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TEACHER IDENTITY MATTERS: THE INFLUENCE OF IDENTITY ON
STUDENT/TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT
PERFORMANCE

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B.S., University of Louisville, 2012
M.Ed., Georgetown College, 2014

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

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Organizational Development

Department of Educational Leadership, Evaluation, and Organizational Development
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2024

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A Dissertation Approved on April 24, 2024

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my son, Josiah James Anderson, and my mother, Lynne Anderson. Both of you have crossed to the other side but have been my fuel to continue this path. Josiah, I was encouraged to “finish your degree...”, by a church member after you passed away during undergrad and I have never stopped pursuing my education. Thank you for the motivation to finish! I love you and wish that you could be here to witness this milestone in your mother’s life.

Mommy, I began my doctoral journey in 2019, and you were so excited and proud that I took a leap on myself. In 2020, my life not only changed because of the pandemic, but mostly because you transitioned that April during my second semester. Since then, I have had to overcome many emotional barriers to press on but having you in my heart cheering me on has been my inspiration! I know that you are proud of me, and this degree is in honor of both you, and your “Jo-boy”! I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The method of data collection for this study was an online GLA group interview via the Zoom platform. I created three prompts, each with a question for participants to respond to that was related to my research questions, but worded in a manner that would not be overwhelming to the educators. The prompts evaluated three topics: the challenges of the inclusive setting, their thoughts on how their instruction was provided after analyzing class scores, and whether they feel as if they have received enough training to provide instruction in the inclusive class as the general educator. There were also three phases of each prompt: to respond in their individual space on the document with their answers, also having the ability to agree with their peers by highlighting comments that they have also experienced, to split into groups and evaluate the emerging themes of answers that were most common in the prompt, and list top three emerging themes from greatest to least in order of importance.

The results of the GLA revealed that all the participants felt as if they had not received enough training to properly instruct students who receive services independent of their co-teachers. They reported feelings of failure and the desire to have more professional development opportunities as they compare scores between higher achieving classes and the inclusive setting. Participants also shared that challenges that they experienced included lack of planning time with their co-teachers, not enough resources to support them in gaining knowledge on how to instruct students on how to allow

technology to support their learning individually, and teaching a content that did not allow for a co-teacher and them having to balance behaviors and academic achievement without the proper strategies to do so. Regarding their feelings after analyzing student data after instruction, participants shared that they feel like they honestly do not always expect students who receive services to out-perform their general education class, so they do not require as much success on assessments. They also feel as though they do not always have time to utilize differentiation strategies with fidelity, so that typically teach to the majority, when affects overall class scores.

What the findings of this study revealed was that teacher identity does influence student achievement in the inclusive setting. The data from the GLA affirmed that participants had a negative reaction when reflecting on their pedagogy and they were not fully confident that they could provide the instruction needed with fidelity as a whole group. Educators have the desire to provide high-quality, rigorous learning opportunities, but that can best be reflected in the inclusive setting when they have strategies on how to self-reflect and are afforded regular professional development that supports them as they build their efficacy providing instruction in the inclusive setting. As these skills improve, content teachers will see greater student achievement and that will be the evidence of their identity positively influencing their classrooms.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------------|
| DEDICATION | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iv |
| LIST OF TABLES | viii |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| PURPOSE OF THE STUDY | 5 |
| RESEARCH QUESTIONS..... | 5 |
| SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY..... | 6 |
| THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND THE SELECTION OF METHODOLOGY..... | 7 |
| DEFINITIONS OF TERMS..... | 9 |
| ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY | 10 |
| CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW | 11 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 11 |
| TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS | 12 |
| SPECIAL EDUCATION | 12 |
| CO-TEACHING..... | 16 |
| TEACHER IDENTITY | 19 |
| TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS | 23 |
| STUDENT PERFORMANCE | 28 |
| SUMMARY | 32 |
| CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY..... | 34 |
| RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN—QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY | 35 |
| THEORY..... | 37 |
| THE RESEARCHER..... | 39 |
| STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF QUALITATIVE CASE STUDIES | 40 |
| CONTEXT OF THE STUDY..... | 41 |
| DATA SOURCES..... | 41 |
| DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES..... | 41 |
| ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS | 42 |
| DATA ANALYSIS..... | 43 |
| GROUP LEVEL ASSESSMENT | 44 |
| PROCESS FOR EXPLORING RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY..... | 44 |
| ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS..... | 45 |
| SUMMARY | 46 |
| CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS | 47 |
| GROUP LEVEL ASSESSMENT | 47 |
| RESULTS OF QUALIFYING SCREENER..... | 48 |
| GLA PROMPTS..... | 49 |
| GLA EVENT..... | 50 |
| RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY | 51 |
| FINDINGS | 52 |
| ATTACHMENT/DISABILITY THEORY | 60 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| SUMMARY | 61 |
| CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS | 63 |
| RESEARCH QUESTION 1 | 63 |
| RESEARCH QUESTION 2 | 69 |
| RESEARCH QUESTION 3 | 71 |
| IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH | 73 |
| RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FIELD..... | 75 |
| SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORK..... | 77 |
| REFERENCES | 79 |
| APPENDIX A: QUALIFYING SURVEY QUESTIONS | 85 |
| APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN SURVEY VIA EMAIL..... | 86 |
| APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM..... | 87 |
| CURRICULUM VITAE..... | 90 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | | |
|----------------|--|-----------|
| Table 1 | Emerging Theme: Challenges | 62 |
| Table 2 | Emerging Theme: Instruction Impacting Performance | 64 |
| Table 3 | Emerging Theme: Adequate Training | 67 |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique: good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.”-Parker J. Palmer

“Teacher educators constitute a group of teachers with a special role in the education enterprise: they prepare future teachers. Is this special role the basis for a distinct professional identity?” (Ben-Peretz, Kleeman, Reichenberg, & Shimoni, 2010, p. 114). This quote reflects the essence of this study because of the many aspects of one becoming an educator. Due to the vital importance of teaching, teachers must not only consider students, but their personal views of how their presence shape young minds. Further consideration for teachers is the work and dedication it takes to become a highly qualified teacher. These factors include required certification hours, field experience when student teaching, and specialization in various areas to improve their own practice.

Classrooms today are filled with students at various levels of knowledge acquisition, including learning how to learn, developing a sense of self, and developing a sense of belonging. Preservice programs for teachers seem to concentrate on unpacking standards and understanding curriculum but lack intentional work around creating a sense of community in classrooms. Further complicating the situation, especially in the post-pandemic world, are the behavioral and academic struggles many students now exhibit, in part to the aftereffects of the global pandemic. Aimed at protecting students and adults, school districts across the county and the world shuttered schools for months at a time as

the world struggled through the COVID 19 pandemic. We are only now seeing the residual impact of those actions in classrooms. This phenomenon has been challenging for all students but seems especially so for those with special needs. Many of those services were lacking or absent during the global pandemic and now the needs of those students seem magnified as we struggle to regain our traction with teaching and learning in the post-pandemic environment. This study, therefore, focused on general education teachers and their work with students requiring special services.

In many pre-service teacher experiences, new educators' philosophies of teaching include wanting to make a difference in the lives of children. This idea could come from a positive experience, where the teacher left a positive impression on their life, or a negative experience that has the new educator commit to being the kind of teacher they never had. With the case of the latter, aspiring teachers enter the field attempting to be one who is supportive, involved, and empathetic to their students who may be having difficulty either emotionally or academically. Although the intentions to be the most impactful teacher are based on honest intentions, they are not always accompanied by a strong sense knowing oneself as they enter the field. In this study, I explored teacher identity and the relationships developed in the classroom between teachers and students with a focus on those relationships between general education teachers and students needing special education students.

Recent research on the topic of teacher identity by Brudvik (2016) and Izadinia (2014) discussed the findings around both self and community support influencing teacher identity and those individual educators contribute lived experiences that are constantly being incorporated while instructing. Brudvik (2016) stated that most teacher

identity begins in the initial years of becoming a novice teacher, although most teachers typically enter the profession with prior K-12 classroom experience (Brudvik 2016).

What this means is that some enter teaching with a para-educator or non-certified background and may become an educator because of their interactions with children prior to beginning their careers. Lunenburg, Korthagen, & Zwart (2011) conducted a self-study research project where ten educators evaluated the identities of teacher-educators.

Lunenburg et al. (2011) concluded that “conducting self-study research supports the development of teacher educators’ professional identities” (p. 417).

For the purpose of this study, I discussed teacher identity, its influence on teacher-student relationships, and how it influences students requiring special services in the general education setting, both academically and behaviorally. The questions asked of participants investigated how identity influences student success in the classroom. This topic is relevant because research shows that over 30-50% of teachers will leave the profession within their first five years (Delvaux, 2013). Stemming the tide of leaving the profession is important and the findings of this study will contribute to the knowledge of the field around teacher retention in ways not yet investigated and reported.

Teacher identity—what beginning teachers believe about teaching and learning as self-as-teacher—is of vital concern to teacher education; it is the basis for meaning making and decision making. Teacher education must begin, then, by exploring the teaching self. (Bullough, 1997, p. 21).

This statement supports the belief that educators must not only examine themselves in their early years, but as a continual process to become experts of their fields (Seifert 2011). Exploring one’s identity in teaching seems foundational to predicting their effectiveness in the classroom.

Regarding studies surrounding teacher identity, Zemblyas (2003) identified two areas in which teacher identity could be classified: its dependency upon power and agency, and the investigation into the emotional components of identity yields a deeper understanding of the teacher self (Zemblyas 2003). In this study, Zymbblas (2003) explored emotion being social and political experiences that are constructed by one's work in a particular field. These factors relate to teacher identity by revealing that it is surrounded by the educator's background and whatever lens their past allows them to view themselves as teachers. In his work, Zemblyas (2003) presumes that exploring the posts-constructivist view of emotion and teacher identity aid in gaining a deeper understanding of their formation of who they will become as educators.

There have been multiple studies completed focusing on teacher identity nationally in recent years. This study has an intended focus on relationships with general education teachers and students with identified special learning needs. How could the exploration of educators' identity enhance teacher-student relationships, specifically their interactions with students who receive special education services? Exploration around this question is vital in improving student outcomes for students receiving services due to building teacher efficacy and capacity.

Lumpe, Vaughn, Henrikson, and Bishop (2014) shares that the way to improve teacher quality is by professional development, which positively impacts student achievement. Discussing the importance of teacher identity and its influence on teacher-student relationships are essential to developing quality teachers who can offer their best instruction to any audience. When educators have opportunities to have moments of self-reflection, with support from members of their school communities, they will build a

deeper sense of self and their confidence will reflect in enhanced instruction leading to greater student success. These findings of this study provide districts, schools, and educators with information on how the lack of awareness of teacher identity truly impacts student learning and could likely be contributor of low scores and negative behaviors in the classroom. As previous research has shown, identity is foundational in decreasing student stress and is a major source of happiness (Argyle, 1999; Glover et al., 1999; McCarthy, Pretty & Catano, 1990). This study emphasizes and affirms the same for those delivering instruction to students with special needs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher identity, its influence on teacher-student relationships, and how teacher identity impacts students in special education settings, both academically and behaviorally. Teacher identity is crucial in being a highly effective educator because one would need to utilize capacity when engaging with students who receive special education services (Rosenzweig, 2009). The research questions were presented to both a general educators and special education teachers to gain a better perspective on how they view support provided by co-teaching experiences.

Research Questions

The questions below were designed to gain a better understanding of how general educators interact with the demographic of students who receive special education services and how that could improve outcomes. When the educator operates with a sense of who they are when they are before students, deeper relationships will be fostered, and

student achievement will be improved. Motivational theorists assert that teacher relatability positively affects student engagement and their perception of teacher readiness predicted grades and achievement (Connell & Wellborn, 1991).

Three research questions guided this study:

RQ 1: What is the general education teacher perspective of the influence of teacher identity on teacher-student relationships in co-teaching special education settings?

RQ 2: What is the general education teacher perspective of the influence of teacher identity on student achievement in special education settings?

RQ 3: What is the general education teacher perspective of the influence of the relationship between teacher identity and student achievement of children who receive special education services in co-teaching settings?

Significance of the Study

Examining the relationship between teacher identity and student achievement in co-teaching setting is vital to ensuring the best outcome for students in education. My research examined, through the teacher perspective, the idea of teacher identity and the impact of building relationships and influencing student performance, both academic and behavioral. While it would be easy to look at the surface of the physical interactions with general educators and special education students, the more specific issue that was investigated was the general educator lack of identity development. Schon (1983) submits that teacher reflection should include the act of engaging in professional activities that will aid in changing perceptions and informing future behaviors. This statement is relevant because teacher reflection is key in realizing teacher capacity and identity as an

educator and committing to looking at current practices on a regular basis aids educators in professional growth. Teacher identity is also developed when educators have a community to support them and are able to guide them in selecting the values that will be foundational to their pedagogy.

Theoretical Underpinnings and the Selection of Methodology

The goal of this study was to examine teacher identity and student achievement by examining how a teacher's self-perception influences student success. As the educator develops their sense of identity, they will reflect on how their practices affect students with disabilities that they instruct. The framework selected to underpin this study was critical disability studies. *Critical Disabilities Studies* can be defined as studying how social constructivism contributes to the environment and rejects the objectification of people with disabilities (Linton, 1998; Oliver, 1996). This theory applies to this study because educators may subconsciously interact with students with disabilities in a manner that portrays them as victims due to personal biases or being misinformed. *Critical Disability Studies* (Linton, 1998; Oliver, 1996) aim to dismantle systemic behaviors that may produce invisible discrimination towards students.

While there are many institutions that have programs to certify teachers, little attention is given to providing avenues to aid in developing teacher identity. Many educators have developed their beliefs from personal experiences inside and outside of the classroom, which may relate to individual systems that rely on morals. Others may become overwhelmed with balancing instruction with building relationships, which interferes with what strengths they could bring to the classroom. When the educator has

little support, or few examples of what a strong sense of personal identity looks like, they may have feelings of failure (MacLure, 1993, p.311). Implementing *Critical Disability Theory* (Linton, 1998; Oliver, 1996), while examining personal teacher identity will aid in instructing students with disabilities because the educator will ensure that content is free of any bias that would be a barrier to achievement.

Bowlby & Ainsworth (1964) joined together and created the “Attachment Theory”, built on the foundational work of John Bolby that focused on the tie that a child has to their mother, and its disruption due to separation, deprivation, and bereavement. Mary Ainsworth added to Bolby’s research and expanded it by revealing that the attachment figure is a secure base that aids in an infant seeing the world (Bowlby & Ainsworth, 2013). Bowlby’s initial statement regarding the “attachment theory” were several historical papers, “The Nature of the Childs Tie to His Mother” (1958), “Separation Anxiety” (1959), and “Grief and Mourning in Infancy and Early Childhood” (1960). Schaffer & Emerson (1964) found that an infant becomes increasingly focused on the one who responds to its crying and engages them in social interaction. Once the infants are attached, infants can use the figure as a secure base and they can safely explore the world (Ainsworth, 1967; Schaffer & Emerson, 1964). Another scholar, Marris (1991), conducted further research about the cultural implications for the “attachment theory”, and his work discovered that a good society is when society minimizes disruption, protects children from harm, and supports family coping. The educator could also be viewed as an “attachment figure” in a child’s life and their ability to provide a safe environment could promote more freedom by developing a positive relationship with their students.

The selected methodology for this study was based on phenomenological research and included an observational collection of participant data from group-level assessment (GLA) (Vaughn & Lohmueller, 2014). The subjects of my research were K-12 general education teachers and special education teachers working in districts who are members an education cooperative in Kentucky, the Ohio Valley Education Cooperative (OVEC). They were asked to engage in a group level assessment activity to collect qualitative data to determine the influence of teacher identity in the co-teaching setting. Because there is little research on general education teacher-student relationships, special education student performance in the co-teaching setting, the findings of this study are important to reveal the influence of these areas on students who receive services.

Definitions of Terms

I used the following terms in the context of this study:

Co-teaching: team teaching where teachers share in the planning responsibilities for instruction while they continue to teach separately. (Cook & Friend, 1995)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): a law that provides resources and support for students and schools at risk of academic failure because of inequitable conditions due to poverty. (Zinskie & Rea, 2016)

Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): provides funding for states for the education of students with disabilities. (Apling & Jones, 2002)

Special Education: specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and instruction in physical education.

Special education settings: the process of educating children with disabilities in regular classrooms of their neighborhood schools and providing them the necessary services and support. (Rafferty, Boettcher, & Griffin, 2001, p. 266)

Student performance (academic and performance as measured by summative assessment data and behavior data reported to the state): any identifiable success in the areas of scholarship or disciplined study.

Teacher identity: The beliefs, values, and commitments an individual holds toward being a teacher and being a particular type of teacher. (Hsieh, 2010).

Teacher-student relationships in the academic setting: the academic relation between teachers and their students

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes the introduction, purpose, statement of research questions, rationale for the study, scope of the study, definition of terms, methods, data sources, and organizational summary of this study. Chapter 2 begins with a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. Chapter 3 provides an in-depth description of the qualitative case study methodology used to collect and analyze the data. Chapter 4 presents the findings of my study. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the findings of my study, and offers implications for policy, practice, and future research. In this chapter, I will suggest further study to include students who receive services and their perception of their general educators.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

“If we want to grow as teachers -- we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives -- risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract.” (Parker, 1998)

This quote is powerful when considering the art of teaching because Parker discusses how difficult it can be for educators to be reflective in their practice. Many times, teachers are instructed on the pedagogical aspects of education regarding the daily routines of disseminating information (Freire, 1968). But the deeper layer that is often overlooked is teacher identity. While there is no one definition to describe fully and accurately teacher identity, many researchers have attempted to narrow down teacher identity to explain it to those who work in the field. MacLure (1993 p. 311) indicates that teacher identity can be used as a resource for people to make sense of themselves in relation to others. This may be useful because it reinforces the idea that when an educator exercises self-reflection the results cause the individual to have better relationships with others. For this phenomenological study, I reflected on three key areas: teacher identity, teacher-student relationships, and the overall relationship of teacher identity to student achievement in the inclusive classroom.

Teacher-Student Relationships

When thinking about teacher-student relationships, it is important to first address how influential teachers are to their students' individual academic success in the classroom. Students depend on educators to guide their learning, as well as give them an example of how to appropriately use social skills with peers they encounter daily (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). This indicator demonstrates the importance of how teachers interact with students impacts their learning outcomes. Bowlby's (1980) attachment theory leads to researchers show that a warm and supportive teacher-student relationship may provide the student with a sense of security, leading to freedom to participate in learning activities (Howes et al., 1994; Pianta, 1999).

Special Education

To properly discuss the purpose of special education in the classroom, I explored its development and evolution to what we now see today. In 1893, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that a child who was "weak of mind" and who caused behavior problems were not able to benefit from education and could therefore be expelled from attending school (*Watson vs. City of Cambridge, 1893*). This continued almost 30 years later when the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that officials could exclude a student until fifth grade in *Beattie vs. Board of Education* (1919). Examples of reasons to exclude children were for having physical deformities and ones who drooled, citing that they "nauseated students and teachers" and caused disruption during instruction (Yell, Rodgers, D., & Rodgers, E., 1998). These reasons caught the attention of civil rights groups and *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) proved to support the

educational law corrections which provided more protection to students with disabilities (Yell, Rodgers, D., & Rodgers, E., 1998). One of the key components to the fight for fair treatment were parental advocates who developed advocacy groups to combat the inequities for this demographic of students (Yell, Rodgers, D., & Rodgers, E., 1998). *The Whitehouse Conference of 1910* focused on children with disabilities and a goal of establishing remedial programming helped to propel advocacy groups to spread information nationally (Yell, Rodgers, D., & Rodgers, E., 1998).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA), later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990) focused on specific changes to certain terminology such as “handicapped child” to “child/student/individual with a disability”. Additional amendments to this act included reclassifying students with traumatic brain injury and autism as a distinct class entitled to the law’s benefits and having a transition plan on every student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) (*Honig v. Doe, 1988*) by the time they turn 16 (Yell, Rodgers, D., & Rodgers, E., 1998).

There are various settings to deliver special education services in public schools currently. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) gives specified language to the implementation of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (Czyszczo, 2022). Inclusion practices and differentiated instruction are now implemented tools for teaching in the classrooms nationally (Chitiyo, 2017; Pancosofar & Petroff, 2013). The inclusive setting is where the special education is in partnership to deliver instruction with a general content teacher to deliver services with same-aged peers (Hester, et al., 2020). In these cases, the special educator is tasked with balancing the implementation of special education to various students and remaining in compliance to individual student

needs stated in numerous Individualized Education Plans (IEP) in the general education class (IDEA, n.d.b.). Both the special education and general education teachers work together to plan instruction, monitor behavioral data, and the administering of assessments to students on a regular basis (Chitiyo, 2017).

Chitiyo (2017) also asserts that effective co-teaching requires a positive attitude and the sharing of instructional tasks and decision-making (Embry & Dennisen, 2013). Embry & Dennisen (2013) discusses that potential issues arise when there is not adequate time available for both parties to plan and this can result in frequent miscommunication and a stressful environment for both students and teachers. These researchers also state that the lack of communication can also lead to frustration due to different teaching styles and can produce an ineffective teaching relationship that does not result in maximum student growth (Embry & Dennisen, 2013). Tondini (2021) states that the inclusive setting is beneficial for all students and has many positive short and long-term effects.

Lindeman (2014) reports that while in the inclusive classroom, all students are educated and included together, regardless of their individual differentiation required for academic achievement. Research has also shown that students in the co-teaching setting have potential for greater learning outcomes and gain a diverse knowledge base and experience from having two teachers in the classroom (Harter, 2018). In this case, teacher collaboration fosters professional judgements of teacher efficacy that results in potential student success (Huffman & Kalnin, 2003; Puchner & Taylor, 2006). Murawski & Hughes (2009) state that students engaged in an inclusive setting have shown academic improvements, resulting in positive self-esteem and behavior.

An additional special education setting is the self-contained, also referred to as resource, setting, which is where the special educator implements more structure and various strategies to students in the smaller group outside of the general education classroom (Dalien, 2014). Self-contained teachers are tasked with delivering specialized instruction to small groups of students with similar educational needs, such as autism, emotional support, and life skills (Dalien, 2014). Billingsley (et al., 2020) and Dewey (et al., 2017) postulate that the self-contained setting provides more intensive behavioral and academic supports than in a co-teaching one. Additional factors for students in this class is that they receive explicit instruction by well-trained educators (Bettini, Kimerling, et al., 2015; Cancio et al., 2014; Finkelstein et al., 2018; Sanz-Cervera et al., 2017).

This idea of teacher identity and the influence on student success becomes even more important when you examine the relationship between general educators and students who receive special education services. There are typically two common places to deliver services, the general educating class where the co-teaching model is enacted so that the special education teacher joins the classroom and the second is the resource class, where the special education teacher presents content in a small group setting outside of the general education classroom. The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher identity, its influence on teacher-student relationships, and how it impacts students in special education, both academically and behaviorally.

Special education teachers through their everyday interactions with their peers and their students witness firsthand the breakdown of the communication and treatment of special education students by their general educators in the classroom, though not always intentionally. While in general content classes, special education students may not

be given the same consideration by the general educator as students not identified for services (Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998). Examples in the co-teaching setting are special education students only being helped by the special educator, lack of differentiation in the presentation of the lesson, and the number of special education students who receive behavior referrals compared to their classmates.

Co-Teaching

To further support students who receive special education services by giving them access to the general education setting, the concept of co-teaching emerged beginning in the 1980s (Bauwens, Hourcade & Friend, 1989). Co-teaching is intended to provide the general educator with the special education teacher to co-deliver instruction in a diverse setting to meet the needs of special education students in the general education classroom (Friend, 2008). Kohler-Evans (2006) refers to co-teaching as a “professional marriage” because of the necessity of building strong personal and parity-based relationships to provide quality instruction. By pairing professional peers with different types of expertise, co-teaching can be viewed as the most reasonable response to the ever-increasing difficult situation of a single educator keeping up with all the necessary instructional knowledge and skills in public schools to meet diverse learner needs (Cook & Friend, 1995). Researchers continue by stating that the intent of co-teaching is to make it possible for students with disabilities to have access to general education curriculum while simultaneously benefitting from being provided specialized instructional skills for academic success (Cook & Friend, 1995).

When co-teaching is implemented correctly, Friend & Cook (2010) describe six different models for planning and delivery of instruction for the general and special

educator can utilize based on student needs. These approaches include, “One teach, one observe”, “Station teaching”, “Parallel teaching”, “Alternative Teaching”, “Teaming”, and “One teach, one assist”. As educators utilize these various strategies, goals and objectives that are set in the IEP are addressed and student achievement can be increased (Cook & Friend, 1995). These models are delivered in the inclusive setting, educator roles are fluid with each one taking on negotiated designed task, including grading and daily teaching chores (Cook & Friend, 1995). Co-teaching can be delivered during an entire class period or half of a period, which is common in middle and high schools currently, as well as a single student receive co-teaching across one or more educational setting each day (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Other factors that should be considered are the co-teaching teaching model and its effectiveness in the co-teaching setting (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprabhan, 2016). During periods of classroom instruction, it is important that both the general and special education teachers equally teach the content to students to ensure that services are adequately provided and there is a “balance of power” displayed (Trent et al., 2003). Many times, special educators walk into the classroom with little information about the lesson, which causes them to feel as if they are a bystander, and students view them as “class paraeducators”. This results in the special educator to focus on primarily supporting students in the room who receive delivery minutes and not having a voice as the lesson is being presented. This is also due in part to the general and special educators not effectively planning together during Professional Learning Community meetings. In that setting, the content teacher takes the lead and special educators are seldom asked for strategies to differentiate instruction without having to insert themselves into the

conversation. To change the culture of the co-teaching classroom, it is important that both teachers have equal voice during planning and implementation during instruction to ensure that special education students adequately understand the content that's being presented.

The above-mentioned factors are necessary to address when discussing teacher identity because both the general and special education teachers are included in the co-teaching setting. While it would be easy to allow the special educator to assume all responsibilities in providing instruction to students who receive special education services, special educators are not typically specialized in specific content areas. The role of the special educator is to provide accommodations and instructional support to aid students the right to a free and appropriate education (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004). It is imperative to acknowledge that the general education teacher plays a vital role in the academic success of students receiving special education services and their personal efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 2001). Armor (et al. 1976) and Bandura (1977) find that teacher efficacy is self-belief in the ability to bring about desired outcomes of student learning and engagement, primarily when there is lack of motivation from the students involved. This statement supports the notion that what a teacher believes about themselves affects student achievement because of personal confidence. If an educator doubts their own ability to provide quality instruction for all students that they teach, students may respond with less than their best efforts and that will be evidenced by their scores on assessments and assignments (Mayer et al., 1999).

Teacher Identity

Andrzejewski (2008) found that identity can be described as context-dependent, layered, and that teacher identity is shaped by the various identities that the educator holds and the context in which they are enacted. Examples of identities are personal experiences, beliefs, knowledge, teacher training, school context, and relationships with colleagues within the school (Andrzejewski, 2008). These factors are significant because they shape the educator throughout their careers. Kroger (2007) shares that individual stage-models of identity development when discussing the dilemma of teacher identity. Erikson (1963) discusses a particular stage of expert identity development that is examined by the tension between self-indulgence and the desire to nurture future generations. In addition, Kroger (2007) explained that these stages are patterned after the educator's life at any specific time. Levinson (1986) hypothesizes that individuals are novices at the beginning of an era and master that specific task before advancing to the next stage. These statements reveal that the educator does not enter the profession of education with the knowledge needed to have the personal capacity to know their own identities as a teacher prior to entering the classroom. This may be an even greater challenge when considering general education teachers and their interactions with special education students.

Wegner (1998) discusses the "communities of practice" and its relationship to identity. When referring to "practice", Wegner (1998) defines it as when one is "doing" in the context of both social and historical structure that gives meaning to what is done. He continues by stating that the concept of practice includes language, symbols, images, well-defined roles, untold rules of thumb, intuitions, and shared worldviews in his explanation (Wegner, 1998). One could define identity as being synonymous with self

(Andrzejewski, 2008). Lemme (2002) defines “self” as consisting of all knowledge and feelings one feels about oneself as unique, functioning individuals. This can be incorporated into Wegner’s (1998) theory of communities of practice because the educator has multiple identities that are dependent on memberships in a community. For example, an English teacher’s community could be teachers, those interested in English, and English teachers. This reveals that when an educator is involved in multiple communities, they influence the development of identity through practices over time.

Beauchamp & Thomas (2009) suggest that there are sub-identities within an identity that must be balanced to avoid conflict as it develops. These include the notion of agency and the active pursuit of professional development that aligns with individual teacher goals. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) determined that there is a problematic nature in the multiple understandings of teacher identity and their connections to identity and self, as well as personal and professional identity. Gee (2001) examines four possible ways that identity could be perceived: nature-identity, institution-identity, affinity-identity, and discourse-identity. These factors are attributed by both internal and external experiences in the life of the educator and supports the idea that identity is multidimensional. Sachs (2005, pg., 15) concludes that identity provides the framework that shows teachers “how to be”, “how to act”, and “how to understand” their work and contribution to society. He continues by saying that identity is negotiated through personal experiences (Sachs, 2005, pg. 15). Beauchamp & Thomas (2009) adds that one of the most complex aspects of determining identity is the notion of self-concept and its relation to identity. They both reveal that various authors consider the

understanding of oneself is a key component of teacher development and the shaping of identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

A process that should be used in developing identity is educators engaging in frequent reflection of their practices. Izadinia (2013) assert that teachers greatly benefit from opportunities to reflect on their practices and Farnsworth (2010) adds to this sentiment by stating that teachers who develop within a co-teaching setting are encouraged to explore one's identity. This tool is useful in developing identity because of how previous experiences are a factor for incoming educators. Chong (2011) states that pre-service teachers bring their personal ideas of what they imagine teachers are supposed to be when entering the profession based on their own school experiences, and these constructs play a large role in determining teacher attitudes towards the classroom. Preconceived teacher images from pre-service educators have powerful influence on their identity formation (Chong et al., 2011). Historical and contemporary literature reveal the value of reflection for teacher preparation (Dewey, 1933; Pedro, 2005; Schon, 1983) and that reflection opportunities create meaning through personal experiences. Schon (1983) also proposes that reflection should occur “in action”, meaning that engaging in professional activities changes personal perceptions and informs future behavior. Theorist, Dewey (1933), advance the model of reflection that focuses on being introspective in nature, which leads to deeper understanding of one’s community, self, and a vehicle to address common problems. Dewey (1933) also introduces two aspects of reflective practice: occurring in community in interaction with others and valuing the personal and intellectual growth of self and others.

The previous statements confirm the need for personal teacher reflection when developing identity. In addition, having the support of colleagues, and sharing experiences, also aids in formulating teacher capacity when providing instruction. Personal reflection encourages the educator to acknowledge specific areas in which they are successful and ones that require personal growth. In exchanging personal stories with those who are in the same field, teachers can feel supported, while at the same time gleaning from the successes of those around them. Reflective teaching is also useful when evaluating current teacher practices regarding student achievement.

This awareness is especially useful when providing instruction to special education students in the inclusive setting where students have individual goals that are measured by success data. Without intentional reflective teaching, the general educator may lack the concrete information required to inform their practices to shift to a more useful style of differentiation for all students. Hattie (2012) predicates that there are five traits of a skilled teacher: knowledge of subject, the ability to create a climate for learning, providing intentional and prompt feedback, depth of rigor, and the belief of the students' ability to learn. These traits are vital to becoming an expert in the field of education and must be evaluated on a regular basis to adjust to student needs to produce greater academic outcomes. When the educator specifically takes time to reflect on their personal pedagogy, it allows them to acknowledge areas of growth and the capacity to challenge themselves to push past their own boundaries. The influence of having a strong sense of teacher identity will be explored more in our next section which discusses the importance of the student-teacher relationship.

Teacher-Student Relationships

Research indicates when students have quality relationships with their teachers, they have greater academic success (Nieto, 1996). Creasey (et al., 1997); Culp, Hubbs-Tait, Culp, & Starost (2002); Field, Diego, & Sanders (2002) are among the few of the researchers that postulate the substantial role that relationships play in student success in the classroom. Webster's online dictionary (2007) defines relationships as being, “the emotional connectedness between people”. It is important to acknowledge that the teacher's role in creating authentic relationships is of the utmost importance when evaluating student achievement. Martin & Dowson (2009) reveals that the deeper the personal and emotional connection (in academics, this is referred to as *relatedness*), there is a greater result of academic motivation, achievement, and engagement. When discussing teacher-student relationships, it is important to begin with the effects of positive interpersonal interactions. Research has shown that relationships are an excellent buffer against stress and a major source of happiness (Argyle, 1999; Glover et al., 1998; McCarthy, Pretty & Catano, 1990). Argyle & Furnham (1983) and Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles (2002) are among several researchers that propose healthy teacher-student relationships are defined when individuals can receive personalized help for specific tasks and challenges, emotional support for their daily lives, and companionship in shared activities.

On the contrary, the loss of interpersonal relationships is a source of great distress and unhappiness (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Cowen, 1988; Gaede, 1985). These statements are paramount when evaluating student achievement in any setting because it proves that the teacher-student relationship is directly impacts student success. Abbott & Ryan

(2001) also discuss that interpersonal relationships are important in social and emotional development. An example would be in childhood and adolescence, the aspects of development rely heavily on positive relationships (Damon, 1983; Hartup, 1982). Ainley (1995); Battistich & Hom, 1997; and Pianta (1998) are among several researchers that state that a critical factor in youth motivation and achievement is largely based on relationships.

Motivation is defined as a set of interrelated beliefs and emotions that direct and influence behavior (Wentzel, 1998; Green, Martin & Marsh, 2007). Martin & Dowson (2009) postulate that relationships affect academic motivation by influencing constituents' beliefs and emotions. In other words, relationships positively encourage student motivation. As students are discovering who they are, *relatedness* teaches them values, beliefs and orientations needed for them to effectively function in the classroom (Martin & Dowson, 2009). When beliefs are positive and adaptive, direct behavior in the form of goal setting, enhanced persistence, and self-regulation are consistently present in students (Martin & Dowson, 2009). Wentzel (1999) put forth that individuals internalize beliefs that are valued by significant others when they are involved in high-quality relationships.

To simplify this finding, individuals take on the beliefs of those they value and trust. An example of this in the education setting is when a student is interacting with a teacher that they like, they begin to take on the attitude of that trusted teacher regarding school content, whether positive or negative. When this occurs, the student is ultimately learning how to behave and be a student in an academic setting (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A perspective in the *relatedness* hypothesis is the *need to belong*, which suggests that

human beings have the drive to form and maintain at least a small quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). It was discovered that when this belongingness is fulfilled, positive emotional responses are produced (Martin & Dowson, 2009). These emotional responses that are produced in the academic setting are said to drive achievement, including their responses to self-regulation, participation, and strategy use (Meyer & Turner, 2002). Connell & Wellborn (1991) discovered that positive emotions connected to peers, teachers, and parents produce positive feelings of self-motivation and self-esteem, which are both related to achievement motivation being sustained by students (Covington, 2002; Thompson, 1994).

A key component of the teacher-student relationship includes perceptions from both the teacher and student of one another. In the systems approach to communication (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967), classroom groups are considered ongoing systems. With this system, whenever a student meets a new teacher, they are typically open to any impression that the teacher may make. After the initial introduction, students then form tentative ideas of the teacher after the first lesson, with students determining how that teacher “is” after the lessons continue to stabilize (Brekelmans, Wubbles & den Brok, 2002). To describe the student perceptions, Brekelmans, Wubbles & den Brok (2002) created a model that was based on the Leary Theory (1957) to the educational context. Leary’s (1957) study, he designed a general model for interpersonal relationships, which was widely investigated in both the psychological and psychotherapeutic fields. Adding to Leary’s (1957) work, Wubbles et al. (1985) developed two dimensions that he referred to as *Influence* and *Proximity* when in relation

to education. These two dimensions are broken down into eight segments of behavior: friendly behavior, leadership, students receiving freedom and responsibility, understanding student behavior, dissatisfied, uncertain, admonishing, and strict (Wubbles et al., 1985). Classroom studies have shown that student perceptions of *influence* were related to cognitive outcomes (Brekelmans, 1989). Brekelmans (1989) also showed that influence was the highest variable in her study at the classroom level. Studies have also shown that within the Proximity dimension, teacher Immediacy resulted in higher outcomes on cognitive tests (Brekelmans, Wubbles & den Brok, 2002). Mehrabian (1981) and In Sanders & Wiseman (1990) defines Immediacy as communication that enhances closeness to one another, which includes teacher approachability, increasing sensory stimulation and warmth (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990).

The previously stated outcomes show that teacher influence is a valid indicator of student success. The more a student has positive interactions with a trusted teacher, the more apt the student is to perform better on assignments because they feel that they are in a positive relationship with the educator. Studies have shown that a positive relationship with one's teacher results in improvements in effortful engagement (Hughes, Cavell & Jackson, 1999; Meehan, Hughes & Cavell, 2003) and cooperation from students and academic achievement (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hughes, Luo, Kwok, & Lloyd, 2008).

On the contrary, when students experience negative teacher-student relationships, there are lasting educational outcomes as well. Research has shown when students are involved with frequent conflict with teachers, they are more likely to be retained a grade, encounter negative peer relationships, and increase externalizing behaviors in the classroom (Ladd, Birch & Buhs, 1999; Pianta, Steinburg & Rollins,

1995; Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2005). A significant portion of negative teacher-student relationships are due to interactions which result in negative student Behavior. Most teachers have a low tolerance for defiance and aggressive behaviors (Cunningham & Sugawara, 1998; Safran & Safran, 1987), teacher interactions are often penalizing, critical, and angry (Coie & Koepl, 1990; Walker & Buckley, 1973). Itskowitz, Navon & Strauss (1988) and Sroufe (1983) find that children who have behavior disorders generally have encounters with teachers that are less warm, not responsive, and lack encouragement in the classroom. Fry's (1983) research showed that children who act out were found to be targets of more negative teacher affect with less sustaining feedback compared to their peers in general education. Theorists have determined that mismatches in behavior disordered children's interactional styles and teacher's expectations, approaches to discipline, and interpersonal traits negatively influence teacher-student relationships and may result in student escalations (Greene, 1995; Walker & Rankin, 1983; Wong, Kaufmann & Lloyd, 1991).

In a longitudinal study regarding teacher-student perceptions of one another concluded many things in their research (Hughes, 2001). Bowlby's (1980) "attachment theory" proved useful when interpreting the effects of teacher-student perceptions. This theory worked in conjunction with Howes et al. (1994) and Pianta's (1999) research that showed a warm teacher-student relationship may provide students with a sense of felt security which promotes involvement in classroom activities. Within this study, it is postulated that teachers and students construct mental representations which guide interpretation of relationship events drawing from the Attachment Theory (Howes, Hamilton & Matheson, 1994; Pianta, Hamre & Stuhlman, 2003). An example of this

would be past relationships with peers, family, and teachers that shape both teacher and student perceptions. Sarason, Pierce & Sarason (1990) describes mental representations as individual characteristics that contribute to perceptions of social support separate from the current environment. Thus, perceptions of the relationship can be both reality-reflecting and reality-creating for both students and teachers based on previous experiences (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999, p. 107). Two factors for this include the differing perceptions due to personal mental representations created individually and the students' perception of their teacher being warm, accepting, and trustworthy, resulting in the student becoming more reliant on the teacher and motivated to please (Hughes & Cavell, 1999).

This information illustrates a gap in evaluating how teachers monitor their own pedagogy and how it relates to their children. By researching this data, the hope would be that the Department of Education, as well as individual districts, would be able to recognize that educators need to be given support on how to reflect on their individual relationships and the part that they play in student achievement. In my next section, I will be discussing student achievement and how it is impacted by instruction.

Student Performance

When discussing student performance, theorist Sizer (1984) submits that the point of education is to improve the quality of what we construct mentally and to use our minds well. This translates to speaking of the importance of the educator in helping shape the minds they instruct. When content is introduced to children, it is the responsibility of the teacher to navigate the processing of the information in a manner that makes sense to the

child. If this task is neglected, it will result in educational outcomes and students suffer the most. To determine what success would look like, this requires a standard of intellectual quality, which is a criterion that examines successful and powerful uses of the mind versus unproductive cognitive work (Newmann, Marks & Gamoran, 1995).

A major educational push that is happening nationwide is for teachers to evolve in their pedagogy and move from teacher-centered teaching to more student-centered teaching and allow students to demonstrate their understanding of content (Newmann, Marks & Gamoran, 1995). Examples of student-centered teaching would be project-based learning, small group assignments, and frequent discussions in the classroom. In these instances, a student's prior knowledge, social context of values, and the student's self-monitoring processes are to be considered during instruction (Newmann, Marks & Gamoran, 1995). The goal of these opportunities is to create moments of higher-order thinking and validate the usefulness of the information beyond school for this student.

As previously discussed, teachers and their methods are great indicators of student success (Casado, 2000; Hostel-Akman & Sigma-Mugan, 2010; Martinez-Clares & Gonzales-Morga, 2018). Research has shown that when educators utilize the question answer, lecture, discussion, and demonstration models, they do so with the best interest of students, who then show higher achievement scores overall (Banerjee & Vidyapati, 1997; Ekeyi, 2013; Falode, Adwele, Ilobeneke, Falode & Robinson, 2015). When these strategies are used, students can have access to differentiated instruction which reaches a broader scope of students within the classroom. These models also go against the former method of teaching which was direct instruction which ultimately used students' rote

memories and little lasting meaning. Educators should embrace this method of teaching and incorporate it into their daily pedagogy.

Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968) introduced teacher expectation research which has continued due to implications of student equity. An example of this is when students have educators with low expectations, they are at a disadvantage because of the reduced opportunities to learn more challenging tasks (Weinstein, 2002). Recent research (Li and Rubie-Davies, 2015, Rubie-Davies, 2007; Wang et al., 2019) has measured teacher behaviors of high class-level expectations, versus those with low class-level expectations, and discovered that high class-level expectation educators promote greater student learning ways overall. Rubie-Davies (2015) furthered her research by exploring “class level” and discussed how educators vary on their levels of expectations and beliefs, which determines expectation effects for students from class to class.

Differences in class levels are that some teachers have high expectations for all students, while others have low expectations which is proven by outcomes. In her study, Rubie-Davies (2015) discovered that self-perception of students in high versus low expectations teachers was significantly different in the areas of math and language arts by the end of the year-long tracking. Students were also aware of their teachers’ expectations; those with low expectations scored much lower than those with higher expectations (Rubie-Davies, 2015). This data explains the importance of the educators’ perceptions of the class ability and to know that what they believe could either be motivating or discouraging to their students in the long run. Teachers must set the tone of high expectations for their students and maintain that standard consistently for both the general and inclusive classroom.

Theorists have suggested that teachers incorporate emotional intelligence (EI) to strengthen connections with students of varying backgrounds. Salovey, Brackett & Mayer (2007) defines emotional intelligence as the processes involved in recognition, use, understanding, and management of one's behavior to solve emotion-laden problems. The goal of teacher emotional intelligence would be to motivate and connect with students daily and increase academic achievement. It is crucial to note that schools that serve at-risk populations have the responsibility to ensure that teacher-student relationships are a priority because they are crucial to achievement (McNulty & Quaglia, 2007). Just as an emotional intelligence assessment can determine which employees possess the affective skills capable of motivating others in the secular world, perhaps this same model could be applied to educational leadership training potential emotional intelligence teachers who excel in motivating their students (Rust, 2014). There presently are few studies which research whether emotional intelligence teaching results in more meaningful relationships and increased achievement (Rust, 2014).

Within the state of a metropolitan area of a midwestern state, there has been a study provided researching the connections between school leadership and student achievement in High Schools (McGuffin, 2011). McGuffin (2011) explored the effects of principal leadership styles, school climate, and teacher efficacy on student achievement because there had not been a study on the topic previously. While there was limited data linking school leadership directly with student achievement, there was a direct correlation between teacher efficacy through school leadership, school culture, and socioeconomic status on achievement (McGuffin, 2011). These findings supported that there was an indirect effect of school leadership on student achievement (McGuffin, 2011).

Additionally, when school leaders had strong, transformational leadership styles, this resulted in greater teacher efficacy and a more conclusive school climate which had a positive influence on student achievement (McGuffin, 2011). This study provided much insight into how much transformational leadership influences student achievement because when educators are inspired to be more for their students, this affects the morale of the entire school and creates a positive culture, which students can sense. How could they not perform better when they are in an environment that is supportive, and they see the passion from their teachers and administrators? It is easy to say that the responsibility of achievement rests solely on teachers because of their immediate contact with students, but this study showed that it is the responsibility of all parties to ensure that culture and teacher efficacy are displayed for the greatest outcomes (McGuffin, 2011).

Little research exists that investigates student performance in the inclusive setting with a focus on student achievement. Few, if any studies are available to speak to the influence of teacher identity on student achievement in the inclusive setting. By addressing this need, the education field, university preparation programs and school district teacher support programs will be able to better serve the educator as well and students with the necessary information to evolve in their ability to understand and employ the development of stronger teacher-student relationships which, as evidenced here, supports greater student success.

Summary

This chapter highlighted teacher identity, the history of special education, a background of co-teaching, and student performance issues. These elements will support the exploration of special education student achievement in the co-teaching setting by

creating a foundation for this study. The findings of this study, when adopted, will better support current and future general educators by encouraging the need to self-evaluate their personal pedagogy and to aid in strengthening teacher-student relationships in public schools. The findings may also better inform school districts and university preparation programs ways to better prepare teachers by providing the opportunities for personal development and mentoring to increase regular growth surrounding teacher identity.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher identity, its influence on teacher-student relationships, and how it impacts students in special education, both academically and behaviorally through the lens of the teacher. My selected approach to determine the effects of teacher identity was the use of a group level assessment focusing on the participant's personal experience in education. Data collected provided the foundation to support how to better instruct educators in this specific area and produce a greater outcome. Group Level Assessment (GLA) has been described as a systematic process to determine value or significance (American Evaluation Association, 2014) There were three research questions guiding this study.

The specific questions guiding this study utility are:

- RQ 1: What is the general education teacher perspective of the influence of teacher identity on teacher-student relationships in co-teaching special education settings?
- RQ 2: What is the general education teacher perspective of the influence of teacher identity on student achievement in special education settings?
- RQ 3: What is the teacher perspective of the influence of the relationship between teacher identity and student achievement of children who receive special education services in co-teaching settings?

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to describe the research methodology for the study. This chapter delineates the research protocol I used to determine the findings related to the research questions of teacher capacity and their experience in the inclusive setting. As a scholar-practitioner undertaking research in the school district in which I am employed, I will discuss the process by which I will explore my positionality and relationship with the topic, students, school, and district in which the study will take place. Lastly, I will discuss the strategies by which I will ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the finding I generate.

Research Methods and Design—Qualitative Case Study

In this qualitative study, I used phenomenological data as my selected instrumentation. As a qualitative researcher, I focused on what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as the “human as instrument” approach, meaning gaining understanding humans’ textured experiences and reflections of those experiences. Jackson, Drummond & Camara (2007) states that there are several characteristics of qualitative methodology, such as content, conversation, and discourse analyses. In these instances, the researcher examines how people respond to environments (Silverman, 1998), how their words are used to communicate responses (Foucault, 1972), and interpreting data from participants, breaking them down into segments to be coded (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). By utilizing the human experience while collecting data will give validity to whether teacher identity truly influences academic performance. An additional characteristic of methodology is ethnography (Wolcott, 1987), which the science of describing and interpreting cultural behavior from a close textual-analytical standpoint. In this study, I will focused on

individual teacher perception and the overall outcome of student performance of those who receive special education services.

Scholars have described methodology as “an overall strategy to best answer a set of questions of the inquirer.” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989. Researchers who have contributed greatly to case study literature are Robert Stake (1995) and Robert Yin (2013). Both scholars have based their research on the constructivist paradigm and suggest the constructivism is learning that active and based on the knowledge as a product of their own personal experiences (Stake, 2010).

The specific methodology for data collection for this study was a Group Level Assessment to allow for a more flexible responsiveness for both the participant and researcher. This format was beneficial to this study because responses could be transcribed and interpreted for data collection essentially in real time as participants recorded their responses and then considered the responses of others as the GLA progressed. Because my research questions cause the educator to self-reflect on their person perceptions of themselves, this method was essential to collecting data to support that identity influences special education student academic achievement.

Creswell (2018) explains that the process of research flows from philosophical assumptions to interpretive lens, and on to the procedures involved in studying social or human problems. The collection of data in the natural setting sensitive to the people and place under study is inductive to establish patterns and themes. This qualitative case study utilized a bound single case holistic research design (See Figure 1). Yin (2018) identified a focus on “how” and “why” questions tend to lean more toward explanatory research in nature and leads to the use of a case study. If the purpose of the study is to

gain an understanding as to why something occurred, you would draw upon documentary information in addition to conducting interviews, and a case study approach would be appropriate. A case study entails direct observation of events under study and includes interviews with those involved currently or previously in the event. The underlying premise is that it tries to illuminate the why behind a decision(s), the implementation process, and results, which directly correlates to the purpose of my study. The interpretive lens through which I sought to understand the phenomena in this study was from a relativist point of view. The relativist aligns with the constructivist approach to capture multiple perspectives and their illumination of the topic of study.

Theory

For this research, I will be incorporating the Critical Disability Theory (CDT) (Hosking, 2008) and the Attachment Theory (Bowlby & Ainsworth, (1964). Known for his work surrounding disability and Critical Social Theory outlined by Max Horkheimer, David Hosking (2008) describes several elements included CDT. These include the alignment of social model of disability, valuing diversity, language, rights, and transformative politics (Hosking, 2008). These elements reveal the importance of multiconnected relationships, this demographic being treated equitable, and how power structures of privilege and oppression are created and maintained (Hosking, 2008). By acknowledging that disability is “a place of oppression but also possibility” (Goodley, Lawthom, Liddiard, & Runswick-Cole, 2019, p. 988), This study will utilize the voices educators who provide instruction in the inclusive setting and their personal teacher identity.

Bowlby & Ainsworth (1964) introduced the attachment theory in response to their individual research surrounding children and their interactions with primary caregivers. Bowlby discovered that he would go into child psychology (Senn, 1977b) after encountering two children; one isolated teenager who had been expelled from school due to stealing, with no stable mother figure, and a 7-year-old who trailed Bowlby constantly due to their relationship (Ainsworth, 1974). Although Bowlby encountered barriers, such as colleagues who did not entirely agree with his work (Klein, 1932) and World War II, Bowlby still managed to continue his research and produced “Fourty-For Juvenile Thieves: Their Characters and Home Lives” (Bowlby, 1944), which later led him to be invited to be the head of the Children’s Department at Tavistock Clinic.

Ainsworth based her personal research on the security theory (Blatz, 1940), which is when infants and small children require a secure dependence on parents before exploring unfamiliar situations (Blatz, 1940). She encountered Bowlby after following her husband to London and seeing an ad to research the effect of personality development of separation from their mother in early childhood (Bowlby & Ainsworth, 1964). Together, their research created the attachment theory (Bowlby & Ainsworth, 1964), which focused on infants must have a warm, continuous, and intimate relationship with their mother (or permanent mother substitute) to have a healthy life (Bowlby & Ainsworth, 1964).

By adding the attachment theory (Bowlby & Ainsworth, 1964) with Critical Disability Theory (Hosking, 2008) to this study, I will reveal data that supports that students will respond in a greater way when they have positive relationships with educators that they encounter on a regular basis. When the educator realizes that their ability to provide not

only specialized instruction, but also emotional safety when they develop a warm setting for instruction. In this research, the proposed outcome will be that the teacher has continuous self-reflection to analyze how they are providing instruction in the co-teaching setting and their ability help increase student performance in the classroom because of their presence.

The Researcher

I have been in the field of special education for 12 years and I have participated in both the inclusive and resource settings. I have found that I create positive relationships with my students with intentionality because experience has shown me that when they feel valued, they perform better academically. As I have repeated involvement in the inclusive setting, I have witnessed both the positive and negative effects of teacher-student relationships and I noticed that children who received services from me appeared more open to me providing instruction to them instead of the general educator. This observation led me to want to explore possible reasons for the disconnect between some general educators and students who receive special education services.

As I began to investigate why this occurs, I realized that it was not so much about the aptitude of the students, but about the confidence that the general educator had within themselves to provide quality, individualized instruction to all who were in their classrooms. This research study aimed to support both student performance and teacher identity by causing the educator to reflect on their pedagogy on a regular basis to better support the needs of their students.

Strengths and Limitations of Qualitative Case Studies

The strength of this study is that it was a reflective examination of teacher perception and their belief of their own capacity to effectively instruct the special education demographic. General Educators are not fully trained in special education, so this may cause lack of teacher capacity when providing instruction in the inclusive setting. As the instructor reflects upon their own practices, as well as utilize the expertise of special educators on strategies that are beneficial to that demographic, they will build efficacy and improve student achievement.

A limitation is that Group Level Assessments have the potential to be broad and difficult for the practitioner to manage if they are not familiar with the methodological steps required (Vaughn & Lohmueller, 2014). Researchers discuss how this method may cause practitioners to be uncomfortable and decide they would like less responsibility than to collect data in large groups (Vaughn & Lohmueller, 2014). There are also instances where participants may withhold information due to GLA being participant-driven and there being a large sample size. In this case, the practitioner may find that validity of responses is questionable due to responses not being proven in all cases (Rogers (2001); Rubinson & Asnis, 1989).

An additional limitation is researcher bias because, as the researcher, I currently teach in a special education setting. I worked to focus on the responses of the participants in the study, setting aside my personal feelings as they related to the research questions. I transcribed the participant responses and carefully considered the words of the participants, divorcing myself from the process as best I could.

Context of the Study

This qualitative study took place via a virtual platform on a weekday evening. Data was derived from teachers in the Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative (OVEC). OVEC is a network of 15 school districts which serves over 155,000 students in north central Kentucky. OVEC also works alongside the Kentucky Department of Education, so collected data can be used to help inform future instruction. This education cooperative has a large network to support special education services for students, as well as the educators who deliver the specialized instruction. The goal in utilizing OVEC as a resource is to have a broader reach when collecting data for my research questions for this study and engaging participants from multiple districts for a better reflection of the work in the region, and not just in a single district.

Data Sources

The data source for this study included a Group Level Assessment in which educators responded to prompts posted in a chat of a virtual meeting. These prompts for the GLA were essential because they provided timely and valid data in a large group method (Vaughn & Lohmueller 2014).

Data Collection Procedures

To begin, I will apply with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) on through the University of Louisville for approval. Once I receive approval, participants will be provided information and consent forms prior to actual participation in the GLA. I sent electronic information and invitations for participants, general education teachers and special education teachers in OVEC, and provided a consent form that required a

signature (See Appendix C). An initial qualifying survey was completed via Qualtrics (See Appendix A). The survey responses were used to determine eligibility for the GLA. All data for the study, including the qualifying data, was secured by a password protected file on a secure computer in a locked.

Those who qualified for the study were sent an invitation including a link for the virtual GLA. Participants were provided a link to a file with the GLA prompts for their reference and the prompts were placed in the virtual chat, as well. Participants were afforded an opportunity to respond to the GLA prompts in a specific timed response for each prompt. Participants were also provided the opportunity to reinforce the responses of others participating in the GLA, thus further developing the data set to allow for original responses by participants and reflective responses as participants considered the responses of others in the GLA.

Ethical Considerations

When considering ethical values for research, I attempted to select ones that I believed to be beneficial to one as an educator. Because I plan on using both the Attachment Theory and Critical Disability Theory (Schalk 2017), the selected values that speak well of the implementation of a qualitative study for my research question. When using these theories in this study, my selected research questions helped guide me in choosing specific areas that focus on the aspects of teacher-student relationships. I compared my interview questions with my personal values in education to ensure that I am clear and ethical in my work.

Values can be applied in various ways being an educator, but the ones that are most prominent in the ones in the life of an educator are equality, trust, and integrity. Because

of my experience in special education, it is of the utmost importance that I am an advocate to those students whom I serve within the school setting. When relating my values to teacher identity, it is important for all educators to develop a foundation of values that best suit their classroom demographic to cultivate relationships. At the forefront of everything, trust must be established for the students to give you their best efforts. I believe that this same core value must also translate in the research setting because culture has proven that there are many unethical avenues that are presented in the name of collecting data. By having trust as a foundation, all other values will naturally work in the best interest of those who are participating in the study because transparency will be evident.

My research thus far has caused me to take a hard look at what is most important to me as a researcher and to place myself in someone else's shoes as to how my study may affect them. Because I know the importance of exploring the world of special education, this work has challenged me to look deeper into what I hope to learn from this work, personally and professionally, which includes how we can evaluate the influence of teacher identity on student performance and how to improve the relationship between teachers and students.

Data Analysis

Once the GLA concluded, the results of the Group Level Assessment were transcribed. Transcriptions were then placed in a table in a word document with each spoken word numbered by lines for quick reference. Once transcription of the interviews was completed, coding the transcriptions began.

I employed a blend of deductive and inductive coding depending on stage order for this study. In addition, the inductive coding (Boyatzis, 1998) was accompanied by a code book for organization and analyzation (Crabtree & Miller, 1998). Boyatzis (1998) discusses that a “good code” is one that examines the qualitative richness of a phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998, p.1). This means that the data reveal the authenticity of the perception of the participants which will propel the results of this study forward. Inductive coding was necessary for this study because it helped to explain the views of the participant in a way that more easily described the similarities and differences in data.

Group Level Assessment

To analyze the data in my group level assessment, I utilized coding to evaluate the data properly and accurately from the GLA session. The goal of the GLA was to allow participants to make meaning of their experiences and to reveal findings that may be useful to educators, schools, and districts (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018).

Process for Exploring Researcher Positionality

As a potential researcher, I find that my position in the study will be one of equality, trust, and integrity. These three areas are foundational in my work in education and in life. Like being in the classroom, participants will need to know that I am one that can be trusted and ethical in conducting my research study. Because the participants will be teachers in the classroom, I will disclose my current role to build trust and let them know that I empathize with how they may feel during the interview. I will be sure to include educators from every background and not show bias towards gender, cultural association, sexual orientation, or years in the classroom.

Studies have shown that there are potential dangers in educational research. For this study, I incorporated the work of Milner (2007) as I explore my positionality as a researcher. Milner states that there are four components of his framework which include researching the self, researching the self in relation to others, engaging in reflection, and shifting from self to system (Milner, 2007). When researchers consider themselves in the context of their study, they must explore and acknowledge their own beliefs regarding race, culture, and personal experiences that shape their pedagogy. Researching others includes examining how one feels about racial and cultural relationships and how those perspectives impact interactions with others. Engaging in reflection encourages one to pause to analyze how their current practices and actions shape those that they communicate with and informs how to properly engage in a way that produces positive outcomes. To shift from self to system is to scrutinize your own beliefs and broaden them to include a larger societal view. To assimilate these factors into this study ensures that participant responses be authentic and rich and provide findings meaningful to the field.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions for this study include the various conceptions of an educator (Kember & Kwan, 2000; Prosser, Trigwell & Taylor, 1994). Participants have individual experiences which shape their pedagogy and belief systems. Kirkwood & Price (2013) posit that the teacher's conceptions of teaching have interrelated and significant influence on how they employ instruction. Because every educator has life experiences that determine who they become, teacher perception is subjective to the person and no two will look the same.

This assumption is also a factor when considering limitations because educators have various backgrounds in teaching. Some of those variations include years of service, content certification, and whether the teacher has ever been involved in the inclusive setting. If there have been no opportunities in the inclusive setting, the data may not fully give accurate information because it would be skewed and not answer the research questions. This study, however, combats this limitation by using a qualifying survey to ensure participants have experience with special education students in their classrooms.

A limitation for the study included the inability to keep all responses confidential. By design, the GLA is an open posting of responses and then gathered feedback to those individual responses. The researcher has no control over whether participants in the study maintain the confidentiality of the work between and among the participants. Though the importance of confidentiality was shared with the participants, some may have been hesitant to share their honest responses given the open nature of the GLA itself.

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to provide information on the research design and methods for the study. I discussed the context, the methodology, and methods of data collection, and ethical considerations that were in play. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the study including participant responses and researcher positionality.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this study, I sought to answer three research questions regarding teacher identity and its influence in the inclusive setting. These were:

RQ 1: What is the general education teacher perspective of the influence of teacher identity on teacher-student relationships in co-teaching special education settings?

RQ 2: What is the general education teacher perspective of the influence of teacher identity on student achievement in special education settings?

RQ 3: What is the teacher perspective of the influence of the relationship between teacher identity and student achievement of children who receive special education services in co-teaching settings?

I organized Chapter 4 as follows: the selected method to collect data, a description of the prompts for data collection, results of the screener sent to teachers prior to the event, explanation of event, results of coding, and summary. This chapter will reveal the utility of GLA and how it correlates to the research questions.

Group Level Assessment

The selected method of data collection for this phenomenological study was Group Level Assessment (GLA). GLA was chosen because of its use of open-ended responses by participants simultaneously with multiple participants in a group setting.

Participants were asked to collaborate as they responded to prompts individually and then respond to comments of other participants. Themes can then be derived from a review of the data and findings developed.

Results of Qualifying Screener

A qualifying survey screener was sent electronically via the Qualtrics platform to 28 general educators all working in schools and districts in the Ohio Valley Education Cooperative. The invitees ranged from various grade levels in K-12, from both regular education public schools designed to serve the general student population and alternative placement schools designed to serve students who struggle in the regular education placement. The screener was comprised of four questions to ensure that the candidates fit the demographic of this study and they answered the following questions:

How many years have you taught in the classroom?

Are you a general education teacher of content?

Do you service students who receive special education services?

Have you received training from the Ohio Valley Education Cooperative (OVEC) to support your work with special education students?

The purpose of this screener was to ensure that the participants were not only special education teachers so that the data collected included general education teachers. It was also important to determine if any of the participants had received training by OVEC to support work with special education students, ensuring at least a working knowledge of special education services.

Of the 28 virtual invitations, ten responded positively to the invitation and all ten then completed survey. There were eight who said they have been a general educator for

more than five years, one who said that they have been one for three to five years, and one who said they have been teaching for one to three years. Once I received these results, I proceeded to schedule the virtual GLA.

GLA Prompts

The GLA process included three prompts shared with participants simultaneously during the convening. The prompts provided an opportunity for participants to respond individually to open-ended questions and collaborate on theme generation from the feedback of other participants. The first prompt stated, “When you teach your classes with students who receive Special Education services, what are some of the challenges that you experience during instruction?” The second stated, “When analyzing your data for your co-teaching classes, what are your thoughts about how your instruction affected the scores of students who receive Special Education services?” The final prompt asked, “As a content teacher, do you feel that you have received enough training to provide effective instruction to students who receive Special Education services? Why do you feel this way?” All prompts had three sections listed; one that allowed space to respond to the question, the next was for theme generation, and the last to rank the top three of the generated themes in order from most important to the least. As participants typed, if they read another response they agreed with, they could highlight the portion of the phrase or word that they either agreed with or experienced to show that it could possibly be an emerging theme on the document. The following section will discuss the GLA event that participants took part in.

GLA Event

For the scheduled GLA there were ten general education teachers from both the secondary and intermediate levels. Nine teachers teach middle school, and one taught at an alternative school with both middle and high school classes. To begin, I opened the virtual meeting room and greeted participants as they entered. Once all joined the virtual meeting, I introduced the GLA exercise and explained the participant interaction that was expected to take place. I provided background information on the GLA process and explained that this would be a collaborative effort to highlight individual and shared experiences by educators in an inclusive classroom setting. I explained to participants that the session would be recorded for transcription purposes and that the group responses would be confidential when reported as findings but that others could see their comments in real time as we worked together. I then advised participants that I would be posting three links during our time that would be a shared document to respond to an individual prompt, and if they saw a response from another participant that they agreed with or previously experienced, they were encouraged to highlight the portion of the statement to indicate its relevance.

Once confirmed the participants understood the instructions, I separated the participants into two groups in preparation for the second and third phases to compare responses. I then introduced the first prompt for the GLA and reminded contributors of the process for the first portion of the document to type in their responses to the prompt and then to highlight words or phrases from other participants that resonated. Following accepted GLA protocol, the time for the first section was nine minutes. After responses were recorded and time was allowed for them to be reviewed, attendees were asked to

look at the initial phase responses and list any words or phrases that were repeated multiple times. They were given three minutes for this activity, reconvening once again to discuss answers. This process was repeated throughout the GLA, where both groups were to look at what was said in phase two and agree on a list of the three most important statements from greatest to least significant. The entire process took one hour and fourteen minutes to complete.

Researcher Positionality

As stated in Chapter 3, Milner (2007) discussed four components of potential dangers when researching education. His framework included researching the self, researching the self in relation to others, engaging in reflection, and shifting from self to system (Milner, 2007). As I conducted my research, I kept this concept in mind when I created the prompts for my GLA. I am a special education teacher who is in both a resource and co-teaching setting, and I have had seen first-hand the differences in the treatment of those students who receive special education services and those students in a regular, general education. While I have my personal beliefs as to why these differences in treatment exist, I was intentional in removing myself from the process. I utilized Milner's component of "researching self in relation to others" because I knew that I would be stepping into a realm that I am not familiar with as far as selecting a panel of all general educators and receiving authentic feedback on their reasoning as they responded to the prompts.

As participants collaborated, I provided little guidance in generating the conversations, only giving instructions to be honest and reminding them of this confidential event. By me stepping aside so that authentic data could be collected,

participants had the opportunity to use their voices to reveal current gaps in education as it relates to the inclusive setting. Me researching my own identity as it relates to general educators has sparked my interest in how programs and professional development opportunities could be created to better serve the teacher as they provide instruction.

I also embraced Milner's component of "shifting from self to system" as I conducted my GLA. I admit that the general education and special education worlds are often kept separate due to both roles having their own educational training. Because of this, I removed my hat as a teacher and shifted to that of "researcher" so that I could oversee the process from the position of one collecting data for my study. This experience has caused me to reflect, and I have grown into a person who has additional leadership capabilities, now being able to view an event from a vantage point that can see the whole picture. I knew that by me being the researcher, participants looked to me as an expert, which made me feel that I stepped outside of my comfort zone and placed me in an educational system because my research aims to ultimately benefit school districts. I know that after this research experience, I am now aware of how favorable incorporating more events into professional developments and professional learning communities could be for school districts because it encourages collaboration and productivity due to it being solution-driven in nature.

Findings

The GLA for this study produced rich discussion and input from each participant who contributed. There was no previous notification of the topics of the prompts, so this experience was a real-time reaction to aspects of the inclusive setting that many had

never had the opportunity to express in their individual school settings. The results of the theme analysis based on the transcription of the GLA appear below.

Prompt One: When you teach your classes with students who receive Special Education services, what are some of the challenges that you experience during instruction?

Emergent Themes: Class Size, Planning Time, Resources

The most often mentioned challenge by the participants in the study was class size. This was stated and repeated by seven participants as being the primary barrier in the inclusive setting. Participant 1 stated “Being able to provide services while managing the remainder of the class.” and Participant 10 expressed, “One of my biggest challenges is implementing all services with fidelity while also balancing class sizes and behavior management.” Five additional teachers simply said the words “class size”, indicating that they personally experience the deficits in their classes where Special Education students attend.

The second most critical challenge to educators for the first prompt was planning time. Participant 7 stated, “There is a lack of planning time with my collaborator.” Participant 8 expressed, “Not enough planning time.” Participant 9 articulated, “Co-teaching effectively-where it's our room, not my room.” During discussion, teachers shared how they felt that the opportunities in the PLC (Professional Learning Communities) often did not allow time for them as the content instructors to include feedback for developing lesson plans that were more differentiated because of their co-teachers not being able to participate due to multi-grade level schedules. Participant 10 also shared a challenge stated as, “Re-teaching or truly teaching to mastery of standards.” This was expounded upon by the group and them agreeing that having more planning

time would support lessons being designed with more components that would support achievement in the inclusive setting.

The third challenge in recurrence was resources for content teachers. The group labeled this as “Support for teachers to learn adapting strategies.” and “Resources for technology, professional development, and support.” Participant 4 shared, “Providing technology aide while teaching and providing services.” Participant 5 stated, “Knowing how to explain the technology to students that is available to help them.” This statement was further discussed, and the group shared that some students in the inclusive setting are embarrassed at times to ask for help and educators may not know that there is an additional need for an individual child. There were five teachers total who named “resources” as a barrier during instruction.

Table 1 Emerging Theme: Challenges

| Themes | Quotes |
|---------------------------|---|
| Class Size | <p>“Being able to provide services while managing the remainder of the class.”</p> <p>“Implementing all services with fidelity while also balancing class size and behavior management.”</p> <p>“Co-teaching effectively-where it’s our room and not my room.”</p> |
| Planning Time | <p>“There is a lack of planning time with my collaborator.”</p> <p>“Class time is too fast paced to meet everyone’s needs.”</p> <p>“Planning time”</p> |
| Resources-lack of support | <p>“Students understanding how to use technology available.”</p> <p>“Access to apt space for student services that require preferential seating areas.”</p> <p>“I seem to struggle with using the data to help support the educational growth when I have not been shown how to do so.”</p> |

Prompt Two: When analyzing your data for your co-teaching classes, what are your thoughts about how your instruction affected the scores of students who receive Special Education services?

Emergent Themes: Instruction, Personal Responsibility, Small Group Instruction

For the second prompt, the primary emerging theme was instruction impacting student performance or co-teaching. This prompt was vital to this study because it was crafted to cause the educators to personally reflect on their pedagogy and how it is reflected in academic outcomes in the inclusive setting. As the group progressed through the three phases of completion, the first factor listed as most important was “effective co-teaching” and having that in their classrooms equals success. Participant 1 stated that “If I did have that additional help, it would positively affect the scores of my students.”

Additionally, Participant 1 shared, “The rare times that I do have a co-teacher, it has been helpful in managing behaviors and allows me to work more one-on-one with students and provide more direct support, which has led to student growth and mastery of content.”

Participants 4 and 6 both said their student performance data increased when a co-teacher was present. While Participant 3 shared the opinion, “When co-planning is limited or ineffective, I feel like I am failing my students.” Effective co-teaching as a comment was mentioned eight times by the group, showing that this factor greatly affects student achievement.

The next most mentioned factor was that of personal responsibility. Participant 6 stated that, “My instruction does not reach all students after I check the scores following instruction.” This quote was agreed with by other participants in the study with Participant 8 adding, “It makes me feel ineffective.” This theme demonstrates that when students in the inclusive setting underperform, it has a negative effect on the educator and their personal identity. Participant 7 stated, “Even though there are more obstacles for success for my special education students, it is still my goal to have them succeed, and that outcome falls on me.” Participant 10 added, “I feel greatly responsible for how my instruction affects all students in my classroom.” This prompt caused the group of attendees to reflect on their own instruction and encouraged them to be vulnerable and admit how their current pedagogy affects student outcomes and how that made them feel as educators when students underperformed following instruction.

Small Group Instruction

The final ranking for Prompt 2 was Small Group Instruction. The group verbally agreed that academic achievement was improved when there were opportunities for small

group instruction. Participant 7 shared, “I have to make time for each individual after initial instruction to do smaller group follow up and even one-on-one mostly. It’s great to have a co-teacher teach with me so I do not have to do one-on-ones by myself, which is monumental, even in a small numbers class.” Participant 1 also shared that having a co-teacher in the inclusive setting allowed her to be more available for small group instruction, which is a necessity in the inclusive setting. This aspect did not have lengthy discussion surrounding it, but the group all agreed that small group instruction should be listed as the third most important factor in the emerging theme of Instruction Affecting Achievement.

Table 2 Emerging Theme: Instruction Impacting Performance

| Themes | Quotes |
|---|---|
| Instruction Impacting Student Performance (co-teaching) | <p>“If I had that additional help, it would positively affect the scores of my students.”</p> <p>“I’ve noticed that my scores a better with co-teaching.”</p> <p>“My instruction does not reach all students after I check the scores of my students following instruction.”</p> |
| Personal Responsibility | <p>“My instruction does not reach all students after I check the scores of my students following instruction.”</p> <p>“I am the instructor therefore; I am responsible for the success of ALL my students.”</p> <p>“My data tells me I’m still too fast for some of them. I depend on my co-teacher to help me analyze it and go back to reteach.”</p> <p>“I feel like I expect less from my co-teach class.”</p> |
| Small Group Instruction | <p>“...it has (co-teaching) been helpful in managing behaviors and allows me to work more one on one with students and provide more direct support/ small group which has led to student growth and mastery of content.”</p> <p>“I have to make time for each individual after their initial instruction to do smaller group follow up and even one-on-one mostly.”</p> |

Prompt Three: As a content teacher, do you feel that you have received enough training to provide effective instruction to students who receive Special Education services? Why do you feel this way?

Emergent Theme: Adequate Training--Professional Development, College Preparation, Learned Individuality

This aspect is pivotal to this study because one aspect is that teacher identity is connected to self-reflection. It is also concerned with having a lack of training that negatively impacts educators in their careers. The first focus was on lack of training on the job, or professional development. All ten participants felt as if they had not received proper preparation while obtaining their certification nor through professional development opportunities once they were teaching. Participant 1 stated, "I do not think I have received enough training to fully provide effective training. We did recently have a PD (Professional Development) that went over ways to better support our students, but overall, a lot of the learning and work on how to provide effective services has been through learning on my own. Even with the strategies that have been provided and that I have learned, I find it hard to fully incorporate all of them with fidelity." Participant 2 typed, "NOT AT ALL! There have been very little opportunities and a lot of what I have learned has been through personal ventures and reaching out, exploring and researching on my own. I spent years not understanding what differentiation really is in a classroom. I hold multiple education degrees, read a lot and still feel like my training in this area is seriously lacking." Participant 7 stated, "Not at all. I believe I might have had a class in college that touched on this subject but nothing in depth to where I feel confident in my

instruction and modifications without the co-teacher.” This sentiment was unanimous for all study participants.

The next area for feedback was centered around college preparatory classes. Participant 4 shared, “As a first-year teacher, I would expect more extensive training.” Participant 5 followed by saying, “I personally don’t think that I have because I’m not totally confident in the training that I have. I do think as time has gone on, I’ve learned to get better at those skills independently versus a PD (Professional Development) training. It’s been more of trial by fire and adjusting accordingly.” Participant 7 expressed, “Not at all. I believe I might have had a class in college that touched on this subject but nothing in depth to where I feel confident in my instruction and modifications without the co-teacher.” The conversation continued with affirmations that their college training did not equip them with the tools necessary to confidently provide instruction in the inclusive setting. Attendees conversed about feeling it necessary to have a co-teacher available to meet the needs of an inclusive classroom.

The final ranking for adequate training was learned individuality. This area speaks to the educators’ experience of not being exposed to the resources that would aid them in providing a more rigorous learning environment for students who receive special education services. Participant 9, who is a veteran teacher, said, “I’ve just learned on the job in bits and pieces over the years.”, and this comment was validated by several other attendees. Participant 8 stated, “Most of my strategies I learned through trial and error or sporadic trainings through the years. There was not intentional professional learning on the topic.” Participant 5 added, “I’ve learned to get better at those skills independently versus a PD training.” All educators in attendance agreed that the lack of opportunities to

be trained specifically on how to deliver general education content in the inclusive setting has affected their personal performance with their students and all desire to have more guidance in this area.

Table 3 Emerging Theme: Adequate Training

| Themes | Quotes |
|--|---|
| Lack of Training, Professional Development | <p>“I do not think I have received enough training.”</p> <p>“I hold multiple education degrees, read a lot and still feel like my training in this area is seriously lacking.”</p> <p>“No, I have not received enough training to effectively teach those students.”</p> |
| College Preparatory Classes | <p>“As a first-year teacher, I would expect more extensive training.”</p> <p>“I’m not totally confident in the training that I have.”</p> <p>“There was not intentional professional learning on the topic.”</p> |
| Learned Individually | <p>“There have been very little opportunities and a lot of what I have learned has been through personal ventures and reaching out, exploring and researching on my own.”</p> <p>“Most of my strategies I learned through trial and error or sporadic trainings through the years.”</p> <p>“... a lot of the learning and work on how to provide effective services has been through learning on my own.”</p> |

Attachment/Disability Theory

Linton (1998) & Oliver (1996) explain the framework of *Critical Disabilities Studies*, which aims to dismantle systemic behaviors that may produce invisible discrimination towards students. When this is related to the GLA event, I believe that data supports that this is a systemic issue because all participants felt as if they were not prepared to adequately provide instruction unassisted in the inclusive classroom. While this may occur due to lack of research of teacher identity and its relatedness to student achievement, students with disabilities are negatively impacted when analyzing scores.

Furthermore, participants were aware of their perspective of students in the inclusive classroom not being as motivated to achieve as those who are in general education, so that caused them to not have the same level of rigor for this demographic. That alone relates to potential invisible discrimination towards this population, but there has not been much exploration of how to address this notion with reflection and strategies to adjust this outlook on an individual basis. Having professional development opportunities to confront potential discriminations towards special education students will enable general educators to acknowledge biases and improve the student-teacher relationships in the inclusive setting.

Bowlby & Ainsworth (1964) joined together and created the “Attachment Theory”, exploring the tie that a child has to their mother, and its disruption due to separation, deprivation, and bereavement. In their research, they state that teachers can be viewed as “attachment figures” who provide a safe environment and promote more freedom by developing positive relationships with students. The GLA data did not explore this aspect due to it primarily focusing on participants and their perspectives of their own identity as an educator. While research has proven the correlation between positive student-teacher relationships and higher academic achievement, this study aimed to reveal how teacher identity affects student achievement currently. Further exploration could be the relatedness between healthy teacher identity and whether that causes greater attachment in the student-teacher relationship.

Summary

The chapter reported the findings of the study including an exploration of researcher positionality and the participant findings of the GLA experience. The findings

of the study participants were reported by GLA prompt and listed in table form with appropriate participant comments included. The GLA was a useful method to collect data for this study due to the experience producing rich, authentic responses to each prompt. Participant feedback on this data collection method found it allowed them to feel confident to speak freely without judgement due to peers identifying with their personal views. While this method cannot guarantee confidentiality because all participants had access to all comments while in the GLA, the participants felt a sense of collective ownership and confidence in all group members sharing their opinions and commenting on those opinions of others. Participants also shared how they felt a personal sense of sadness because of feelings of failure due to lack of proper training. They shared a sincere desire to see academic growth in all their students in their classes but were not clear on how to grow in this area. As the group went from phase to phase, there was cooperation and unity in identifying theme generation for each prompt, which allowed the GLA to be both productive and efficient.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher identity, its influence on teacher-student relationships, and how it impacts students in special education, both academically and behaviorally by investigating these research questions:

RQ 1: What is the general education teacher perspective of the influence of teacher identity on teacher-student relationships in co-teaching special education settings?

RQ 2: What is the general education teacher perspective of the influence of teacher identity on student achievement in special education settings?

RQ 3: What is the teacher perspective of the influence of the relationship between teacher identity and student achievement of children who receive special education services in co-teaching settings?

Having explored the existing literature and finding little evidence supporting the role of teacher identity and its relation to the importance of relationships with students, I sought to seek out factors that may have contributed to or limited the development of teacher-student relationships between general education teachers and their students.

Research Question 1

RQ 1: What is the general education teacher perspective of the influence of teacher identity on teacher-student relationships in co-teaching special education settings?

This first question was designed to reveal the general educators view of how teacher identity may influence teacher-student relationships in their co-teaching settings. Seifert (2019) explored how expert teachers understand what they teach and understand the needs of the students they are teaching. This statement is important when considering this research question because the general educator must have confidence in who they are (teacher identity) to create a climate for learning as well as their personal beliefs in the student ability to learn (Hattie, 2012). Bullough (1997, p.21) conveys that teacher identity must begin with the exploration of the teacher self, meaning that teacher education programs must include the concept of identity (Seifert, 2009). Studies have shown that teachers are more likely to understand the decisions they make and the way they think through those decisions as they become more self-aware (Seifert, 2009). These findings by Seifert were evident and reinforced when evaluating the GLA event for this study with ten general education content teachers and their perspectives on teacher identity in the inclusive setting.

The first prompt highlighted challenges teachers face in developing their identity as a general education teacher with special needs students in their classrooms. While co-teaching with a special education teacher was valued by all participants, most responded they do not have enough planning time with their co-teachers to create effective lessons that include rich and differentiated learning for their students who receive services. Additionally, class size, lack of resources, and administrative support were additional challenges that were most often shared by the participants. The discussion surrounding this sentiment reinforced that the general educator desires to have the opportunity to

provide quality instruction to their students and they are not always able to do that at full capacity because of their lack of expertise.

The lack of experience in preparing to instruct special education for these content teachers was rarely addressed in their careers because of the focus on instruction delivery mandated by school districts. Because of this, participants have depended on the co-teacher to assist the students they are assigned to for that inclusive class, which does not promote the development of their personal identities. This practice does little to support the development of teacher identity as a teacher of special needs students and therefore, does little to support the development of positive and productive relationships with their special needs students. The idea of teacher identity, especially as it relates to regular education teachers with inclusive classroom settings, has been absent from teacher preparatory programs. The participants in this study realized and verbalized that they had not considered this question of teacher identity and support for students before, so this caused them to reflect on their own pedagogy.

When the ten participants discussed the shortage of planning time overall, they shared that they preferred to have common planning opportunities with their co-teachers. Attendees unanimously agreed that they knew that having this for their lessons would increase student performance academically in the inclusive setting and it would have a more positive impact on student behavior, as well. Teachers acknowledged that their lessons would not always reach all students in their classes and their observation was confirmed when they reviewed data scores for their assessments with their peers.

Participants also shared that while they were aware of the need for proper documentation for students who receive services, there should be a process in place to

document differentiation of materials and instructional strategies. They admitted to struggling with the issue of documentation to the point of frustration. This issue could be addressed by having intentionally scheduled co-planning time with their co-teaching partners to support the general education teacher in the inclusive setting, ultimately benefiting student progress and success.

Further, several teachers stated that they knew that all lessons did not have differentiation to the depth needed for the multiple learning levels in their classrooms. One expressed that the occurrences of little differentiation was due to not being properly trained on how to implement strategies in lesson planning outside of a recent professional development that she attended. Again, intentionally scheduled co-planning with their co-teaching partners could better support the needs of the general education teachers both in terms of better teaching strategies and more intentional differentiation of instruction that would benefit all students in the classroom and not just the special education students. Theorist Farnsworth (2010) recognized that teachers working in a collaborative setting encourages teacher identity exploration and engagement. This aspect supports the idea that participants shared regarding having regularly scheduled planning meetings with their co-teachers. It can be surmised that changes in how schools allow for co-planning to support co-teaching would help teachers gain greater teacher identify as general education teachers of special needs students in their inclusive classroom settings, ultimately benefiting their students academically and behaviorally.

The next challenge the group stated as important to consider was class size for their inclusive settings. Teachers mentioned class size eight times during the GLA, which showed that class size was a challenge for most participants. These general education

content teachers have classes of between 26-29 students except for one, who teaches at an alternative school with class sizes no greater than 15 students. The participants stated that they are more successful when they have the assistance of their co-teachers because it allows them to focus on small group and individual instruction, which has a result of increased student achievement in their inclusive classes and a decrease in student behaviors that limit learning. Participants shared that most co-teachers are often only in Language Arts and Math classes. One content teacher participating in the study teaches Social Studies and does not currently have a co-teacher and indicated she struggles to balance instruction and behaviors with more than 25 students in her room at any given time. While she has between three and five years of teaching experience, she was able to articulate that class size is a barrier to her students being high-achieving special education students on her own.

Delivering daily rigorous instruction in a classroom of more than 25 students did not offset the challenges that a class size of greater than 25 in an inclusive setting. Seifert (2010) speaks to this when you consider interactions for large class sizes. Seifert (2010) explains that the teacher chooses the communication style appropriate for each setting. Verbal, non-verbal, selective, intentional, and unintentional interactions differ based on the individual context of the people involved (Seifert, 2010). This means that classroom teachers who may not have a co-teacher for their inclusive settings may alter their delivery of instruction to manage behavior in ways that they then treat students differently, whether positively or negatively. Managing a class of 25 or greater while attempting to deliver high quality instruction is difficult for master teachers and can be

especially challenging for teachers early in their career while not having the experience or expertise to better address the challenges that large class sizes present.

The final factor on the first prompt was revealed to be an issue of resources, or a lack of support. This theme applied to both teacher support in implementing differentiation during lesson planning and technological resources used during instruction. One participant stated that it was hard to properly provide instruction to increase achievement in the inclusive setting when they have never been trained to do so. Beauchamp & Thomas (2009) said that teacher identity is shaped by interacting with others in a professional manner. This statement suggests that the participant may not be confident in their ability to successfully provide the highest level of instruction in the inclusive setting, which also affects their identity development. The group continues to describe the necessity for technological support in their classrooms. The example given was not having the proper training to provide instruction for their students on digital programs available to them that would support individual learning for differentiation. While resources are available to these teachers, there has not been any designated training or information provided to them regarding which sites could be used during instruction outside of content-based products that are mandated by special education directors at the district level to support differentiation and student achievement. The participants, again all general education professionals, said that having information on available resources would positively impact the development of teacher identity and would result in increased student performance because they would develop confidence in themselves to provide quality instruction. That is a powerful statement as it relates to their increased sense of self and the ability to better serve their students.

While the initial question was designed to solicit information about teachers, their identity, and their ability to nurture relationships with their students, their responses indicated they face significant challenges. It was understood that they wanted to do what was best for their students, but the challenges seemed to prevent their success in an inclusive classroom. They were concerned about common planning time with their special education trained colleagues, resources available to them to develop their skills as teachers of special needs students, and the class sizes they face in their inclusive classroom setting. They affirmed these challenges often prevented them from developing the positive and productive relationships with their students that, as teachers, they know is important to their academic and behavioral success.

Research Question 2

RQ 2: What is the general education teacher perspective of the influence of teacher identity on student achievement in special education settings?

This question aimed to explore how educators believe teacher identity influences student achievement in the inclusive classroom. The second prompt given during the GLA event spoke to this research question as it asked attendees their personal feelings on their instructional methods and strategies in their classes for students who receive services after they review student performance and behavior data with their peers. The participants shared differing views, but there were several who had a negative reaction regarding their instruction when analyzing scores. One shared that they felt ineffective after providing the best instruction they could design because the student performance data did not necessarily reflect learning. They then shared that they depend on their co-teacher to help them plan a lesson to reteach standards that were not mastered from their

initial instructional delivery. Another shared that they sadly expect less from their inclusive classes, which could mean that they do not believe that they can successfully provide the same rigor in a differentiated fashion. They also may never have had opportunities to learn how to have high expectations in those settings. Another participant had a similar view and stated that their data shows that they still provide instruction in a manner that is too fast or in a manner too abstract in those classes and their data shows that the lessons are not reaching all the students who receive services. This prompt had an overwhelmingly unified reaction from attendees of how they struggle emotionally and how they perceive that their instruction affects their students.

There were some participants who had differing responses when answering the prompt. One teacher stated that they are the instructor, so they are responsible for all their students' learning. This person has been in education for more than ten years and would be considered a veteran teacher. This participant spent a great deal of their career in low-performing schools who receive support from the district and state to boost their academic achievement and teacher capacity. Hearing the ownership of their instructional work demonstrated that there has been intentional reflection on how to effectively provide instruction because they said that the responsibility solely falls on them.

Another participant said that they feel a great sense of responsibility for how their instruction falls on all students in their classes. They continued by saying that they find common trends of learning gaps between groups of students who receive services and those who do not. This teacher also spent much of their career in low-performing schools and, like the previously mentioned participant, has had similar experiences that have trained them to know how to properly analyze data and reteach standards confidently. But

their confidence in their analytical ability highlighted their frustration at the learning gap that continues for their students. Both examples of responses are proven from what Wenger's (1998) position that says that identity and practice are closely linked together with the personal and professional self. Because both educators have had more diverse professional experiences, those experiences allowed them to better develop their sense of teacher identity and then have more positive academic and behavior outcomes in their classes. Regardless of the inclusion of special needs students in their regular education classrooms, the participants understood and saw the connection between teacher identity and student performance. Their identity as a regular education teacher was more firmly established than their identity as an effective regular education teacher in an inclusive classroom setting.

Research Question 3

RQ 3: What is the teacher perspective of the influence of the relationship between teacher identity and student achievement of children who receive special education services in co-teaching settings?

The final research question focused on the educator's point of view of how much teacher identity affects student achievement in the inclusive environment. Prompt three of the GLA event aimed to address this notion. The question asked participants whether they felt they had enough training to provide effective instruction for students who receive services. Interestingly, Rosenzweig's (2009) study that surveyed general educators to investigate if they were prepared to instruct students who received services found that the current push in education is to have general educators fully involved in the IEP development process. Rosenzweig (2009) discusses that although it is now state and

federal law that general education teachers are a crucial part in planning for IEP services, many educators continue to feel that they are not adequately prepared to deal with IEP matters. This relates to teacher identity regarding the methods that educators use during instruction. Researchers have revealed that teachers' methods of delivering instruction are good predictors of student achievement (Casado, 2000; Hosal-Akman & Sigma-Mugan, 2010; Martínez-Clares & González-Morga, 2018).

Participants for this study unanimously agreed that they have not received adequate training in their careers. All ten teachers shared that they have not had enough opportunities to be exposed to professional development or college preparation courses that specifically focused on how to craft their lessons in a way to support academic growth for their classes that include students' special education students. Participant 7 stated they have not received any in-depth training that would cause them to be confident in their instruction and modifications without a co-teacher's assistance. Participant 2 added that they hold multiple degrees, yet they continue to feel that training in how to provide instruction in the inclusive classroom is lacking for general educators. IDEA amendments suggest that general educators must develop knowledge necessary to provide instruction for the increasing number of students being identified for services in their classrooms (Dingle, Falvey, Givner & Haager, 2017). Yasutake and Learner (1996) conducted a study including general educators regarding their perceptions and attitudes on inclusive practices and concluded that general educators did not retain the practical training that makes inclusion successful academically. If this trend continues for the general educators, there will most likely not be much growth regarding personal reflection and development of identity due to lack of exposure to proper methods on how

operate in content delivery in the inclusive setting. This study reinforces the previous study findings cited earlier that teacher feel unprepared to face the challenges of inclusive classrooms.

This entire experience revealed the necessity for general educators to have space to address deficits in their careers when relating to the inclusive setting. All participants acknowledged that this is an area of growth to empower them as teachers and will increase engagement and achievement. School districts lack the proper tools to provide support to content teachers and this GLA affirms that this is a universal problem that deserves attention. Creating more opportunities for professional development, training, and courses for incoming educators could help minimize the lack of confidence in teacher identity regarding providing instruction in the inclusive setting.

Implications for Future Research

Limitations for this study could be the fact that this was a small sample size for a study of this importance. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, GLA's have the potential to be broad and difficult for the practitioner to manage if they are not familiar with the methodological steps required (Vaughn & Lohmueller, 2014). After completing the GLA, this was proven to be true in collecting my data for this study. Only 10 of 28 invitations were accepted it proved difficult to analyze some responses thoroughly because there were so few provided. Had there been more participants, there may have been more varied answers given for each of the prompts, allowing for more of a range of current issues facing teachers in classrooms today. This may have also revealed additional aspects of their work related to teacher identity because of a greater range of years of experiences. Additional participants may be broadened the responses and

demonstrated a stronger sense of self given a greater range of experiences and time in the field. While I was able to conduct this research with a limited number of participants in an online environment, it may be interesting to allow participants an open forum for a similar GLA event during professional development opportunities to better inform future training and practice.

The GLA for this study did reveal an added area that could be explored when collecting data related to teacher identity and student achievement. This participant group was populated with nine of 10 current teachers in regular education public schools, but there could be a more of a focused study for teachers who instruct in alternative placement schools could benefit the field. These alternative placement schools have a unique staff due, in part, to the demographic of the school being primarily students with behavior issues or who are challenged by being in a regular education setting. Also, many of these students are identified as needing special education services.

Districts providing professional development to these specialized staff environments could support teacher retention and increased student performance because teachers would receive resources to support their pedagogy and better equip them with the strategies needed to experience greater outcomes in the classroom. Future researchers could potentially create a study that would follow a school for a set period and evaluate the effects of teachers receiving regular professional development opportunities focused on reflection and methods to provide effective instructions. Researcher could analyze influence by collecting data that evaluates scores on assessments and state testing.

Recommendations for the Field

This study brought to light implications that, if employed, could have a positive influence on student success in academics and behavior. While challenges will always exist where teaching and learning takes place, being intentional in some critical areas, including teacher identity and its influence on academic achievement in the inclusive setting, could positively impact student outcomes and teacher identity.

First, to better support general education teachers involved in inclusive classroom settings, schools and districts should consider including the mentorship of general educators by pairing them with experienced special education mentors. All attendees agree that there has not been much exposure to how to properly provide instruction in the inclusive setting, so a mentor would be a valuable resource as they develop their teacher identity. Fletcher & Strong (2009) state that mentoring positively influences teacher instructional practices. Providing general educators the opportunity to be mentored by those experienced in the field could have multiple benefits not just benefitting the teacher in the development of their skills, dispositions, and identity, but the adjacent benefits for all students in the classroom. Kardos & Johnson (2010) discovered, when they conducted a study across multiple districts and states, that there is a critical need for the identification of aspects of mentoring that lead to better teacher practice and positive student outcomes.

Green (2006) and MacPherson (2010) found that experienced and novice general education teachers had a positive view of mentorship experience. A mentor who specializes in mentoring content teachers on strategies on how to provide instruction in the inclusive setting could aid them with building relationships, increase classroom

management, and improve their educational practices (Sowell, 2017). School districts nationwide could support teacher identity surrounding general education and the inclusive setting by creating programs that allow mentors to be available for training and relationship development. Researchers have described mentoring as “a relationship and a process” (Kwan & Lopez, 2005, p.276).

Second, deliberate and intentional common planning or co-planning time with their co-teachers must be in place to both support the general education teacher working in an inclusive teaching setting.

Third, better preparation and training should be afforded to all teachers from their pre-service university experiences through their professional development. The training should be ongoing throughout the career of the general education teacher because their classrooms will always be populated with students who learn differently. Co-teaching and co-planning should be the norm for districts and schools that provide inclusive setting for students with special needs.

Fourth, districts and schools must revisit class size for inclusive classrooms. This is especially important if co-teaching is not a widely used practice in the district or school. While the field of research varies widely on class size effect, we cannot deny the lived experiences of the general education teachers who struggle to meet the individual needs of 25 or more widely diverse learners who populate their classrooms daily.

Finally, teachers need to time to learn, talk, and grow together. Allowing teachers an opportunity to share practices, frustrations, challenges, and success will go far to help address issues common in inclusive classroom settings. Special education teachers may be able to provide real time support during these sharing sessions. These sessions would

also go a long way to address the isolated feelings many general education teachers feel when forced to work alone without support from a co-teacher or from school-level and/or district personnel.

By working to address these challenges and honor the needs of the general education teachers, we may better be able to help them grow in their identity not only as highly qualified teachers, but teachers highly confident to meet the needs of their students—all of their students—regardless of the diversity of their learning needs. The participants in this study reinforced the idea that they understand the importance of positive relationships with their students and that those positive relationships tended to promote positive student performance, but the daily challenges they face prevent them from fully being the educator they want to be for all students.

Significance of the Work

This study is important to me because of my education journey and the relationships I have witnessed in my career. Many times, as one who has been the resource teacher and co-teacher in classes, general educators typically leave the differentiation for learning of the students with special needs solely up to me. Students who receive services are not always given the same attention as their peers in part because of their identification but also because general education teachers simply are not prepared to support differentiated learning. As I developed my topic, I chose to not only focused on the teacher-student relationships that are often discussed, but I wanted to place my focus on how the teacher believes in their ability to provide rigorous, quality instruction to all the students in their classrooms. I discovered that the issues these general education teachers face may not be a case of the general educator not wanting to

teach students who receive special services, but it could be a deeper issue that they were never given the tools to teach them in ways that make a difference. The disconnect could be that they were never challenged to grow in that setting due to the lack of conversations with peers and supervisors of their training and application of strategies not being recognized or addressed in a safe, productive way.

The burden to address these issues should not be shouldered by the schools and districts alone. The findings of this study should open a door for colleges and school districts nationally to invest time and resources in equipping future and current educators with the exposure of necessary steps that are needed to be an effective teacher and truly meeting the needs of all. School districts and universities need to work together in partnership to identify areas of growth for pre-service teachers so that they are better equipped and trained to take on the demands of an inclusive classroom because that is and will continue to be a reality for teachers now and in the future. As these partnerships develop and early career teachers are better prepared for a diverse classroom in terms of learning, there could be improved relationships between teachers and students, as well as between the general and special education teachers. Better aligned academic expectations and mutual respect between and among all parties would create a more positive and productive learning environment for students and adults. Time spent exploring teacher identity and its influence on academic achievement in the inclusive setting will produce educators who are empowered to be a more informed example to their students of belief and success in school setting and beyond. Our students deserve our best efforts.

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APPENDIX A: QUALIFYING SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. How many years have you taught in the classroom?
2. Are you a general education teacher of content?
3. Do you service students who receive special education services?
4. Have you received training from the Ohio Valley Education Cooperative (OVEC) to support your work with special education students?

APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN SURVEY VIA EMAIL

TEACHER IDENTITY MATTERS: THE INFLUENCE OF IDENTITY ON STUDENT/TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT PERFORMANCE

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Jamil Anderson, and I am inviting you to participate in a brief survey discussing teacher perception on teacher identity and its influence on student achievement in the co-teaching setting. The results of this survey will aid me in using this study to show school districts the need for development in teacher identity for general educators who instruct students who receive services.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and all responses will be kept confidential. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses to any reports of these data. Your information will be assigned a code number that is unique to this study. The list connecting your name to this number will be kept in a locked file in my office in a school building and only the research and other researchers will be able to see the survey results. No one at University of Louisville will be able to see your survey or even know whether you participated in this study. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list linking participant's names to study numbers will be destroyed. Study findings will be presented only in summary form and your name would not be used in any report. While the investigator(s) will keep your information confidential, there are some risks of data breaches when sending information over the internet that are beyond the control of the investigator(s).

If you have questions about the study, you can ask me now or anytime during the study. You can also call me at (502) 724-8169 or e-mail me at <mailto:jamil.anderson@jefferson.kyschools.us>. You may also contact Dr. Debbie Powers by phone at (502) 852-6428 or email debbie.powers@louisville.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at University of Louisville (502)852-5188 or by email: hspofc@louisville.edu. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

By completing this survey, you are consenting to participate in this study.

*Please print or save a copy of this form for your records. *

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM.

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY: TEACHER IDENTITY MATTERS: THE INFLUENCE OF IDENTITY ON STUDENT/TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Introduction and Background Information

You are invited to take part in a research study about teacher identity and its influence on student achievement in the co-teaching setting. The study is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Deborah Powers at the University of Louisville.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to get feedback on how general educators feel about teacher identity and how special education students perform academically in co-teaching settings.

What will happen if I take part in the study?

Your participation in the study will involve responding to a brief qualifying electronic survey and, should you qualify, participate in a virtual Group Level Assessment (focus group) setting of between 8 and 20 participants to respond to interview questions. Your participation in this study will not exceed 120 minutes total.

What are the possible risks or discomforts from being in this research study?

There are no known risks by taking part in this study, but there may be some discomfort when reflecting on personal teacher identity. Additionally, there may be unintended breaches of confidentiality as there is no guarantee that information shared in a focus group or Group Level Assessment will be kept confidential by the participants.

What are the benefits of taking part in the study?

You may or may not benefit personally by participating in this study. The information collected may not benefit you directly; however, the information may be helpful to others.

The possible benefits of this study include informing school districts of the need to offer more professional development to educators surrounding teacher identity.

Will I be paid?

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

How will my information be protected?

All data collected will be kept private and secure on a password protected computer and a password protected electronic file. A backup copy of materials will be kept on CardBox, a University of Louisville secure electronic storage system.

Individuals from the Department of Educational Leadership and Organizational Development, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPPO), the University of Louisville, and other regulatory agencies may inspect these study records. In all other respects, however, the data will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Should the data be published, your identity will not be disclosed.

Will my information be used for future research?

Your data will not be stored or shared for future research.

Can I stop participating in the study at any time?

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study, you may change your mind and stop taking part at any time. You will not be penalized or lose any benefits for which you qualify.

Who can I contact for questions, concerns and complaints?

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Jamil Anderson at jamil.anderson@louisville.edu or Dr. Debbie Powers at 502-852-6428 or by email and debbie.powers@louisville.edu.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff and you do not wish to give your name, you may call this 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.

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).

Acknowledgment

This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. By answering survey questions and interviewing, you agree to take part in this study.

You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by consenting to this study. You can save this consent form for your records.

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Organizational Skills
Curriculum Planning
Student Conflict Resolution
Solution-Driven
Student Counseling &
Support

EXPERIENCE: Building Staff

Teacher-Leader- Presenting Research-Backed Programs to

Education

Teacher-Leader- Professional Development for Staff for Special

School-Based Decision-Making Committee
Team Leader