risks may include feeling uncomfortable answering some of the questions during the interview as well as being identified by some of the information that is provided in the study by other teachers in Fayette County although that risk is minimal.
If you are interested in learning more about this study, please continue to read below.

**Introduction and Background Information**
You are invited to take part in a research study because you have been identified as a co-teacher at the high school level in Fayette County. The study is being conducted under the direction of Mary Brydon-Miller, PhD of The College of Education and Human Development at the University of Louisville. The co-investigator is Erin Seale.

**Purpose**
The purpose of this study is to examine the perception of special education teachers’ and general education teachers’ experiences in the co-taught classrooms as both teachers work to meet the needs of all students including those students with a disability.

**Procedures**
In this study, you will be asked to schedule a time with the principal investigator to sit for a semi-structured interview that will last no longer than one hour. The interview site will be chosen by you but will take place in a quiet environment to limit distractions during the interview. The purpose of the interview questions will serve as the basis for information pertaining to your experiences as a co-teacher, role conflict resolution, and suggested trainings to improve co-teaching. This conversation will most likely take place via an online video conference platform as long as the Covid-19 Pandemic is still active. The Co-Investigator will record the interview via a video conference platform’s recording feature and record the interview with a voice tape recorder to ensure thoughts are captured. The Co-Investigator will also be taking written notes during the interview. A follow-up conversation may occur via phone or email of no more than thirty (30) minutes, which will allow the co-investigator to check for the accuracy and clarification of the notes after reviewing the transcripts of the first meeting. Email may also be used to contact you throughout the study, however, clarification of information, as a follow-up, will be done by telephone as needed. If a follow up is done by telephone, the conversation will be recorded with an audio recorder. Preexisting data related to your name, location of your employment, and designation as a co-teacher will already be known. The overall study duration including consent forms, interviews, and follow up questions should last no longer, than one month but your time commitment to this study should be minimal. During the interview process, you may decline to answer any question that may make you uncomfortable.
Member checking will occur giving you the results of the data to review for accuracy and resonance with your experiences. Results of the overall research study will be shared with you after the completion of the doctoral defense. Results will be shared with you in person or through email with the data collection results.

A review of records, class rosters and the students’ Individualized Education Plan, will be used to determine the number of special education and general education students in the study participants’ classes. The students’ Individualized Education Plan will assist in determining the different type of disability category in the participants’ class.

**Potential Risks**
There are no foreseeable risks other than possible discomfort in answering personal questions and the potential for identification by other teachers in Fayette County who may read this research study. There may also be unforeseen risks.

**Benefits**
The possible benefits of this study include being able to share your experiences and perceptions of co-teaching and personal recommendations on how to improve co-teaching.

The information collected may not benefit you directly; however, the information may be helpful to others.

**Alternatives**
Instead of taking part in this study, you could choose to not participate in this study.

**Payment**
You will not be paid for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you are in this study.

**Confidentiality**
Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. We will protect your privacy to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public. Once your information leaves our institution, I will keep it private.
Your information may be shared with the following:
- Organizations that provide funding at any time for the conduct of the research.
- The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Protection Program Office, Privacy Office, others involved in research administration and research and legal compliance at the University, and others contracted by the University for ensuring human you safety or research and legal compliance
- The local research team
- Applicable government agencies, such as:
  - Office for Human Research Protections

**Security**
The data collected about you is private and secure by password-protected computer and secured server with limited access.

**Voluntary Participation**
Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide not to participate in this study, there will not be a penalty or loss any benefits for which you qualify. If you decide to be in this study, you may change your mind and stop taking part at any time. If you decide to stop taking part, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits for which you qualify. You will be informed about any new information learned during the study that could affect your decision to continue in the study.

**Research Participant’s Rights**
If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office at (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a research participant, in private, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also call this number if you have other questions about the research, and you cannot reach the study doctor, or want to talk to someone else. The IRB is an independent committee made up of people from the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as people from the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has approved the participation of human you in this research study.

**Questions, Concerns and Complaints**
If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Co-Investigator: Erin Seale at 859-753-3388 or
Principal Investigator: Mary Brydon-Miller, PhD, Department of Educational Leadership, Evaluation and Organizational Development Room 335, University of Louisville College of Education and Human Development, (502) 852-6887. If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff and you do not wish to give your name, you may call the toll free number 1-877-852-1167. This is a 24-hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

Acknowledgment and Signatures
This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature and date indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document though you are providing your authorization as outlined in this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

____________________________________
Participant Name (Please Print) Signature of Participant Date Signed

____________________________________
Printed Name of Investigator(s) (PI, Sub-I, or Co-I)

____________________________________
Signature of Investigator(s) (PI, Sub-I, or Co-I)

Date(s) Signed

Phone number for you to call for questions: (502) 609-3504 or (859) 229-7115
Principal Investigator: Mary Brydon-Miller, PhD, Department of Educational Leadership, Evaluation and Organizational Development Room 335 – University of Louisville College of Education and Human Development, (502) 852-6887.
Co-Investigator: Erin Seale, Doctor of Education, (859) 753-3388, University of Louisville College of Education and Human Development
Site(s) where study is to be conducted: Tates Creek High School, Fayette County, Kentucky.
CURRICULUM VITAE

Erin Seale
189 Strawberry Fields Rd.
Lexington, KY 40516
(859) 753-3388
eltayl05@louisville.edu

OBJECTIVE:
To obtain entrance into the Ed.D. Educational Leadership and Organizational Development program at the University of Louisville.

EDUCATION:
Master of Education-Special Education
University of Louisville
• Professional Certification: Teaching Exceptional Children-Learning and Behavior Disorders P-12

Bachelor of Science in Special Education
Winthrop University
• Certification: Intervention Specialist / Interrelated Special Education P-12

WORK EXPERIENCE:

Tates Creek High School/ Fayette County Schools
Achievement and Compliance Coach (ACC)
1111Centre Parkway
Lexington, KY 40517
August 2013-Present

Performance Duties
• Scheduling Admission and Release Committee (ARC) meetings according to Kentucky and Fayette County Policy and Procedures and timelines
• Chair annual reviews, referrals, manifestation determinations, eligibility, evaluation planning, and parent request ARC’s
• Assist staff and parents in the referral process and meetings for special education
• Collect data at the school level consisting of number of referrals, effectiveness of special education programs, number of suspension for special education students, and number of ARC’s meetings
• Complete due process forms correctly and accurately
• Review and assist staff in constructing and implementing Individualized Education Plans
• Administer and score academic achievement tests and behavior inventories
• Develop and write psychoeducational reports

Woodford County Middle School/ Woodford County Schools
Special Education Teacher
100 School House Road
Versailles, KY 40383
June 2008- June 2013

Taught 6th-8th grade Language Arts, Math, and Academic Focus resource classes
• Special Education Department Chair and Team Leader 2010-2011
• Autism Cadre member 2009- present
• Prepared and implemented Individualized Education Plans for students with special needs.
• Prepared and implemented Behavior Intervention Plans for students with special needs.
• Specifically designed instruction for students on the Autism Spectrum and Specific Learning Disabilities.
• Safety Crisis Management Certified 2008-2010

Elkhorn Middle School/Franklin County Schools
Special Education Teacher
916 East Main Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
August 2005-June 2008
Taught 6th-8th grade Language Arts and Math resource classes

- Behavior Cadre member 2005-2008 academic school year
- Member of the Instructional Learning Team (ILT) for 2005-2007 academic school year
- Crisis Management Certified 2006-2007 academic school year
- Defibulator Trained/Certified 2006-2007 academic school year
- Treatment and Education of Autistic and other related Communication handicapped Children (TEACCH) trained for 2006-2007 academic school year
- Prepared and implemented Individualized Education Plans for students with special needs.
- Prepared and implemented Behavior Intervention Plans for students with special needs.

Children’s Home Society of West Virginia, Child Care Worker / Group Counselor
Parkersburg, West Virginia
November 2004- July 2005

- Administering and documenting medication for residents.
- Supervising daily activities for residents.
- Preparing and leading Group Counseling sessions for residents.
- Documenting residents’ daily behavior in behavior logs.

Apalachee High School
Special Education Teacher/ Special Education Staffing Coordinator
Winder, Georgia
January 2001- September 2004

Taught Applied Problem Solving (Math); Life Skills History; and Study Skills classes in a resource setting.

- Prepared and implemented Individualized Education Plans for students with special needs.
- Prepared and implemented Behavior Intervention Plans for students with special needs.
- Prepared and implemented daily lesson plans for 9th, 10th, 11th English; Applied Algebra;
- Administered and evaluated students based on the PIAT, Brigance Inventory of
Basic Skills, and the WISC-R tests.

Cities in Schools (Alternative School), AmeriCorps Member
Rock Hill, South Carolina
Fall 1998- Spring 1999
  • Tutored students in reading and math.
  • Developed and implemented classroom management plans.

RELATED EXPERIENCE:
  • Autism Cadre Team Member for Central Kentucky 2009-2013
  • Woodford County Middle School Department Chair and Leadership Committee Member 2010-2011
  • Safety Crisis Management Training Fall 2007- Summer 2010
  • Ziggurat Method for Autistic Students Training Summer 2008
  • Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (T.E.A.C.C.H.) Training July 2006
  • Defibulator Trained and Certified 2006-2007
  • Instruction Learning Team member and Special Education Representative 2005-2007
  • Behavior Cadre for Central Kentucky Special Education Coop Representative for Elkhorn Middle School 2005-2008
  • Crisis Prevention Intervention Training, Certified 2005
  • Preventing and Managing Aggressive Behavior, Certified 2001-2004
  • AmeriCorps Member, 1998-1999
  • Literacy Clinic, Tutor 1998-1999
  • Children’s Attention Home, Volunteer/ Tutor 1998

ORGANIZATIONS:
  • Kentucky Educators Association 2007-Present
  • National Educators Association 2007-Present
  • Autism Society of America 2007-Present
  • Council for Exceptional Children 2000-Present
  • Professional Association of Georgia Educators 2000-2004

COACHING EXPERIENCE:
  • Varsity Girl’s Soccer, 2004
  • Varsity Competitive Cheerleading, 2003-2004
• Varsity Basketball Cheerleading, 2002-2003

HONORS AND ACTIVITIES:
• Central Kentucky Special Education Cooperative—Outstanding Educator of the Year 2010-2011
• Woodford County Middle School Teacher of the Month
  o September 2012
  o May 2011
  o November 2010
• Certified in the Ziggurat Method, a special teaching method for Autistic children
• Certified in Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH), a specialized teaching method for Autistic children
• Member of Instructional Learning Team and Special Education representative
• Employee of the Month for Children’s Home Society, May 2005
• Outstanding Teacher Apalachee High School, 2002
• Special Education Staffing Coordinator Apalachee High School, 2001-2002
• Dean’s List:
  o University of Louisville, 2007-2009
  o Winthrop University, 1999-2000

SKILLS AND INTERESTS:
• Autism Specialist
• Defibulator certified for Elkhorn Middle School 2006
• Certified American Red Cross First Aid and CPR
• Special Olympics Volunteer
• Internet, E-Mail, and Word Processing Skills

REFERENCES:

Marty Mills
Principal, Tates Creek High School
1111 Centre Parkway, Lexington, KY 40517
(859) 381-3620
marty.mills@fayette.kyschools.us

Amanda Dennis
Director of Special Education, Fayette County Schools
701 East Main Street, Lexington, KY 40502
(859) 381-4100
amanda.dennis@fayette.kyschools.us

Jan Sellars
School Psychologist, Woodford County Schools
330 Pisgah Pike, Versailles, KY 40383
(859) 879-4600
Jan.sellars@woodford.kyschools.us

William Bartley
Principal, Elkhorn Middle School
1060 E. Main Street, Frankfort, KY 40601
(502) 695-6740
William.bartley@franklin.kyschools.us