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A CASE STUDY: THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, AND CO-PLANNING ON TEACHER
PERCEPTIONS OF CO-TEACHING

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B.S., Bellarmine University, 2014
M.Ed., University of Mary Hardin Baylor, 2018

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

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

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April 16, 2024

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the remarkable individuals who have played pivotal roles in shaping my journey and supporting me every step of the way.

To my mother, Dr. Michele Zimmerman whose consistent dedication to education and dedicated pursuit of knowledge have been a guiding light in my life and educational journey. Your resilience, strength, and the example you've set as a woman and a mother with a PhD inspire me daily. Thank you for instilling in me the value of education and the importance of determination.

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And finally, to my dissertation chair, Dr. Powers, whose expertise, guidance, and unwavering support have been instrumental in bringing this dissertation to fruition. Thank you for your invaluable feedback, patience, and dedication to helping me succeed!

ABSTRACT

A CASE STUDY: THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, AND CO-PLANNING ON TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF CO-TEACHING

Heidi Zimmerman

April 16, 2024

This dissertation presents a case study methodology investigating the influence of professional development, administrator support, and co-planning on teacher perceptions of co-teaching. My interest in co-teaching increased as a former special education teacher after implementing co-teaching strategies in my own practice. As defined by the Kentucky Administrative Regulations, Collaboration means, a teacher of exceptional children works with children with disabilities in the regular classroom to provide specially designed instruction and related services (707 KAR 1:350, Section 2). Oftentimes, Collaboration and Co-Teaching may be used interchangeably. For the purpose of this study the term Co-Teaching will be used throughout.

The goal of providing children with disabilities special education services in the most appropriate setting is to provide a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) that meets their identified needs. There are no defining guidelines of what is best for each student, hence the creation of an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP outlines special education services that will be provided to the child, and how they will be implemented. For students with disabilities a co-teaching environment may be a common recommendation from the ARC. Some committee members may have the

predisposition to prefer co-teaching or be biased towards co-teaching. Teacher perceptions of co-teaching may subsequently impact this decision-making process.

Given IDEA's policy, this leads to an increasing number of students with disabilities being educated in the least restrictive environment. The perceptions of teachers implementing co-teaching strategies in their classrooms and its effectiveness may vary depending on their personal experience and the limited amount of research available that they have been exposed to. This research study addresses the problem of the need to determine teacher perceptions of co-teaching, allowing the field to improve successful co-teaching implementation and outcomes for students with disabilities.

The study utilized a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews to collect data from co-teachers in the Ohio Valley Education Cooperative region. The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which these three factors influence co-teachers perceptions of co-teaching and to identify strategies for improving co-teaching practices. The study aims to provide insight into the importance of these factors in promoting successful co-teaching practices and offer recommendations for improving co-teaching initiatives in schools. With a clearer understanding of teacher perceptions of co-teaching strategies investigated, co-teachers, building administrators, and district administrators will have the knowledge needed to determine where biases may be relevant, additional professional development is needed, and address gaps in educators' knowledge of co-teaching to better serve the needs of students with disabilities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“This student needs to be placed in a special class. They are too far behind and cannot be successful in a regular education classroom (Anonymous Teacher, 2022).” As a former special education teacher, I have heard this statement from parents, administrators, and teachers when discussing a student’s placement. We cannot educate our children in the most convenient way for teachers or parents, we must educate them in the way most beneficial for them, the students. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) outlines provisions that children with disabilities should be educated in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible (IDEA, 2021).

IDEA states that children with disabilities should be educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent possible. Children with disabilities should only be removed from a less restrictive environment when the extent and severity of their disabilities prohibit an appropriate education in the less restrictive general education setting (IDEA, 2021). This study has further explored the influence of professional development, administrator support, and co-planning time on the teacher perceptions of co-teaching.

The Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) must discuss the least restrictive environment (LRE) and as an ARC must come to a consensus regarding special education services and the location of those services.. This Admission and Release Committee, or ARC as typically called, is a school-based team that collaboratively makes

decisions for special education and related services for eligible students. The ARC also decides how those services will be provided. Decisions regarding evaluation, eligibility determination, placement, and special education services for an individual child are made by a team rather than by a single person (Kentucky Parent Guide for special education, 2021). Members of an ARC committee discuss options for determining the best placement for children with disabilities to most effectively meet their needs academically and social-emotionally. This study aims to better understand both special education and general education teacher perspectives of co-teaching.

Statement of the Problem

My interest in co-teaching increased as a former special education teacher after implementing co-teaching strategies in my own practice. Co-teaching is defined as a service delivery in which the student is served in the regular classroom and a special education teacher and regular education teacher collaborate to implement the child's IEP to provide instruction and access to the general education curriculum (Kentucky Parent Guide for special education, 2021). However, I encountered complications around implementing meaningful co-teaching strategies effectively because of limited shared planning time with my co-teaching counterparts, lack of ongoing professional development, and a lack of administrative support for this work. IDEA requires that students with a disability be educated in the general education classroom with their non-disabled peers to the fullest extent possible. However, the educators providing co-teaching strategies may not believe they are well equipped with the necessary training and resources to co-teach effectively, as I realized through my own experiences.

The phrase “to the most extent possible” may be subjective and could be interpreted differently. Historically, circuit court cases involving the least restrictive environment (LRE) have interpreted the LRE in various ways and with different court decision outcomes (Underwood, 2018). IDEA is the framework for federal policy decision-making regarding children with disabilities (Aldersley, 2002). When Congress decided to include the provisions of LRE as a component of IDEA, some saw it as a political act after opinions around special education grew increasingly intense in the 60s and 70s. As a result, the role of those in the judicial system became even more pertinent when interpreting the LRE clause. However, the intent was to no longer exclude children with disabilities from the same opportunities and experiences as non-disabled peers (Aldersley, 2002). The goal of providing children with disabilities special education services in the most appropriate setting is to provide a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) that meets their identified needs.

There are no defining guidelines of what is best for each student, hence the creation of an Individual Education Plan (IEP). An IEP is a plan written by the ARC which includes invitations to the parents to join the ARC team. The IEP outlines special education services that will be provided to the child, and how they will be implemented. It will include all programs and services needed to help the child be involved and make progress in the general curriculum (Kentucky Parent Guide for Special Education, 2021). Each decision is made on an individual basis of student needs. A committee, including regular education teachers and special education teachers, discusses student present levels of achievement that include areas of strength, areas of deficit, and performance data to attempt to make the best education decisions for each child on a case-by-case basis. For

many students, a co-teaching environment is a common recommendation from the ARC. Some committee members may have a predisposition that prefers co-teaching in the general education setting or vice versa. Teacher perceptions of co-teaching may subsequently impact this decision-making process.

The number of students identified as having a disability that impacts their learning increases yearly on a national level (Brinkman & Twiford, 2012). Given IDEA's policy, this leads to an increasing number of students with disabilities being educated in the least restrictive environment. The perceptions of teachers implementing co-teaching strategies in their classrooms and its effectiveness may vary depending on their personal experience and the limited amount of research available that they have been exposed to. However, more available research on co-teaching strategies, such as the six co-teaching models is becoming more available to educators (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). This research study addresses the problem of the need to determine teacher perceptions of co-teaching allowing the field to improve successful co-teaching implementation and outcomes for students with disabilities.

Conceptual Framework: Theoretical Framework and Role Theory

Role Theory is the theoretical framework that guided this study. Role theory lays the foundation for studying and discussing social issues (Biddle, 1986). Primarily addressed by role theory is the perception that human beings behave in unique and predictable ways depending on their social identities and current social situation (Biddle, 1986). Biddle (1986) states that role theory may concern itself with a triad of concepts: patterned and characteristic social behaviors, parts or identities that social participants assume, and scripts or expectations for behavior understood by all. For this study, the

term role represents behavior, referring to a set of normative expectations associated with a position within an organization.

Role Theory encompasses specific frameworks within the overarching framework. One of those is Organizational Role Theory. Organizational Role Theory (OTR) is said to have originated within the work of Kahn (1964). OTR has been useful in this study because of the focus on the interests in the roles of formal organizations. Normative expectations within an organization are generated and may vary depending on the organization, official demands of each organization, and pressures of informal groups. The phenomenon of role transition within Organizational Role Theory connects to a general education teacher transitioning to upholding the roles and responsibilities of a co-teacher. Co-teaching teams expect that they are to collaborate to deliver instructional content while meeting the needs of a group of diverse learners (Pratt, 2014).

Cognitive Role Theory is another branch of Role Theory that emphasizes the relationships between role expectations and an individual's behavior (Biddle, 1986). Cognitive Role Theory suggests a direct impact and correlation between teacher expectations of student classroom behavior and achievement (Biddle, 1986). As discussed by Biddle (1986), some roles may reflect a cognitive process in combination with the normative expectations of a particular role. This suggests that an individual's thoughts about their role integrate with role theory, creating Cognitive Role Theory. Exploring teacher perceptions of co-teaching and being a co-teacher with diverse student ability levels is supported through a Cognitive Role Theory lens.

Critical Disability Theory

Critical disability theory refers to a diverse set of theoretical approaches. This work may also be referred to as “Critical Disability Studies” or CDS (Schalk, 2017). The goal of critical disability theory is to analyze disability as a cultural, historical, relative, social, and political occurrence. Critical disability theory involves the study of not bodily or mental limitations and impairments but the social norms that define specific attributes of being viewed as disabled and the social conditions that perpetuate stigmatized attributes that have been stigmatized in minority groups (Schalk, 2017). The theory of disability explores the identities of minorities and the belief that if their identities are thought disabled, consequently, there will be little hope for the political and social equality of minorities with these identities or disabled people (Siebers, 2021).

Through the framework of Role Theory and Critical Disability Theory this study has focused on the education of children with disabilities in two different learning environments. The first of the two learning environments is the co-teaching setting. Students with special education needs requiring supplemental aids and services and modifications are sometimes placed in general education classrooms. The students are often several grade levels below their classmates in reading and are in the class with little or no support (Battagila & Brooks, 2019).

Advantages of co-teaching are that some models allow groups of students to be broken up better to differentiate instruction into instructional groups with lower student-to-teacher ratios. Disadvantages are that implementation requires planning to maintain organization and increased classroom structure (Jackson, Willis, Giles, Lastrapes,

Mooney, 2017). Often, current educators have difficulty finding time to collaborate with the goal of effective co-planning.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study investigates teacher perceptions of co-teaching and the factors that may influence their perceptions of co-teaching at the elementary school level in grades kindergarten through five that lead to student success. Objectives of the purpose of this study are to determine successful practices, structures, preparation, and support systems that contribute to positive perceptions of successful co-teaching, including strategies practices with the intent of utilizing the findings to positively impact co-teaching at the elementary school level.

Context of the Study

The research has been conducted within the region of Kentucky supported by the Ohio Valley Education Cooperative (OVEC). OVEC serves 15 school districts within north central Kentucky and provides an avenue to support and facilitate regional planning, educational planning, and professional development to occur on an ongoing basis (OVEC, 2023). Although OVEC serves fifteen school districts in grades preschool through twelve, this study focused on elementary school teachers, general education and special education teachers within the OVEC region teaching in grades kindergarten through five. Within OVEC is an Exceptional Children Services (ECS) department. The OVEC ECS department aims to provide leadership and provide specialized training and supports in collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and surrounding school districts (OVEC, 2023). One of the particular services provided to the

school districts supported by OVEC is training, coaching, and support on Co-Teaching strategies.

To provide an overview of the fifteen school districts within OVEC during the 2021-2022 school year each district ranged from having 10.90% students with an Individual Education Program (IEP) at Anchorage Independent School District to 17.50% of students having an IEP at Spencer County School District. The statewide average for the 2021-2022 school year was 16.00%. This study focused on teachers within the OVEC region and their perceptions of co-teaching specifically in the areas of professional development, administrator support, and co-planning. Students with disabilities that are provided special education services in the general education classroom through co-teaching are participating in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Indicator 5A from KDE provides data on the percentage of students with an IEP serviced in the regular education classroom setting for 80% or more of their day. Below is a chart representing the percentage of students with an IEP in each of the 15 school districts within OVEC.

Table 1

Table 1 provides data from the 2021-2022 school year and the OVEC Region School Districts individual percentage of the total population of students with an IEP educated in the general education classroom setting for 80% or more of the school day during the 2021-2022 school year.

School District	More than >=80% in gen ed
Anchorage Independent Schools	89.20%
Bullitt County Schools	70.50%

Carroll County Schools	81.80%
Eminence Independent Schools	88.30%
Franklin County Schools	83.20%
Gallatin County Schools	85.60%
Grant County Schools	83.30%
Henry County Schools	84.30%
Oldham County Schools	77.80%
Owen County Schools	92.30%
Shelby County Schools	83.20%
Spencer County Schools	93.00%
Trimble County Schools	87.00%

Note: The percentages represent the percentage of total. District list by Indicator 5A: Inside the regular class 80% or more of the day.

Retrieved from:

<https://kcewsreports.ky.gov/t/KCEWS/views/SpecialEducationIndicatorDashboardV2/1/Districts?%3Aembed=y&%3Aiid=1&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=>

Table 1 Summary:

The state target has not been set for the 2021-2022 school year but individual districts within OVEC can be compared to the 2020-2021 school year state target of 75% of students educated within the regular education classroom for 80% or more of the school day. When compared to the 2020-20201 state target, all but one school district met the state target.

This case study identifies factors contributing to the success of an elementary school co-teaching models in grades kindergarten through five from the perceptions of

general education and special education teachers within the OVEC region. As a result, other schools within the region, surrounding education cooperatives in the state of Kentucky, and universities will be able to employ the knowledge gathered to enhance teacher preparation programs, replicate and implement successful strategies, and create professional development targeted to address areas of deficit.

Research Questions

There are four research questions that have guided this study. The first and second question focused on the perceptions of general education teachers and special education teachers within the OVEC region. The third question focused on what structures are currently in place within the school districts supported by OVEC that both general education and special education teachers believe have a contribution towards the success of co-teaching. The fourth and final question delved into the current perceptions of co-teachers and additional support or structures that may need to be in place to contribute to the success of co-teaching.

RQ 1: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of general education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

RQ 2: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of special education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

RQ 3: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what structures and supports currently in place do those involved in co-teaching believe contribute to the success of the co-teaching model?

RQ 4: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what additional supports systems are needed for successful co-teaching in a fully inclusive setting?

Procedures

A case study is best defined as an intensive study of a single unit to better understand a more extensive set of units (Gerring, 2004). A case study does not require any particular type of evidence (Yin, 1981). Case studies may be completed by using either qualitative or quantitative evidence. The research for this study will be conducted and analyzed through semi-structured interviews. A case study method has provided data to analyze from a combination of semi-structured interviews with current regular education teachers and current special education teachers. This particular study has been conducted as a case study because occurred within the school districts part of the OVEC region in grades kindergarten through five. Teachers employed at school districts within OVEC have been offered and/or provided professional development in the area of co-teaching strategies. For this study, I have conducted interviews with both general education and special education teachers in grades kindergarten through five currently teaching within OVEC region and those that have participated in the co-teaching professional developments provided by OVEC.

Significance of the Study

All students are expected to be prepared for their next level of learning and to have mastered the minimum graduation requirements over the course of their time in high school allowing for a successful transition to post-secondary life. However, not all students have the same starting position academically and socially. Those students classified as students requiring special education services often face challenges, both academically and socially, that require different ways of teaching and learning to acquire success. A literature search revealed the absence of research that investigates the least restrictive environment and factors that influence teacher perceptions of co-teaching special education students in a full co-teaching model. This study contributes to educators' and placement committee's knowledge when making informed decisions for children with disabilities to plan for their maximized success. Having completed this study with a case study methodology, co-teacher perceptions of co-teaching have assisted in determining additional supports and resources needed for effective implementation. Without the presence of solid evidence, educators and decision-makers would not have the ability to gauge the equity and reliability of the continuum of services now being delivered to develop effective educational reforms to the system for the improved education of children with disabilities (Aron & Loprest, 2012). Additionally, with a clearer understanding of teacher perceptions of co-teaching, district administrators will be employed with having the knowledge needed to determine where biases may be relevant, when more professional development is needed, and address gaps in educators' knowledge of co-teaching to better serve the needs of students with disabilities better.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited in the sample size and location of the study. This study was completed within a single education cooperative in the north central region of Kentucky. Overall, there are a total of nine education cooperatives across the state of Kentucky and this study may not be reflective of all the education cooperatives. Due to the sample size of a single education cooperative through a case study methodology, the findings may not reflect a larger majority of the rest of the state of Kentucky. The sample size is small when compared to the overall population of the state, completed at one of nine education cooperatives in the state of Kentucky and was completed within a single state.

This study focused on teacher perceptions of co-teaching. In this case study, the experience, educational background, and prior knowledge of co-teaching may not be analogous to other elementary schools. Other schools or school districts may not solely implement these specific co-teaching strategies. This case study will be conducted with general education and special education teachers that have been provided professional development through OVEC on co-teaching strategies. Co-teaching strategies is a training focus of OVEC, and other surrounding education cooperatives may not provide the amount of professional development on co-teaching strategies or have the resources to provide these professional development opportunities.

Lastly, the teachers that interviewed on their perceptions of co-teaching were all voluntary. It is possible that teachers from each of the districts supported by OVEC may not choose to participate in interviews. However, the results of the study have been interpreted based on the OVEC region and therefore this study may limit applicability across the field.

Definition of Terms

Admission and Release Committee (ARC): means a group of individuals described in 707 KAR 1:320, Section 3, that is responsible for developing, reviewing, or revising an individual education program (IEP) for a child with a disability (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008).

Collaboration/Co-teaching: means, for purposes of determining class size in 707 KAR 1:350, Section 2, a teacher of exceptional children works with children with disabilities in the regular classroom to provide specially-designed instruction and related services (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008).

Consent: means: (a) A parent has been fully informed of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought, in his native language, or other mode of communication; (b) A parent understands and agrees in writing to the carrying out of the activity for which his consent is sought, and the consent describes the activity and lists the records, if any, that will be released and to whom; (c) A parent understands that the granting of consent is voluntary on the part of the parent and may be revoked at any time; and (d) If a parent revokes consent, that revocation does not negate an action that has occurred after the consent was given and before the consent was revoked (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008).

Child with a disability: means a child evaluated in accordance with 707 KAR 1:300 as meeting the criteria listed in the definitions in this section for autism, deaf-blindness, developmental delay, emotional-behavior disability, hearing impairment, mental disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, or

visual impairment which has an adverse effect on the child's educational performance and who, as a result, needs special education and related services (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008)

Disproportionality: Disproportionality refers to a group's representation in a particular category that exceeds expectations for that group of differs substantially from the representation of others in that category. Special education disproportionality is referred to as the extent to which membership in which membership is given in a group affects the probability of being place in a specific disability category (National Association of School Psychologists, 2021)

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): means special education and related services that: (a) Are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; (b) Meet the standards of the Kentucky Department of Education included in 707 KAR Chapter 1 and the Program of Studies, 704 KAR 3:303, as appropriate; (c) Include preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the state; and (d) Are provided in conformity with an individual education program (IEP) that meets the requirements of 707 KAR 1:320 (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008).

Individual Education Program (IEP): means a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised in accordance with 707 KAR 1:320 (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): " means the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 1400 through 1450, as amended (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008).

Least Restrictive Environment: In selecting the least restrictive environment, consideration shall be given to any potential harmful effects on the child or on the quality of services that he needs. A child with a disability shall not be removed from education in age-appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general curriculum. In providing or arranging for the provision of nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities, an LEA shall ensure that a child with a disability participates with nondisabled children in those services and activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the child (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008).

Resource Class: children with disabilities assigned to a teacher of exceptional children per period, block, or the specified length of time set by the individual school (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008).

Self-contained or Special Class: children with disabilities assigned to a teacher of exceptional children for the purpose of providing individualized specially designed instruction and related services in a special class setting (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008).

Special Education: Specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of the child with a disability, including instruction in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings. Special education means speech-language pathology services (if the service is considered special education rather than a related service), travel training, and vocational education. (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008)

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI): " means adapting as appropriate the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child

with a disability and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum included in the Program of Studies, 704 KAR 3:303 (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008).

Supplementary aids and services (SAS): means aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education-related settings to enable a child with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate in accordance with 707 KAR 1:350 (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2008).

Organization of the Study

This study has been divided into five separate and purposeful chapters. The first chapter of the study includes the purpose, research questions, definitions of terms, statement of the problem, and study's limitations. The second chapter of the study reviews the literature regarding teachers' perceptions of co-teaching, administrator influence on effectiveness towards co-teaching success, shared planning time amongst co-teachers, relevant court cases, co-teaching models, and current data and trends regarding special education services provided along the continuum. The third chapter includes the methodology of the study, participants in the study, means of data collection, and the following method of analysis. The fourth chapter provides the study's research findings and identified themes as a result of the analysis. The fifth chapter is a detailed discussion of research findings and implications for further research.

Summary

This study further extend prior research on teacher perceptions of co-teaching but through a case study methodology. Our schools today face the large responsibility to not only meet the given requirement of ESSA and IDEA but to be held accountable for

ensuring students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum (e.g., Cook, 2004; Friend 2008). The completion of this study with a case study methodology, teacher perceptions of co-teaching has assisted in determining additional supports and resources needed for effective implementation. The educational opportunities of students with disabilities are increased through access to the general education curriculum provided through co-teaching (e.g., Cook, 2004; Friend, 2008). The findings of this study have assisted in further support for students with disabilities.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purpose of Literature Review

This section aims to explore the influence of professional development, administrator support, and co-planning on teacher perceptions of co-teaching. The history of special education policy at the federal and state level has a significant impact on how special education students are provided services and specially designed instruction, as it drives the current reality of the least restrictive environment and teacher perceptions of co-teaching. The inclusion of students with disabilities in an educational setting has been more widely promoted in the recent past than in any other time in the history of public education. As a result, many students with disabilities receive most, if not all of their special education services in general education classrooms (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). The following literature review includes the progression of opportunities for successor students with disabilities regarding their education in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers and factors that may influence this, such as administrator support of co-teaching and professional development provided by co-teachers.

One of the defining principles of IDEA is the requirement to provide students receiving special education services in the least restrictive environment (Underwood, 2018). Additional relevant court cases that promoted legislation and policy-making decisions at the federal and state levels will align with the decision-making processes and

history of advocating for the needs of students with disabilities. In Chapter II, I will review previous court cases, their outcomes, and how these outcomes impacted opportunities for students with disabilities. This study explored professional development prior to co-teaching implementation, during co-teaching implementation, and post-implementation of co-teaching. Teacher perceptions of co-teaching review shared planning time and available resources for the general education teacher and special education teacher. The six models of co-teaching reviewed in this section and the relation to how co-teaching roles and responsibilities influence teacher perceptions of co-teaching.

History of Special Education: Education for All Handicapped Children Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1975)

The Education for All Handicapped Children requires states to provide a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) to any child with a disability between the ages of three to twenty-one. All students with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under the provisions of the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) (707 KAR Chapter 1, 2021). This act defined handicapped children as any child requiring special education or related services (Enforcing the Right to an "Appropriate" Education: The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 1979). The Education for All Handicapped Act was the most comprehensive legislative policy that provided federal funding assistance to states to ensure FAPE for children with disabilities (Harrison, 1981). The Education for All Handicapped Act represents the continued evolution of national responsibility and commitment to providing equal educational opportunities to children (Ballard & Zettell, 1979).

PL 94-142 was an initiative that set minimum standards required for states and local education agencies regarding the education provided to disabled children (Aron & Loprest, 2012). Additionally, states received monetary incentives to meet the standards set by EHA (State Response to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 1985). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act aimed to allow autonomy at the state and local levels in decision-making processes. This was done to decentralize policy-making decisions at the federal level (State Response to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 1985). General requirements are outlined for the states, however, specific programs for the education of handicapped children are not required by the act.

EHA did include language and guidelines set forth to protect the free and appropriate education of handicapped children. EHA had the requirement that handicapped children be educated to the maximum extent possible with their non-disabled peers (Enforcing the Right to an "Appropriate" Education: The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 1979). Before this requirement, disabled students were excluded from being educated with their general education peers. Prior to the implication of EHA, states, including North Carolina and Nevada, did not require handicapped children to attend public schools.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 1975

A child with a disability prior to 1975 was fully excluded from receiving an education in public schools (Bradley, Katsiyannis, & Yell, 2001). IDEA is a law that requires free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for all children with disabilities (IDEA, 2021). IDEA ensures that any child with special education needs is provided with

special education services and related services to meet the individual needs of their disability (IDEA, 2021). Additionally, IDEA assures that children with disabilities are given early intervention through the regulation of state and government agencies. Covered in IDEA part B, children from birth to age two are provided with early intervention strategies. Regulated in IDEA part C, children with disabilities ages three up to 21 are provided special education and related services (IDEA, 2021).

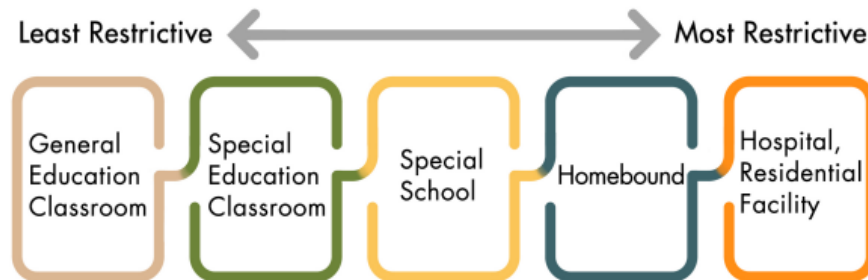
In 1996, the number of students attending public schools receiving special education services increased from 8% to 11% in the United States (Terman et al., 1996). At that time, the number of students who meet eligibility for special education services was expected to continue to rise.

Identification of students who are not yet receiving special education services is an additional provision of IDEA. Every Local Education Agency (LEA) has the responsibility of ensuring that all children with disabilities within their boundaries are identified and evaluated (Ramirez, 1998). This applies to public and private school students. If an Admission Review Committee (ARC) including the child's parent suggests or agrees to an evaluation, then an evaluation must occur in all suspected disability areas. Section 350 of IDEA requires that every child with a disability be provided an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and related services that pertain to the disability; it does not require that any person is held accountable if the child does not meet their projected growth for their IEP goals (Ramirez, 1998).

Each student receiving special education services and their placement in a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is decided upon by the Admissions Review Committee (ARC). IDEA requires that school districts provide a continuum of the least restrictive

education options to the most restrictive education options (IRIS Center, 2021). As required by IDEA, students must be educated in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible. To educate students in the general education setting in the least restrictive setting, supplementary aids and services must be provided to allow that student to participate to the greatest extent available, as required by IDEA. Placement options are, however, fluid. Once a student is placed in a more restrictive setting or less restrictive, changes can be made with factors taken into consideration, such as student needs and progress (IRIS Center, 2021). Below is a visual representation of the continuum of services.

(IRIS Center, 2021) <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/>



No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001)

The No Child Left Behind Act required that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible. However, the No Child Left Behind Act was innovative compared to previous legislation requiring that these students be taught by highly qualified teachers (NCLB, 2001). No Child Left Behind was significant for students with disabilities and special education teachers by outlining the requirements for obtaining highly qualified teacher

status. Additionally, accountability of all students was highlighted in No Child Left Behind. Assessment data was now required to be analyzed to track student progress over several years (Sclafani, 2002). This policy required that states monitor the progress of subpopulations within their school buildings.

The year 2015 proved to be a significant year for education. On December 15, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) was reauthorized, now known as Every Student Succeeds Act. ESEA was created as a component of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" (McLaughlin, 1975). ESEA outlined a commitment for all students to have equal access to a quality education. Title I was a provision outlined in ESEA which distributed funds to schools and school districts serving a high percentage of students coming from low-income families (Jeffrey, 1978). This outlined a commitment to the success of all students. In 2015, ESEA was reauthorized by President Obama as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA continued the provisions to ensure the success of all students and all schools and offered flexibility to the states. For states to qualify for this flexibility, career ready standards and assessment and school accountability programs that focused on the largest achievement gaps must be implemented (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.) One of those provisions strongly correlates to the needs of students with disabilities. ESSA aims to advance equity by enforcing and upholding critical protections for disadvantaged and high-needs students (ESSA, 2020).

Additionally, ESSA requires that all students, regardless of whether they have a disability, must be held to a high standard that prepares them to become college and career-ready (ESSA, 2020). This is significant due to the component of IDEA that

requires students with disabilities to be educated in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible. Direct correlations can be seen between IDEA expectations and ESSA expectations by requiring students with disabilities to be held to the same standards as their non-disabled peers to prepare them for post-secondary success.

History of Litigation

Throughout history, several court cases have ultimately impacted special education law. The significance of these court cases is reflected within IDEA. This section reviews relevant court cases, and their results are connected to current practices around special education. The court case ruling below moved schools towards more inclusive practices. In a review of court cases involving least restrictive environments, Underwood discovered that litigation outcomes and interpretations all preferred placement in the regular education classroom and educational benefit to the student (Underwood, 2018).

Plessy v. Ferguson

The Plessy ruling permitted states' actions that required physical separation of persons by race (Davis, 2021). Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) ruled separate yet equal, recognizing that African American students learning in segregated schools were denied their constitutional rights. The rationale of the courts in its Plessy decision reached exponentially beyond a black-and-white racial composition to encompass a range of legal relations that had been attached to the personal identity of African Americans (Davis, 2021). Brown v. Board of Education (1954) did not directly overturn the ruling of Plessy; the ruling of Brown vs. Board of Education rejected the principle of “separate but

equal” from Plessy in 1896 (Powell, 2021). As a result of Brown vs. Board of Education, the separation of education facilities by race was no longer permitted. African American students would no longer attend state-mandated segregated schools.

Consequently, these same students who previously attended segregated schools are not protected from discrimination within the school walls and are exposed to discrimination from their teachers and peers (Cunningham, Francois, & Trask-Tate, 2014). Brown vs. Board of Education is significant for students with disabilities because this case signified the first-time segregation in schools was first addressed and the right to an education. The outcome of Brown vs. Board of Education set a precedent for the right to an education on behalf of students with disabilities for the first time in 1954.

Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

In 1972 the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania established that deprivation of education for students with disabilities was a violation of their rights. It was established that this was a violation of the rights of students with disabilities under the fourteenth amendment (Gamson, McDermott, Reed, 2015). Ultimately, their rights to a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) were violated. The rights of students with disabilities were strongly advocated for by PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, resulting in an agreement to provide special education students an education in the general education setting. This court ruling supported parents of students with disabilities who had advocated for their child's rights and were excluded from being educated with their non-disabled peers

(Borthwick-Duffy, Palmer, Lane, 1996). Additionally, this required that an Individual Education Program (IEP) be developed to support a student receiving special education services in the general education classroom setting with a clear plan for goals to meet their needs in order to make academic progress in their educational setting (Gamson et al., 2015). *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* was the first major legal case to provide equality to students with disabilities in public education.

Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia

That same year, furthering the advocacy of students with disabilities occurred with the rulings of *Mills V. Board of Education of District of Columbia*. *Mills vs. Board of Education* advocated on behalf of seven school-age children who had been denied placement in a public education program for extended periods due to the student's mental, behavioral, physical, or emotional disabilities. The plaintiffs in *Mills vs. Board of Education* sought restitution because they had been denied the right to Due Process (Stewart, 2022). The lawsuit reinforced the need for schools to provide a free, appropriate public education for all students. It is a mandate to provide a free, appropriate public education for all students regardless of their disability and prevalent behavioral needs (Yudof, 1984). Equal protection and due process were interpreted by lower federal courts and the subsections of the Fourteenth Amendment that required public school decision-makers to admit students with disabilities that had been previously excluded and to provide these students with hearings and review procedures upon any change in their educational placement (Yudof, 1984).

Least Restrictive Environment: Current Statistics of LRE

The current nationwide statistics of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) are important to consider in the context of conducting research on teacher perspectives of co-teaching because they provide a broader understanding of how special education services are delivered in schools. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students with disabilities must be educated in the LRE that is most appropriate for their needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). In recent years, there has been a trend towards including more students with disabilities in general education classrooms through co-teaching (Murawski & Dieker, 2014).

Research on teacher perspectives of co-teaching can shed light on how well co-teaching is working to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. This is particularly important because while co-teaching has been widely implemented, there is still a lack of consensus on best practices and how to effectively implement co-teaching (Friend & Cook, 2013). Teacher perspectives can provide valuable insight into the benefits and challenges of co-teaching, as well as recommendations for improving co-teaching practices.

The data in the table below is a current summary of the statistics on Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The data does not include students in a separate school, residential facility, private school, homebound/hospital placement, or correctional facility. Students in those settings collectively make up 4.90% of all students with disabilities. Students educated in the general education classroom setting for more than 80% of their school day make up the majority of students with disabilities at 64%. 48.50% of students eligible under an Intellectual Disability are educated in the general education classroom setting for less than 40% of their school day. This was the

most significant percentage when compared to all other eligibility areas. For a student to meet eligibility for an Intellectual Disability, they must have a significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior. This deficit manifests during the child’s developmental stages and has an adverse impact on the child’s educational performance (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2018). Students meeting eligibility for a Speech Language Impairment were educated in the general education classroom the most, at 87.80% compared to all other disabilities. Following Speech Language Impairment are students eligible under Specific Learning Disability at 72.20%, and Other Health Impairment at 67.30%. A student in 2018 whose eligibility was Multiple Disabilities was least likely at 14.20% to be educated in the general education classroom for 80% or more of their day. To meet eligibility for Multiple Disabilities, a child must have a combination of two or more disabilities. The combination of two or more disabilities results in severe educational needs (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2018).

Table 2

Percentage of students ages 6 to 21 years old, nationwide by their educational environment and type of disability: Fall 2018

Disability Category	Less than 40%	40-79%	80% or more
All students with disabilities	13.1	18.0	64.0
Autism	33.20	18.50	40.00
Deaf-blindness	35.70	12.60	25.70
Developmental Delay	14.40	18.50	65.60

Emotional Behavioral Disability	17.20	17.40	49.60
Hearing Impairment	10.50	14.70	63.30
Intellectual Disability	48.50	27.50	17.30
Multiple Disabilities	44.90	17.60	14.20
Orthopedic Impairment	22.10	15.60	54.30
Other Health Impairment	8.50	20.20	67.30
Specific Learning Disability	4.60	21.40	72.20
Speech or Language Impairment	3.90	4.60	87.80
Traumatic Brain Injury	19.70	21.50	51.00
Visual Impairment	8.90	12.40	68.20

Note: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia only. Includes fall 2015 data for 6- to 21-year-olds in Wisconsin because fall 2018 data were not available for children served in Wisconsin. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.
Retrieved from: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2021). Digest of Education Statistics, 2019 (NCES 2021-009), [Table 204.60](#).

Teacher Perceptions of Co-Teaching

The last century has proved to be paramount for the rights of students with a disability. The fight for students with disabilities has transformed from being excluded of being provided with an education to the fight for full inclusion within a co-teaching

setting (Gordon, 2006). Co-Teaching is defined as a service delivery in which the student with disabilities is educated in the regular classroom, and a special education teacher and regular education teacher collaborate to implement the IEP and provide instruction and access to the general education curriculum (Kentucky Parent Guide for Special Education, 2021). The perception of teachers providing co-teaching services to students with disabilities is increasingly important to understand because the competing themes of access versus accountability continue to be part of the debate around co-teaching (Gordon, 2006).

Shared Planning Time

Shared planning time can be defined as a daily or regular predetermined time in which the regular and special education teacher collaborate. During co-planning time, they may plan for ways in which to integrate the curriculum, develop lesson plans, plan for implementing specially designed instruction (SDI), grade assessments, or reflect on current instructional approaches (Mertens, Flowers, Anfara, Caskey, 2010). According to Mertens et. al. (2010), teachers that collaborate and engage in shared planning time have reported statistically higher levels of classroom practices that correlates to higher levels of student performance.

An adequate amount of time to meet expectations is rare for any educator. Planning time is the biggest obstacle for many educators intending to effectively implement co-teaching (Dieker, 2001; Keefe & Moore, 2004). As a natural result, teacher perceptions of co-teaching may be heavily influenced by their shared planning time. Teachers often do not believe they have adequate time to plan. Co-teaching requires that both the general education teacher and special education teacher share

responsibilities. One of those shared responsibilities is planning. With this, a shared planning time must occur for the most effective planning. Shared planning time for effective co-teaching utilizes the time to plan for a wide variety of skills/knowledge, formative and summative assessments given, and provide an inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities (Andrews & Harpell, 2012).

Requiring special education teachers and general education teachers to meet additional expectations during a shared planning time may impact their perceptions of co-teaching either negatively or positively depending on the effectiveness of their shared planning time.

School leadership teams need to consider scheduled planning periods for co-teachers (Walther-Thomas, Bryant & Land, 1996). Planning is defined as an intentional time with a purpose for two educators to collaborate and work together to accomplish educational objectives for students in their classroom (Battaglia & Brooks, 2019). Intentionality of scheduling should allow co-teachers common planning periods that allow them to have the opportunity to plan to meet the needs of both the general education students and special education students in their classroom. The special education teacher and general education teacher each bring their own individual expertise to the planning table. Reported by Mastropieri et. al. (2005), the content knowledge brought by the special education teacher has a substantial impact on the effectiveness and outcomes of co-teaching. Common planning time allows them to effectively co-plan to meet the objectives of students with their own expertise.

Available research suggest that co-teachers require a minimum of one hour per week to effectively plan for co-teaching instruction (Walther-Thomas, 1997). During this

planning time, co-teachers can discuss and establish common appropriate expectations for their classroom, problem-solve foreseeable concerns and current issues, and work out the more technical aspects of co-teaching such as roles and responsibilities. Teachers with a shared planning time reported increased levels of a positive perception of their work environment and a higher perception of teacher efficacy (Mertens et. al., 2010).

Ideally, co-teachers will collaborate using their district curriculum guidelines as a structure for planning lessons for instructional unit plans, weekly plans, and daily lessons that they co-develop. To legally meet student' educational needs as outlined in their Individual Education Plans, co-teachers will look for commonalities between standards required to be taught at each grade level and the IEP goals of identified students through intentional and methodical co-planning (Battaglia & Brooks, 2019). For example, the result of this co-planning may find a student with a specific learning disability in written expression being provided with graphic organizers that relate to the writing task given, pre-taught vocabulary words in a small group, and specially designed instruction in the use of sentence structure provided through one of the co-teaching models that reduce the student to teacher ratio (Andrews & Harpell, 2012)

Co-teachers that have students with Individualized Education Plans in their classroom that include accommodations and modifications must have time for operational planning built into their daily schedule. Without a common planning time and the appropriate amount of uninterrupted planning time, co-teachers may not be adequately prepared to implement effective co-teaching practices to meet the needs of their students.

Administrator Support

Administrator support can play a prominent role in the effectiveness of the implementation of co-teaching and the staff mindset towards a more inclusive environment. The support from administrators is a key component for the success and implementation of co-teaching. The leadership provided by administrators can assist in ensuring that the required supports are available to make co-teaching successful (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Administrator advocacy for the inclusion of students with disabilities can begin with educating the staff in their building (Bateman & Bateman, 2014). Staff may have a misconception or a different perspective on the purpose and the why behind co-teaching. By educating the entire staff, the faculty of the building then share the same understanding of the purpose of co-teaching. The involvement of administrators can play an active role in the planning and implementation of successful co-teaching (Phillips & McCullough, 1990). Administrators, particularly principals, can take pivotal steps to lead toward a more inclusive, friendly school environment.

A second role for administrators is to ensure that supplementary aids and services are available to students with disabilities (Bateman & Bateman, 2014). Students with a disability are afforded the right to have the accommodations provided to participate in the general education classroom setting. Each IEP outlines accommodations and modifications that must be provided to ensure individual student success. A misconception often may occur that only the special education teacher is responsible for providing these accommodations. However, it is the responsibility of the special education teacher and general education teacher to provide these accommodations to any student with a disability (Gordon, 2006).

Many education leaders themselves, have not had the personal experience of co-teaching (Murwaski & Lochner, 2011). When implementing co-teaching practices, it is imperative for the administrators in the school to also be trained. Administrators also need to remain current in their knowledge through participating in co-teaching professional developments, either prior to the teachers or alongside the teachers. By doing this, administrators will be more aware of the demands placed on co-teachers and the necessary skills both co-teachers will need to effectively implement co-teaching models in their classrooms (Nierengarten, 2013). The knowledge of the school administrators of the co-teaching models is also important when evaluating co-teaching pairs. The administrator should fully understand the variety of co-teaching models and be able to have a deeper understanding of what is occurring in the classroom (Murawski & Lochner, 2011) Finally, administrators need to have a deeper understanding of co-teaching to provide the entire staff with a clear vision and appropriately support the general education and special education teachers that are co-teachers.

Lastly, administrator support demonstrating their commitment to co-teaching will provide the critical foundation needed to lead a school towards an inclusive environment and positively influence teacher perceptions of co-teaching. The administrators have their roles and responsibilities related to co-teaching, and by supporting the vision of the school, they will be able to proactively address concerns related to co-teaching as they arise, foresee any possible issues, and engage in effective decision making for advocacy of students with disabilities (Nierengarten, 2013). The role of the administrator in developing co-teaching practices and their contributions toward teacher perceptions of co-teaching is imperative in guiding staff toward a democratic based decision-making

model that advocates for the inclusion of students with disabilities and decisions made are consistent with the school's overall vision and philosophy (Scheffel et al., 1996).

Co-Teaching Debate

In Kentucky, the preferred terms to utilize are *collaboration* and *co-teaching*. However, other school districts in the United States may use terms such as *team teaching* or *inclusion*. "Collaborative teaching" is the preferred umbrella term for the combined efforts of two certified teachers in a general education classroom setting with different areas of expertise (Kentucky Department of Education Division of Learning Services, 2011). Co-Teaching in Kentucky refers to a regular education teacher and a special education teacher working together to ensure the success of their students. When the term Co-Teaching is utilized, this refers to a specific type of collaborative teaching format. In this scenario, this is a special education service delivery option. Co-Teaching services may occur daily and weekly based on an individual student's Individual Education Program (IEP) and involve two or more certified teachers, including a regular and special education teacher (Friend, 2008). Both the regular education teacher and special education teacher share instructional responsibilities and hold joint accountability for the educational progress of students with disabilities through a partnership and utilizing teaching strategies in a general education setting (Friend, 2008).

Full Inclusionists

Full co-teaching models for the purposes of this study refers to a special education teacher collaborating with the general education teacher providing specially designed instruction in the general education classroom. The advocate for full inclusion believes

that the supports should be brought to the student receiving special education services in the general education classroom. Rather than removing the student to receive necessary supports (Wright, 1999). Full Inclusion consists of special education students being educated in the general education classroom setting for the entirety of the school day. NCLB advocates have a lengthy history of supporting a policy of full inclusion. This is the placement of virtually all students with disabilities in the regular education classroom full-time (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010). Full co-teaching models are more commonly seen in elementary buildings. Elementary teachers can carry out a full co-teaching model for an entire school day by placing a special educator's caseload into a general education class at that grade level (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). For example, if there are 12 special education students in 3rd grade, all students can be included in one general education classroom with both co-teachers for the whole day.

Full inclusion can be seen as “blurring” the lines between special education and general education. As a result, the distinction between special education would disappear (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010). The theory of full inclusion placement in the general education classroom setting is a desirable concept. However, the reasons full inclusionists support and advocate for a full-inclusion model vary depending on the type of full inclusion theory in which they identify.

There are three types of full inclusionists. The first type is a group that advocates for the full deconstruction of special education. The second type is a group that is conservative financially and also policymakers that hold the perspective that full inclusion is a necessary cost-saving measure. The third group advocates for full inclusion with imperative supports and services brought to the general education classroom to meet

the needs of students identified as having a disability (Fuchs & Fuchs 1998; Pfeiffer & Reddy, 1999; Villa & Thousand, 2005).

The most pressing concern of advocates for full inclusion is the thought that special education should be represented through a Tier of Response to Intervention (RTI) (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010). As a result, there is a lack of potential to build a comprehensive general education program that remains inclusive. This was the former way of thinking for the advocates of full inclusion in the 1980s and 1990s that believed in the full elimination of special education and the continuum of placement (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010).

The most prominent advocacy groups for full inclusion are primarily parents of children with severe intellectual disabilities. This advocacy group of parents believes that the primary responsibility of an educator is to nourish friendships between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998). Additionally, the belief is held that, for students who have a severe cognitive disability to become productive members of society, a prerequisite during school-aged years is to learn relevant functional and social skills in the general education classroom setting (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998).

It was argued in 1995 that for the previous 15 years following the passage of P.L. 94-142, a vast majority of children with disabilities were continuing to be denied access to the general education classroom setting to be educated in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers (Maloney, 1994). Full inclusionists argue that removing students to receive special education services is segregative in nature and by removing students, they do not have access to the same challenging curriculum as their

non-disabled peers (Forest & Lusthaus, 1989). Through full inclusion of special education students in the general education classroom setting, an end is put to the segregation of students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers.

Another group of full inclusion advocates hold the belief that special education services should be provided to not only special education students with disabilities but also general education students in the general education classroom setting (Fuchs et al., 2010; Stainback & Stainback, 1985). Full inclusionists believe that the responsibility to work together to support students with disabilities of all levels to gain the necessary knowledge, self-control, and essential life skills to become predictive members of society belongs to the collaboration of general education and special education teachers (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998). Consequently, graduation from high school, post-high school employment, or college enrollment will be facilitated through co-teaching collaboration in the general education classroom setting.

Barriers of Co-Teaching

Challenges exist at all levels for teachers involved in a co-teaching model. Secondary education teachers, those at the middle and high school level, face the reality that they may not have a depth of content knowledge in every subject that would allow for a true partnership in a secondary classroom. By virtue of their training, special education teachers rarely have deep content knowledge in all subjects offered at the secondary level. Special education teachers at the secondary level reported not feeling prepared as content specialists (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). An example of this could be a special education teacher assigned to be a co-teacher in a geometry class with general and special education students. However, the special education teacher likely does not

have any content specialty knowledge in geometry. This subsequently leads them to more of an observer role during lesson delivery. As a result, the special education teacher often can be seen as a teacher assistant to the general education teacher in the classroom (Keefe & Moore, 2004). Content knowledge at the high school level is more of a challenge for special education teachers who become co-teachers (Keefe & Moore, 2004).

The high school level of instruction presents barriers to co-teaching while elementary level co-teaching may present its own barriers as well. A child's elementary years of education are vital for learning necessary social skills and developing friendships. A study conducted by Pivik, McComas, and LaFlamme (2002), revealed intentional and unintentional barriers to effective co-teaching in elementary schools. Elementary students receiving special education services through a co-teaching model reported a difficulty forming friendships due to intentional ignoring of their peers. As a result, they were not able to fully benefit from the co-teaching model. Additional barriers included students with disabilities being emotionally bullied such as name calling or being treated differently than their non-disabled peers (Pivik, McComas, & LaFlamme, 2002).

The nature of collaboration between special education and general education teachers is another consistent barrier found in the current literature. Currently, a consistent method for partnering with co-teachers does not exist (Keefe & Moore, 2004). Frequently, co-teachers may be paired together based on who is available when creating the master schedule. Teachers should have input in selecting their co-teachers (Keefe & Moore, 2004). Partnerships of co-teachers should be determined by the needs

of the students in the classroom rather than teacher willingness. Previous studies have recommended that prospective co-teachers be interviewed to determine their level of compatibility for co-teaching together (Keefe & Moore, 2004). As a result of being paired as co-teachers without any input, a feeling of increased pressure for accountability of results seems to arise (Dieker & Murawski, 2003)

A lack of time to adequately plan together is noted as a significant barrier for co-teachers although noted as one of the most important factors leading to successful co-teaching (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). Finding time to communicate and plan together is difficult for co-teachers who likely do not share the same planning period (Keefe & Moore, 2004). Special education teachers may co-teach with multiple general education teachers at all levels and finding time to plan together is a challenge.

Defining the role of the special education teacher in the general education classroom varies by school and the expectations of administrators (Keefe & Moore, 2004). Some teachers settle into roles with the special education teacher taking the sole responsibility for modifications and accommodations for special education students. In contrast, the general education teacher took the lead in planning the curriculum and delivery of lessons. Often, the special education teacher may need to explain the student's disability and the appropriate modifications based on the student's Individual Education Program (Keefe & Moore).

Determining which teacher would complete grading is a complex area to navigate. Due to their content specialty, general education teachers may prefer to grade all student assignments. Co-teaching pairs that preferred to co-assess together reported a barrier when finding time to co-assess together (Persiani, Ricci, & Williams,

2019). Others felt that the special education teacher should grade students' assignments with Individual Education Plans (Keefe & Moore). Finding the time and appropriate space to assess formative and summative assessments together is a barrier for co-teachers (Persiani, Ricci, & Williams, 2019).

Co-Teaching Models

The whole group approaches to co-teaching include Team Teaching, One Teach, One Observe, and One Teach, One Assist. These approaches do not lower the student-to-teacher ratio in the classroom.

Team Teaching involves both the regular education teacher and special education co-teaching pair teaching in front of the whole class. Each teacher participates simultaneously, leading the classroom in core instruction (Kentucky Department of Education Division of Learning Services, 2011).

One Teach, One Observe, is implemented with one co-teaching partner leading whole-class instruction. While one teacher (either the special education or general education teacher) leads the class in instruction, the other collects data through observation. Ideally, the co-teaching partners have agreed upon and discussed pre-determined specific information that will be observed and gathered during instruction. Together, they will analyze the observational data to make intentional instructional decisions or create temporary skill groups for future classroom instruction (Kentucky Department of Education Division of Learning Services, 2011). One Teach, One Assist, is the method that most co-teachers have experience implementing. This method also does not reduce the student-to-teacher ratio. During One Teach, One Assist, one co-teacher is primarily responsible for delivering whole-class

instruction for the lesson. While one co-teacher leads the class in instruction, the other co-teacher circulates through the classroom to assist students as needed (Kentucky Department of Education Division of Learning Services, 2011). Support can take many forms, such as assisting a student with a specific math problem they may be struggling with, prompting students off task, or clarifying directions. Frequently, this is the special education teacher providing accommodations individually on a student's IEP. This approach is the most commonly overutilized.

Small group approaches include Alternative Teaching, Station Teaching, and Parallel Teaching. Small group approaches reduce the overall student-to-teacher ratio. However, these methods traditionally require more planning and preparation between the special education teacher and general education. These are also the most underutilized co-teaching strategies.

Alternative teaching consists of one co-teaching partner instructing one group. At the same time, the other teacher (this can be either the special education or general education teacher) works with a temporarily formed small group. In this group, a specific and intentional instructional purpose is identified in advance. The small group instruction can take various forms and may be for the enrichment of a previously learned concept, re-teaching a concept to struggling students, pre-teaching vocabulary words, and other instructional strategies. Once this small group instruction is complete, students will return to the large group and continue participating in classroom instruction, group work, or assignments. The general education teacher and special education teacher should meet consistently to plan and reform the small group makeup of students based on continued various formative assessment data. This is to avoid any consistent segregation that may

result in stigmatizing students with disabilities (Kentucky Department of Education Division of Learning Services, 2011).

Station teaching divides the instructional content into assigned workstations around the classroom. The co-teachers divide the students from both general education and special education students into small groups. These groups of students rotate throughout the classroom. In a station teaching model, the special education and general education teacher will work with an assigned teacher-led station. Stations without a teacher are student lead stations. Students rotate at a designated time at each station. (Ricci, Persiani, & Williams, 2019).

Parallel Teaching occurs when the classroom of students is divided into two groups. Each teacher leads a group of students in the lesson. Both groups have the same instructional standards and objectives. During the implementation of parallel teaching, the same materials and resources are used throughout the lesson for consistency among both groups. The benefit of this model is that the student-to-teacher ratio is reduced (Ricci et al., 2019). However, the classroom setup must be conducive to effective parallel teaching.

Identified trends and success strategies resulted from a case study that implemented the six co-teaching models in a California school districts with both middle and high school educators during a pilot program in a mathematics teacher program (Yopp, Ellis, Bonsangue, Duarte, Meza, 2014). The case study occurred in two low-performing, high-needs school districts. Two cohorts of teaching fellows with 20 teachers at both the middle and high school levels were selected to participate in the co-teaching pilot program. Teaching fellows were paired with master teacher fellows to co-

teach (Yopp et al., 2014). Prior to the school year beginning, all teachers completed a half-day of professional development. Professional development provided the co-teaching pairs with the opportunity to practice communication, role play, explore co-teaching models, and build a positive relationship (Yopp et al., 2014). Forty-three percent of co-teachers reported Team Teaching as the most-liked model of co-teaching.

In contrast, twenty-four percent of co-teachers reported Team Teaching as their least favored model. Parallel Teaching was reported by thirty-three percent of co-teachers to be the least favorite and nineteen percent of co-teachers to be the most favorite (Yopp et al., 2014). The teacher fellows' and master co-teachers perceived success was consistent with the implementation of One Teach, One Assist. At least fifty percent of co-teachers reported success with all other co-teaching models, except for alternative teaching. Survey results revealed that Alternative Teaching is reported to be the most challenging to implement (Yopp et al., 2014).

Co-Teaching Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships

Perceptions toward co-teaching tend to vary depending on prior knowledge and prior experiences with co-teaching (Keefe & Moore, 2004). The relationship that co-teachers shared had a significant impact on their overall negative or positive perception of co-teaching. Findings following a co-teaching case study in an urban teacher residency program revealed that both residents and mentors had an overall positive perception of the benefits of co-teaching following the completion of the residency program (Ricci, Persiana, & Williams, 2019). Initial perceptions of co-teachers found that many candidates for co-teaching reported feeling overwhelmed, stressed, and fearful

(Strieker, Gillis, & Zong, 2013). Varied perspectives for the general education teacher mentor and special education teacher candidate were revealed following the case study.

Limited time for co-planning and co-assessing was a common theme between mentors and residents. Residents reported that the fixation on classroom furniture hindered the ability and effectiveness of implementing the different co-teaching models, remarkably parallel teaching (Ricci et al., 2019). Residents and mentors also reported a common concern with an equal division of the workload. For co-teaching to be effective, co-teachers must create an equal and balanced workload between the two (Strieker et al., 2013). Co-teachers having an equivalent workload is more likely to result in the students viewing both teachers as equal authority figures in the classroom. Inequalities in the workload are more likely to result in ineffective co-teaching results (Strieker et al., 2013).

Positive interactions and communication are critical factors for effective co-teaching results (Strieker et al., 2019). During the urban teacher residency program, both co-teachers shared that they could more frequently communicate with one another and debrief due to co-teaching throughout the day (Ricci et al., 2019). Co-teaching has been referred to as being analogous to a marriage. For effective results, much giving and talking must occur.

Both the special education and general education teachers having the ability to choose their co-teaching partner positively impacted the division of roles and responsibilities, resulting in more positive perceptions of co-teaching. General education teachers and special education teachers had the opportunity to interview one another to determine compatibility prior to co-teaching resulted in increased effectiveness (Keefe &

Moore, 2004). Allowing the special educator to have autonomy in their choice of the content area and grade level(s) of knowledge, preference, and in which they are going to co-teach holds value when nurturing the confidence in both educators as well as a willingness to participate in co-teaching strategies (Nierengarten & Hughes, 2010).

Role Theory and Critical Disability Theory provided the guidelines and framework for the chosen methodology. This study is a qualitative case study. Data was retrieved through conducting individual semi structured interviews with those currently implementing co-teaching practices. Interviews occurred outside of school hours through a voluntary basis. To ensure the reliability of the data, special education and general education teachers were asked the same questions throughout the interview process.

Teacher Perception and the Role in Teacher Effectiveness

One must consider the perception of the teachers who are implementing co-teaching practices and the role that it plays in teacher effectiveness. There have been several studies in which teachers reported positive perceptions towards co-teaching (Hang & Rabren, 2009). Of those studies, it was reported that implementing teachers felt that their students had an increase in their self-confidence, peer relationships, social skills and academic performance (Austin, 2001; Cramer & Nevin, 2006; Ritter, Michael, & Irby, 1999; Trent, 1998; Walther-Thomas, 1997). It is noted that 6 studies derived from 89 articles related to co-teaching had a sufficient amount of quantitative data to be used in calculations by Murawski and Swanson (2001) on the effectiveness of the co-teaching instructional approach. From the 6 studies it was determined that an average effect size of 0.40 indicates that co-teaching is a moderately effective instructional approach for

students with disabilities (Murwaski & Swanson, 2001). A summary of qualitative studies both special education and general education teachers reported that experienced professional benefits from implementing co-teaching practices and being part of a co-teaching arrangement (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie 2007).

Summary

Effective co-teaching involves two teachers, one general education and one special education teacher, collaborating to provide students with disabilities an enhanced learning experience (Bryant & Land, 1998). In 1975, IDEA was created. Amendments have been made to IDEA. However, the requirement of educating students in the least restrictive environment is a defining component of IDEA. Referenced court cases and the proceeding implications for educators and decision-makers have continued to support the needs of special education students. According to the United States Department of Education, the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2016, 61.80% of students receiving special education services were educated in the regular education classroom setting for more than 80% of the school day (Underwood, 2018).

Co-teachers generally have positive perceptions of co-teaching (Hang & Raben, 2009). However, as covered in this chapter, additional factors may influence the outcomes of positive or negative perceptions of co-teaching, such as administrative support, common planning time, and professional development offered. However, clearly defined roles and responsibilities have an impact on the outcomes of teachers' perceptions of co-teaching. Confusion amongst roles and responsibilities that are not clearly defined results in the assumed hierarchy in the classroom by the content teacher (Keefe & Moore,

2004). Furthermore, Hang and Raben (2017) revealed that practices that led to ineffective co-teaching outcomes included lack of professional development, insufficient planning time, and not having clearly defined roles.

Gaps in the literature that I discovered included professional development and the impact when offered concurrently with the implementation of co-teaching. Professional development offered prior to the initial implementation of co-teaching was reviewed in the literature. However, there was not an adequate amount that reviewed professional development offered concurrently with the implementation and ongoing throughout the school year. Additionally, there was minimal literature on co-teaching preparation for educators in teacher preparation programs completing their undergrads.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Purpose

This studies purpose was to investigate within the OVEC region of north central Kentucky, the teacher perceptions of co-teaching and the factors that may influence their perceptions of co-teaching at the elementary school level in grades kindergarten through five that lead to student success. Objectives of the purpose of this study were to determine successful practices, structures, preparation, and support systems that contribute to positive perceptions of successful co-teaching, including strategies practices with the intent of utilizing the findings to positively impact co-teaching at the elementary school level. An additional purpose of this case study was to utilize the findings to determine what additional supports and practices may need to be put into place to achieve successful co-teaching.

Restatement of Research Questions

RQ 1: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of general education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

RQ 2: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of special education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

RQ 3: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what structures and supports currently in place do those involved in co-teaching believe contribute to the success of the co-teaching model?

RQ 4: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what additional supports systems are needed for successful co-teaching in a fully inclusive setting?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks of Critical Disability Theory and Role Theory has guided the methodology of this research. This approach has allowed me to cultivate a more profound understanding using the tenets of Critical Disability Theory and Role Theory to cultivate an empirical understanding of the perspectives of teachers implementing and participating in co-teaching practices.

Critical Disability Theory refers to a diverse set of theoretical approaches. The task of critical disability theory is to analyze disability as a cultural, historical, relative, social, and political occurrence. This work may also be referred to as “Critical Disability Studies” or CDS (e.g., Meekosha & Shuttleworth 2009; Vehmas & Watson 2014). Critical Disability Theory involves the scrutiny of not bodily or mental limitations and impairments but the social norms that define particular attributes as disabled and the social conditions that enforce stigmatized attributes in minorities (Schalk, 2017). The Theory of Disability explores the identities of minorities and the belief that if their identities are thought disabled, consequently, there will be little hope for the political and social equality of minorities with these identities or disabled people (Siebers, 2021). As long as this exists, there will be continued justification for inferior treatment. Disablism is

defined as a form of oppression that involved the restricting of activity on people with a disability resulting in an undermining of their overall emotional wellbeing (Goodley, Butz, & Schlegel, 2017). Having a disability may be viewed as a personal tragedy or deficiency. Critical Disability Theory has guided me in my research as a lens to view disabilities as a problem of society rather than an individual's personal limitations

Role Theory supported Critical Disability Theory in guiding the framework of this study. Role Theory seeks to examine patterns in behavior and roles. The functional approach to Role Theory manifested from the work of Linton in 1936 (Biddle, 1986). Role Theory explains that persons in specific roles hold expectations for their behavior and hold expectations for other persons in the same role (Biddle, 1986). Co-teaching teams have many demands placed on them, and their perspective may be influenced by role strain. Individuals may experience role strain when faced with demands of their role and internal conflicts. These internal conflicts may become "role strains" (Goode, 1960). A co-teacher may have a predetermined perspective towards co-teaching depending on their background and experiences related to co-teaching. Factors that may impact an individual accepting their role obligations include compartmentalization abilities, delegation, and elimination of role relationships (Goode, 1960). Co-teaching partnerships can become effective with collaboration by using individual strengths and personal differences (Pratt, 2014).). Role theory provided a framework to help understand the complexity and expectations of the role of a co-teacher. Role theory helps explain the ways in which the roles and expectations of a co-teacher have an influence on the perceptions of those performing these roles in the school of study.

Research Design and Rationale

A case study is most appropriately defined as an in-depth study of a single unit (Gerring, 2004). Yin described a case study as the investigation of an empirical inquiry further seeking information about a contemporary phenomenon within the real-life context, particularly when the boundaries are unclear between the phenomenon and context (Yin, 2004). A single-case study design with a qualitative approach was utilized in this study.

According to Scruggs et al. (2007), “Qualitative research is generally appropriate for describing and providing insights about attitudes, perceptions, interactions, classroom structure, and behaviors” (p. 394). A case study is an inquiry in which the researcher explores a single program, activity, event, or process of one or multiple individuals (Creswell, 2009).

For this study, a case study supported in determining successful practices, structures, preparation, and support systems that contribute to successful co-teaching at the elementary school level in grades kindergarten through five at schools within the OVEC region. Yin (2014) stated a dual definition of a case study. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, mainly when the boundaries between the context and the phenomenon may not be transparent (Yin, 2014). A case study inquiry copes with a distinctive situation in which there may be multiple variables of interest than data points. One result relies on various sources of evidence with triangulating data confirming the results. The greater depth the research questions seek to understand “how” or “why” the workings of a social phenomenon, the more helpful case study research will be (Yin,

2014). The objective of a single case study, when presented with a standard case, is to capture specific circumstances and conditions within a daily situation. The mandate of IDEA that students with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers in the least restrictive environment results in public schools educating students in co-teaching classrooms. As early as 1990, there were identifiable trends in public education moving toward greater inclusion for students with disabilities (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

Yin (2014) addresses the reality that case study research follows a formal protocol. Data collection occurred through one-on-one semi-structured interviews. A case study interview is more aligned with a guided conversation than a structured inquiry (Yin, 2014). The intent of the study was to determine reliable, valid, and common teacher perceptions of co-teaching. To achieve this, semi-structured interviews occurred with the general education co-teacher and special education teachers within OVEC in grades kindergarten through five. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Teams. Interviews only occurred after verbal and written consent is obtained from each of the special education and general education teachers for a total of ten consent forms. Data collected from semi-structured interviews was analyzed and coded for themes to ensure reliability and validity of the data. Creswell (2009) stated, “Researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” (p.208). Audio recordings were collected during the interview with permission from the interviewee to provide a more accurate recall for transcribing purposes.

Target Population, Participants, Sample, and Sampling Procedures

The target population of this study were teachers within the OVEC region currently teaching in grades kindergarten through five who are providing co-teaching services to students with disabilities. Participants were invited to be interviewed in a one-on-one setting to further discuss their perceptions of co-teaching and factors that influence their perceptions specifically in the areas of professional development, administrator support, and co-planning time.

I conducted interviews with a total of ten teachers, being a mixture of general education teachers and special education teachers currently providing co-teaching strategies within the OVEC region. Teachers interviewed may be currently teaching in any of the fifteen school districts supported by OVEC in the north central region of Kentucky. The participants identified in this study were all certified Kentucky general education classroom teachers in grades kindergarten through five. The participants interviewed came with a variety of experience with implementing co-teaching strategies and a variety of professional development provided throughout their background and educational training.

Consent Process

When conducting a study on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-world context, as the researcher, I am obligated to proper ethical implementations (Yin, 2014). To adhere to these ethical implications, prior to engaging with any participants in the research, I sought approval from the University of Louisville (UofL) IRB. For the UofL IRB process to be successful I followed the steps provided to submit a new study. Approval by the UofL IRB is a requirement prior to conducting any initial research with human subjects. Specific care for this case study research involved gaining informed

consent from prospective participants. This process included protecting participants from possible harm. This will encompass avoiding any deception, protecting their privacy and confidentiality, taking special precautions to protect particularly vulnerable persons, and selecting participants in an equitable manner (National Research Council, 2003).

Data Analysis

Data collection for this study was obtained through one on one Semi-structured interviews occurred from November 2023 to March 2024. The interviews were one-on-one with the general education teacher and special education teacher separately for co-teachers to feel comfortable answering honestly. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Teams. As referenced by Saldana (2016), coding is a way to analyze qualitative data that includes words or short phrases through symbolically assigning an attribute to a portion of language that is based on data. The interviews were coded in the first round through In Vivo coding in the initial coding cycle. The first coding cycle identified the language and terminology used by the interviewees in the semi-structured interviews. In-vivo coding supported in the authenticity of the data because it was rooted in the participants language (Saldana, 2016). The first coding cycle was open coding, this was an analytic process which utilized a consistent comparison of data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Overall themes were noted during the first round of open coding. After the initial coding for identified themes, the second coding round occurred to identify more succinct themes and organize coinciding with the initial research questions. The second coding round was descriptive coding. Descriptive coding supported to categorize multiple opinions stated by multiple participants (Saldana, 2016). The third and final round of coding used axial coding.

Strengths and Limitations

What initially drew me to qualitative research was a quote by a former college professor. “Everyone’s perspective is their reality.” The way that individuals and communities of people make sense of the world creates their reality. I used this to explore further the teacher's perspectives on the benefits of co-teaching and how co-teaching can be improved to better support students for student success. Qualitative research can be defined as any type of research that produces findings and is not solely an objective procedure quantifiable through numbers. ,(Rahman, 2017). Qualitative research can explore lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, feelings, organizational functioning, and social movements (Rahman, 2017).

I chose to utilize a qualitative approach because there has been a shift in the mindset and thoughts toward special education becoming more inclusive since the Individuals with Disabilities Act was enacted. Our society and communities have become more inclusive throughout history, and this shift appears within our schools. A limitation of conducting a qualitative study is confidentiality. Confidentiality needs to remain a significant part of the study and research. However, when conducting a qualitative study, it may not be feasible for Confidentiality to remain absolute (ILTA, 2016). As the facilitator of research, confidentiality must be maintained while still exploring the perspectives and realities of our educators towards inclusive education and best practices for students with disabilities.

Context of the Study

The research was conducted within the region of Kentucky supported by the Ohio Valley Education Cooperative (OVEC). OVEC serves fifteen school districts within north central Kentucky and provides an avenue to support and facilitate regional planning, educational planning, and professional development to occur on an ongoing basis (OVEC, 2023). Although OVEC serves fifteen school districts in grades preschool through twelve, this study will focus on elementary school teachers, general education and special education teachers within the OVEC region teaching in grades kindergarten through five. Within OVEC is an Exceptional Children Services (ECS) department. The OVEC ECS department aims to provide leadership and provide specialized training and supports in collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and surrounding school districts (OVEC, 2023). One of the particular services provided to the school districts supported by OVEC is training, coaching, and support on Co-Teaching strategies.

To provide an overview of the fifteen school districts within OVEC during the 2021-2022 school year each district ranged from having 10.90% students with an Individual Education Program (IEP) at Anchorage Independent School District to 17.50% of students having an IEP at Spencer County School District. The statewide average for the 2021-2022 school year was 16.00%. This study focused on teachers within the OVEC region and their perceptions of co-teaching in the areas of professional development, administrator support, and co-planning. Students with disabilities that are provided special education services in the general education classroom through co-teaching are participating in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Indicator 5A from KDE

provides data on the percentage of students with an IEP serviced in the regular education classroom setting for 80% or more of their day. Below is a chart representing the percentage of students with an IEP in each of the 15 school districts within OVEC.

Table 1

Table 1 provides data from the 2021-2022 school year and the OVEC Region School Districts individual percentage of the total population of students with an IEP educated in the general education classroom setting for 80% or more of the school day during the 2021-2022 school year.

School District	>=80% in gen ed
Anchorage Independent Schools	89.20%
Bullitt County Schools	70.50%
Carroll County Schools	81.80%
Eminence Independent Schools	88.30%
Franklin County Schools	83.20%
Gallatin County Schools	85.60%
Grant County Schools	83.30%
Henry County Schools	84.30%
Oldham County Schools	77.80%
Owen County Schools	92.30%
Shelby County Schools	83.20%
Spencer County Schools	93.00%
Trimble County Schools	87.00%

Note: The percentages represent the percentage of total. District list by Indicator 5A: Inside the regular class 80% or more of the day.

Retrieved from:

https://kcewsreports.ky.gov/t/KCEWS/views/SpecialEducationIndicatorDashboardV2/1_Districts?%3Aembed=y&%3Aiid=1&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=

Table 1 Summary:

The state target had not been set for the 2021-2022 school year but individual districts within OVEC can be compared to the 2020-2021 school year state target of 75% of students educated within the regular education classroom for 80% or more of the school day. When comparing to the 2020-2021 state target, all but one school district met the state target.

This case study identified factors contributing to the success of an elementary school co-teaching model in grades kindergarten through five from the perceptions of general education and special education teachers within the OVEC region. As a result, other schools within the region, surrounding education cooperatives in the state of Kentucky, and universities will be able to employ the knowledge gathered to enhance teacher preparation programs, replicate and implement successful strategies, and create professional development targeted to address areas of deficit.

Ethical Considerations

When working with and educating students with disabilities, we have a moral and legal responsibility to provide them with services and support to meet their individual needs. The school systems across our nation have a responsibility to provide all students, especially students with disabilities, the skills, and experiences that will

effectively prepare them to function in a complex society with vastly changing demands (Jenkins, 1985). Additionally, as a researcher, I need to be cognizant not to push the narrative further that students with disabilities are perceived as being less than or not as capable compared to their typically developing peers. The term disability may potentially unintentionally create a connection to students with disabilities not having the same potential for academic success as students without disabilities. Society's positive value placed on individuals without disabilities deemed normal or without deficits creates the conditions in which students with disabilities remain separate (Gilham & Tompkins, 2016).

Additionally, I plan to utilize the results of this research to implement change. The desired change for the betterment of education and special education services that we provide for students with disabilities will be guided using the results of this study. Ensuring that intentional plans for change follow the findings of this study will be paramount.

Intentional use of a Structured Ethical Reflection (SER) tool guided the continued awareness of ethical considerations throughout this study. The intended use of a Structured Ethical Reflection tool guided the ethical considerations and implementation of the research process. Possible misconceptions or ethical concerns had the potential to arise throughout this process. The SER tool was a support to guide the work to alleviate and avoid possible negative implications for the participants that are most affected, the students themselves.

I chose six values as a focus in my reflection process. IDEA mandates one of the six, inclusivity. This mandate for inclusivity is through more of an elevated platform. In my day-to-day work as a Special Education specialist, I must be part of developing strategies and advising to promote inclusivity. Through the reflection process, I have concluded that when developing partnerships throughout this research, I ensured to maintain being cognizant of student needs and putting student needs at the center of this research.

Conviction and resilience are two additional values from the SER process that furthered the success of this research. Being aware of variances in predetermined opinions of other educators had the potential to sway the conviction and values that I hold. However, through resilience and holding true to the purpose of this research, planning for the future needs of students with disabilities I was able to remain a focus of this research process.

Opportunity being a value of high importance for me as a researcher is also a trait identified through the SER tool. Providing students with disabilities opportunities and creating opportunities for stakeholders worked in achieving the overarching purpose of this research. The overarching goal of this research process was to make decisions that are best for students to meet their needs most effectively. Maintaining the core values through implementing the SER tool throughout the process acted as a facilitator to the student-centered research process and dissemination of knowledge to enhance the educational experiences of students with disabilities(s).

Exploring researcher positionality is an important aspect of conducting qualitative research as it allows the researcher to acknowledge their own biases and how they might influence the research process. As a researcher conducting research on teacher perspectives of co-teaching, I reflected on my own experiences and biases related to co-teaching and teaching in general.

According to Creswell (2013), researcher positionality refers to "the influence of the researcher's background and beliefs on the research process" (p. 203). As such, I reflected on my own experiences as a teacher and a co-teacher, as well as any biases or assumptions I might have about co-teaching. To further explore my positionality, I also engaged in ongoing self-reflection throughout the research process (Finlay, 2002). I considered how my own experiences and biases may affect my interpretation of data and my interactions with participants.

Milner (2007) stated that dominant notions of what is categorized and accepted as normal in education practices. The positionality of a researcher is shaped by his/her unique mix of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other identifiers, including positions of power into which society has placed the person, as well as his/her personal life experiences within and around these identities (Tetreault, 1993). I believed myself nearly immune to falling into one of Milner's "unforeseen dangers." Any work in special education has the potential to be sensitive. As an educator who has worked with students of varying disabilities and needs, I had the potential to present a biased view of topics centralized in special education practices. Throughout this research process, it was imperative not to view this process from an influenced point of view due to my work in

education. While being cognizant of my potential personal bias towards the research and the impacts of bias, I aimed to also not lose sight of the moral imperative of the research. Including students receiving special education services in the least restrictive environment can be controversial. The controversy manifests when viewed by stakeholders who may hold differing perspectives and who are affected in varying degrees.

It is imperative that, as a researcher, I engaged in cultural self-reflection as well. To do this effectively, I posed conscious questions about myself. As addressed by Milner (2007), researchers engaging in thoughtful and intentional questions through self-reflection can bring awareness and consciousness to known (seen), unknown (unseen), and unanticipated (unforeseen) issues, perspectives, epistemologies, and positionality. I addressed this ethical consideration through the process of triangulating data within the case study. By utilizing data collected from stakeholders that were participants in the research, the data possessed reliability and validity. Ensuring the perspectives and participation of varying stakeholders worked to alleviate and be proactive regarding potential ethical harm.

The sensitive nature of special education is similar to how Milner (2007) discussed his positionality of conducting research. When conducting research centered on special education and general education teacher perceptions, the researcher must consider whether they have the cultural knowledge to accurately interpret and validate the experiences of the teachers (Milner,2007). Most educators have heard stories about students coming to school dirty, without proper clothes, and hungry from abusive homes.

On one of my first days as a former special education implementation coach (ARC chair), one of the students had come to my office for a “cooling off” period. She asked me, “What is your real name?” I asked for clarification and inquired if she meant my first name. She said, “Yes.” When I told her that my first name was Heidi, she responded with, “Why do you white people always have such stupid ass names?” I was a bit taken aback at first. After reflecting on the statement, my name probably sounds very unfamiliar to her. I loved the experiences that I gained while working at a diverse school. It gave me the opportunity to have a better understanding of the homes our students come from and their convictions and beliefs. Banks (1998) and Tillman (2002) reviewed the importance of researchers and their personal development of cultural knowledge within the communities being researched and how this is a critical part of the research process. Over the next three years, I had the opportunity to meet with multiple families daily, allowing me to better understand their perspectives.

Banks (1998) and Tillman (2002) reminded us that the researchers’ development of cultural knowledge is a critical component of the research process. Meaning who is conducting research with people and communities of color is less important than the knowledge developed by the researchers about the people and communities being studied.

In reading an article by Georgia Rhoades on *Dealing with Racism in the Classroom*, she stated that she could no longer see herself teaching in a world where she can no longer be invisibly non-racist (Rhoades, 1991). The knowledge of my positionality provided the road map to complete research with the intent of the success of our students and communities. Understanding teacher perceptions of co-teaching allows

and empowers me to determine successful strategies that can be employed to ensure students with disabilities have access to the same quality programs and academic experiences as their non-disabled peers. Most importantly, the outcomes of this study provide the evidence necessary to support changes in culture, practice, and policy for special education students on a smaller scale in the school of study and on a broader scale in our communities and state-wide educational practices. Our work should always be student facing and rooted in equity.

Trustworthiness: Strategies for Ensuring Credibility, Transferability, and Dependability

General criteria can be used in establishing the trustworthiness of the research. The criteria include credibility, transferability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility has been referenced as aligning findings with reality (Stahl & King, 2020). This can be a subjective question due to relying on individual judgments of the reader. For this study, credibility was promoted through the use of multiple sources of interviews. By not relying purely on one or two interview results data credibility was promoted as part of this research through establishing repeated patterns in the data (Stahl & King, 2020).

A second identifying factor identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) of trustworthiness is transferability. The design of a qualitative study does not aim to be replicated but also maintain patterns from one context to another (Stahl & King 2020). I aimed to guarantee that the transferability of data being established through the use of data collected from one on one semi structured interviews and intentionally coded for themes. Interview findings are reported out with a thick description of the processes for

readers to have a deep understanding of the context of the research circumstances. The duration of the study is also described in detail as well as the method and time frame to establish transferability of the research (Stahl & King, 2020). The transferability of the findings has been established through the use of current practices. Through more recent amendments to IDEA, inclusive education has been included by documenting the requirement that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment. The practices completed in this study are transferable due to the federal mandates and current practices in modern schools. This study occurred with teachers across the OVEC region with a range of experience and schema related to professional development which will provide a range of findings that have not been confined to a specific teacher.

Dependability, the third perspective that contributes to trustworthiness from Lincoln and Guba (1985) has been enforced throughout the research process and analysis by ensuring that my personal biases do not impact the research and data analysis or interpretation. My personal biases reflected in the data analysis would have negatively impacted the dependability of the research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The process of bracketing was used to ensure dependability. Discussed by Stahl and King (2020), bracketing separated the data into interpretations and observations as a way to create dependability. The bracketing process involved my bias as a researcher and the existence of my bias within the data analysis. I utilized the methods discussed above throughout my study to ensure credibility, transferability, and dependability to aim for

trustworthiness of the research to guide further practices and implementation of the findings.

Summary

The significance of my study is based in the federal and state policies outlined by IDEA which require the education of students with disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate with their non-disabled peers. When researching co-teaching it is paramount to study the perception of those who are implementing the instructional strategy. Chapter III outlines plan for researching teacher's perceptions of co-teaching.

The goal of chapter III is to outline the methods of research to address the identified research questions. A review of the context of study, procedures, study participants, data collection, and data analysis to outline and frame the connection to the identified methodology. Chapter III clarified utilizing a qualitative case study approach and how a qualitative case study can lead to appropriately defining a single unit of study to better understand a larger unit of study (Gerring, 2004). A review of ensuing trustworthiness and the steps taken to each transferability was also reviewed in Chapter III. An overview of theoretical frameworks of Role Theory and Critical Disability Theory correlated to the structuring of the research plan and enacting that plan. Participants, collection of data, and data analysis were discussed, and how they relate to the purpose of the research to determine the perspectives and implementation of co-teaching to support the needs of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

Data collected in Chapter III will guide the findings that will be reported in Chapter IV. The purpose of Chapter IV is to report the findings of the research following

the implementation of the identified methodology from chapter III. This study will contribute to the research of the perceptions of general education and special education, co-teaching pairs towards the development and implementation of co-teaching instructional strategies to continue to support students with disabilities.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This phenomenological study aimed to report on the perceptions of special education and general education co-teachers in grades kindergarten through five. Specifically, how co-planning time, administrator support, and professional development impact educator perceptions. Chapter four details the outcomes of this phenomenological inquiry aimed at addressing the following research questions posed in this study:

RQ 1: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of general education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

RQ 2: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of special education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

RQ 3: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what structures and supports currently in place do those involved in co-teaching believe contribute to the success of the co-teaching model?

RQ 4: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what additional support systems are needed for successful co-teaching in a fully inclusive setting?

This chapter is structured into three main sections: (1) researcher positionality, (2) data collection and analysis, which includes participant profiles, and (3) findings from a thematic analysis corresponding to each of the four overarching research questions.

Researcher Positionality

The researcher is a current practicing special education district-level employee. Previously the researcher piloted a co-teaching program at an elementary school in their

district of employment. A comprehensive grasp of special education best practices and policies shape the researcher's positionality as a researcher. The researcher's experiences advocating for students with disabilities and navigating conversation around implementing a co-teaching pilot program helped inform the researcher's inquiries throughout this study and guide the researcher to further explore teacher perspectives of co-teaching. The researcher approached the research with an objective lens and completed a structured ethical reflection to analyze their implicit bias. The hidden values and basic beliefs in action research act like a compass, guiding researchers toward a research style that is all about democracy, freedom, and making life better (Stringer et al., 2021). The researcher's personal experience of being a former special education co-teacher and general education co-teacher shaped the researcher's passion for co-teaching after witnessing the positive impacts that intentional co-teaching practices were able to have on former students of the researcher. They acknowledged their strong passion for co-teaching and understood the importance of listening to participants during the semi-structured interviews without imposing their own personal influence or bias as a researcher. The researcher ensured to maintain control over their communication with participants to ensure that their own feelings, opinions, or emotions didn't overshadow the voices of the participants or their experiences. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews without injecting personal beliefs or core values into the data collection process. They aimed to maintain their objectivity to avoid potential risks such as exerting personal biased perspectives. The researcher's goal was to conduct the research with deliberate intentionality and objectivity, with the goal of striving to remain neutral while staying mindful of potential influences.

Role Theory and Critical Disability Theory

Role theory and critical disability theory offered the researcher a valuable perspective for conducting research on teacher perspectives of co-teaching. Both role theory and critical disability theory each contributed unique insights and considerations to the study. Role Theory provided a framework for understanding teachers' various roles in co-taught classrooms and how these roles influence their attitudes and experiences (Holland & Skinner, 1987).

When conducting semi-structured interviews for this research, the researcher was able to explore how teachers perceive their roles within co-teaching partnerships (Holland & Skinner, 1987). By examining role clarity, role conflict, and role ambiguity, the researcher was able to gain further insight into how teachers' perceptions of their roles may impact their attitudes and thoughts of co-teaching (Biddle, 1979). In the context of research on teacher perspectives of co-teaching, critical disability theory offered insights into how inclusive practices of co-teaching are conceptualized and implemented in educational settings (Campbell & Oliver, 1996). Through the lens of critical disability theory, researchers can thoroughly examine possible underlying assumptions and dynamics present in co-teaching relationships between two co-teachers (Campbell & Oliver, 1996).

By employing role theory and critical disability theory within the study design, the researcher was able to delve into various aspects of teacher perspectives of co-teaching and student success. This included looking at the roles teachers take on in co-teaching environments as well as taking a closer look at co-teaching dynamics. By doing this, the researcher gained a deeper insight to teacher perspectives of co-teaching

especially with how co-planning time, administrator support, and professional development has on student success.

Data Collection and Analysis Overview

Analyzing qualitative data involves several stages, starting with formulating questions, followed by discovery, comprehensive reading, and interpretation of the study (Scott, 2013). In this study, data came from semi-structured interviews conducted through Microsoft Teams. After data collection, the next step was transcribing the semi structured interviews. Patterns and meanings were identified across the data sets using a thematic analysis approach. This was accomplished using a five-step process: immersion in the data to gain familiarity by reading and re-reading, coding with annotations, visual representation to discern themes through color coding, condensing the transcriptions by reviewing identified themes, and interpretation to formulate thematic categories (Boyatzis, 1998). All interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Teams. Initially, manual coding captured significant quotes throughout the transcriptions. This was followed by in-vivo coding to derive codes directly from participants' words. Data collected through manual coding was then analyzed based on common themes for each research question. Thematic analysis of the transcripts was also utilized to help identify patterns of themes.

Participant Profiles

All 10 participants in this study were either special education or general education teachers in grades kindergarten through five and were, at the time of their participation in the study, involved in a co-teaching model within the Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative (OVEC) during the 2023-2024 school year. The ten participants represented

educators from several public school districts within OVEC. Thirteen potential participants were contacted, and ten confirmed their participation. Ten teachers were randomly chosen as participants, and all completed the consent form (appendix C). The breakdown of participants is included in Table 1 with their identifier, gender, years of teaching experience, and years of experience involved in a co-teaching model.

Demographic of Participants

Table 1

Participant	Gender	Certificate	Years as a Co-Teacher
A	Female	Special Education	9 years
B	Female	Special Education	7 years
C	Female	Special Education	3 years
D	Female	Special Education	4 years
E	Female	General Education	15 years
F	Female	Dual Certified	10 years
G	Female	General Education	8 years
H	Female	Dual Certified	5 years
I	Female	General Education	9 years
J	Female	General Education	7 years

Note: Participants' names are pseudonyms to protect identity.

Findings from Thematic Analysis

Themes for each of the four research questions were developed after the data transcriptions were coded using deductive and inductive, or In Vivo, coding. The first round of emerging themes were organized and derived using two strategies. Common themes emerged with the use of anecdotal note taking capturing the relevant quotes of participants during interviews and from transcripts. Thoughtful and impactful quotes were captured during the initial manual coding phase from a series of readings of the

transcripts to increase familiarity. The purpose of this was to help the researcher understand the context as well as to identify key themes that emerged throughout the interviews. Transcripts were highlighted for significant information through annotation. The second organizational strategy was initial coding. Labels were assigned to sections of the text to identify powerful and recurring themes utilized was grouping the data according to which responses related specifically to each individual research question. Data was electronically organized in a spreadsheet based on commonality grouping. This process was completed for research questions one through four. The following table details the codes and themes that emerged as a result of the coding process by identifying first-order codes, second-order codes, and final themes.

Table 4
Emergent Codes/Themes

Research Question	First-Order Codes	Second Order Codes	Themes
RQ 1: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of general education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?	<p>Inclusion of students with disabilities is beneficial for all students</p> <p>Experience co-teaching with an effective special education teacher</p> <p>Belief that students with disabilities can be successful</p>	<p>Positive pre-disposition towards students with disabilities</p> <p>Knowledgeable special education co-teacher</p>	Inclusion
RQ 2: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of special education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?	<p>Student Behavior that arises and pulls the special ed teacher away from their co-teaching assignment</p> <p>Pre-determined division of co-teacher responsibilities</p> <p>Relationship between special education teacher and general education co-teaching pairs</p>	<p>General education teacher knowledge of co-teaching practices and expectations</p>	Relationships and empathy
RQ 3: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what structures and supports currently in place do those involved in co-	<p>Frequent and intentional collaborative planning time between co-teachers</p> <p>Professional development</p>	<p>Opportunities to grow as educators, specifically in the co-teaching model</p> <p>Support from your co-teaching partner</p>	Opportunity and Support

<p>teaching believe contribute to the success of the co-teaching model?</p>	<p>opportunities on the co-teaching model, particularly in parallel and station teaching</p> <p>Administrators who are knowledgeable and supportive of co-teaching expectations</p>	<p>built through a positive relationship</p> <p>Intentional pairing of co-teachers prior to implementation</p>	
<p>RQ 4: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what additional supports systems are needed for successful co-teaching in a fully inclusive setting?</p>	<p>Professional development opportunities made available prior to and concurrent with co-teaching implementation for regular education and special education teacher</p> <p>Master schedule that allows for built-in planning time across all co-teaching assignments</p>	<p>Professional and personal growth through collaboration</p>	<p>Collaboration and Trust</p>

Theme derived from research question #1: Inclusion

RQ 1: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of general education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success.

Four of the ten interviewees were current regular education teachers. All four interviewees had a passion for working with students with disabilities that emerged in their interview responses. Three of the four regular education interviewees either had close friendships or family members who were special education teachers, which impacted their outlook and disposition towards the overall theme of inclusion.

First-order coding: Of all four interviews conducted with regular education teachers, there was an emergent theme of a positive predisposition towards inclusion being beneficial not only for students with disabilities but also for general education students. Of the four teachers interviewed, all of them mentioned having the most student success through the co-teaching model when having had the opportunity to co-teacher with a special education teacher who was knowledgeable and effective when implementing co-teaching strategies. Although the general education teachers may not have had a robust knowledge of co-teaching implementation strategies, they had a special education co-teacher who was knowledgeable and supported them while working collaboratively.

Table 5: Quotes from research question one and first-order coding: Theme of inclusion

Research Question	First order coding leading to theme	Participant	Sample Quote
RQ 1: For those actively involved in a	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inclusion of students with	Participant G	I think it's amazing. I think from what I have

<p>co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of general education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?</p>	<p>disabilities is beneficial for all students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience co-teaching with an effective special education teacher • Belief that students with disabilities can be successful 		<p>seen, keeping kids especially special needs kids in the classroom is so beneficial because they learn so much from their peers and just being in the classroom environment.</p>
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Overall, the first-round themes of the general education co-teacher’s perceived benefits and challenges of co-teaching, positive predisposition towards inclusion, experience working with an effective special education co-teacher, and belief that students with disabilities can be successful contribute to the overarching theme of inclusion. This was highlighted through the importance of collaboration, effective practices, and supportive environments in creating inclusive educational experiences for all students, including those of students with disabilities.

Second-order coding: Next, the researcher used in-vivo coding through a deeper evaluation of the first-order themes. This involved a second order of coding and assigning labels to specific phrases and words that came directly from the participant interview transcripts. With the aim to capture the participants' own language and their perspectives, the second-order themes of having a positive pre-disposition towards students with

disabilities and co-teaching with a knowledgeable special education co-teacher were derived. Participant G shared, “Last year and this year have been better for me because I’ve been working with a co-teacher that I get along well with personally and professionally. We just vibe well with each other. We build off of each other and our personalities go really well together.”

Table 6: Quotes from research question one and second-order coding: Theme of inclusion

Research Question	Second-order coding leading to theme	Participant Sample	Quote
RQ 1: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of general education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive pre-disposition towards students with disabilities • Knowledgeable special education co-teacher 	Participant F	So I would say it was definitely effective and then working with the teachers like so we would sit down and look at all of the different activities and lessons that you would do within one school day and then broke it up over OK, this, this part I would feel comfortable taking lead on.
		Participant G	Last year and this year have been better for me because I’ve been working with a co-teacher that I get along well with personally and professionally. We just vibe really well with each other. We build off of each

			other and our personalities go really well together
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The participants in this study indicated their love and desire for working with students with disabilities in an inclusive setting. It is evident that they have a passion for advocating for inclusive classrooms through the practice of co-teaching. Although none of the regular education teachers are special education teachers by trade, they recognized the importance of creating an inclusive classroom, and this is possible through collaboration with an effective special education co-teacher and a positive predisposition towards co-teaching and openness to collaboration leading to the overall identified theme of inclusion for research question one.

Theme derived from research question #2: Relationships and Empathy

RQ 2: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of special education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

The theme of relationships and empathy emerged from research question two which explored the perceptions of special education teachers engaged in a co-teaching model regarding its connection to student success. Within the context of co-teaching, where both general and special education teachers are expected to collaborate closely and frequently to support learners of diverse needs, the emphasis on relationships becomes paramount for student success. Questions 6, 9, and 11 emerged the themes of relationships and empathy. Co-teachers working within a co-teaching setting may be more likely to develop strong connections with their co-teaching partners that they support on a collaborative level. These relationships are characterized by mutual respect

for one another but also incorporate trust and understanding. Therefore, the theme of relationships and empathy submerged from the semi-structured interviews that occurred regarding research question number two.

First Order Coding: First order coding for research question two uncovered the first order coding theme of student behavior and other duties having an impact on co-teaching and student success, division of co-teaching responsibilities, and the importance of a positive and healthy working relationship between co-teachers.

Table 7: Quotes from research question two and first order coding: Relationships and Empathy

Research Question	First order coding leading to theme	Participant	Sample Quote
RQ 2: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of special education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Behavior and other duties having an impact on co-teaching success • Division of co-teaching responsibilities • The importance of a positive and healthy working relationship between co-teachers 	Participant D	I would say the main reason that would happen the most often is there would be a lot of times when a student is kind of in crisis, so what you plan on doing during your planning period doesn't always get to be done.
		Participant J	But then I think as a school year gets going and you're thrown curveballs left and right, the weight of everything that is needed to be a good teacher can be a lot.

		Participant E	Some days it's like triage, but other days it's, you know, it's like, this is so great. It's such an awesome day. So those are the days we live for.
		Participant A	Yes, there's conversation and conversation with the regular teacher saying, would you be open to this? And how would you feel about sharing your classroom? How would you feel about sharing planning? How would you feel about differentiation if a test had to be modified?

First Order Coding: First-order coding involved the initial stage of analyzing and rereading interview responses to identify and categorize key themes or concepts. For research question number two, concerning the perceptions of special education teachers involved in a co-teaching model, first-order coding allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the interview transcripts to identify relevant statements and quotes related to the connection between co-teaching and student success. For research question number two focused on special education teachers' perceptions regarding the connection of co-teaching and student success, the first-order coding process involved identifying specific statements from the interview data that related to special education

teacher's perceptions of co-teaching connections to student success. These statements were then grouped into thematic categories that emerged during the coding process.

The first theme that emerged from the first-order coding was related to student behavior and other duties associated with being a special education teacher. This theme highlighted challenges such as handling student behavior issues and attending meetings that may disrupt the co-teaching assignment due to the special education teacher being pulled in many directions. It also emphasized the importance of understanding and flexibility from the general education teacher when these situations arise. The second theme identified through first-order coding revolved around the pre-determined and agreed-upon division of co-teacher responsibilities. This theme emphasized the collaborative nature of co-teaching, wherein both the general education and special education teacher discuss and agree upon their respective roles and responsibilities to ensure effective collaboration in the classroom. A quote provided by Participant E emphasized the first-order coding outcomes,

Some days it's like triage, but other days it's, you know, it's like, this is so great.

It's such an awesome day. So those are the days we live for.” The third theme that emerged from the first-order coding process emphasized the importance of cultivating a positive and healthy working relationship between special education teachers and general education co-teaching pairs. This theme highlighted the importance of trust, communication, and mutual respect in fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students.

(Participant E, 2024)

Overall, the first-order coding process involved systematically analyzing the interview data to identify the key themes discussed above and how those key themes related to special education teachers' perceptions regarding the connection between co-teaching and student success. These themes provided valuable insights for the researcher into the dynamics of co-teaching relationships and their impact on student outcomes in inclusive classrooms.

Second-order coding: Upon further analysis of the transcripts, a deeper evaluation was conducted during the second-order coding process, which led to the application of in vivo coding techniques. This method allowed the researcher to explore the data further, capturing the participants' own language and expressions to capture their perspectives. The interviewed practicing special education co-teachers emphasized the critical significance of general education teachers' understanding of co-teaching practices. Participant F shared the following statement, "I would say that the impact is extremely beneficial. I have also had really good co-teaching experiences. So I think that that's probably why I feel that way is because we always have a lot of resources on like effective co-teaching strategies and they involve both like regular classroom teachers in that and special Ed teachers so that we can really become a team." Their insight and responses emphasized the correlation between general educators' familiarity with co-teaching strategies built through relationships and empathy and the subsequent student success.

Table 8: Quotes from research question two and second-order coding: Relationships and Empathy

Research Question	Second-order coding leading to theme	Participant Sample	Quote
RQ 2: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of special education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General education teacher knowledge of co-teaching practices and expectations 	Participant F	I would say that the impact is extremely beneficial. I have also had really good co-teaching experiences. So I think that that's probably why I feel that way is because we always have a lot of resources on like effective co-teaching strategies and they involve both like regular classroom teachers in that and special Ed teachers so that we can really become a team

The quote provided by Participant F sheds a light in which how a positive perception of the impact of co-teaching on student learning. The participant used language such as "extremely beneficial" based on their experiences to describe their perceptions of co-teaching. The mention of "really good co-teaching experiences" suggests that the effectiveness of co-teaching strategies contributes to their positive perception toward co-teaching and the connection to student success. A theme derived from the interview transcripts, attributing the success of co-teaching to the involvement of both the regular education classroom teacher and special education teacher, which emphasized the importance of collaboration and teamwork in implementing effective co-teaching practices. Overall, the transcripts and second-order coding highlight the significance of the knowledge of general education teachers in the area of co-teaching

practices and collaboration among educators in creating and implementing successful co-teaching practices.

Theme derived from research question #3: Opportunity and Support

RQ 3: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what structures and supports currently in place do those involved in co-teaching believe contribute to the success of the co-teaching model?

Research question number three investigates the support structures in place that are considered essential by general education and special education teachers actively engaged in co-teaching and their connection to student success. From the semi-structured interviews, the themes of Opportunity and Support emerged from the participant's language. Eight of the ten participants shared the previous positive experiences and benefits from receiving professional learning but also the desire for more professional learning opportunities and support from administrators in this area. All ten participants mentioned the benefits of co-planning times, and out of those, all of them also believed that they did not have enough co-planning time to ensure student success.

Effective co-teaching depends on having solid systems in place and the right kind of support, such as support from the administration, professional development opportunities, access to resources, clear lines of communication, and fostering a positive school atmosphere (Perry, 2017). Digging into the participants' language through their interview responses and how their responses shed light on how Opportunity and Support within schools affect teacher perspectives of co-teaching and the connection to student success. The participant's language helped to emerge them theme of Opportunity and Support in fostering a successful co-teaching environment as well as understanding its link to student success.

First Order Coding: Building administrator and co-teaching partner support play a crucial role in creating a positive perception of co-teaching practices among educators. When one participant was asked about administrator support for co-teaching, she believed that she did have the administrator support. However, her response alluded to it being due to mandates rather than student success. Participant B stated, “OK, I feel like they supported it in a sense that it needed to be done or they would be breaking the law. But I do not feel like they supported it in a sense that it needed to be done well in order to help students meet their needs.” Other participants felt support from their administrators and/or co-teaching pair. Participant Carly shared, “The closer that I was to the co-teacher, the more effective our co-teaching practices were for students.” This participant also felt a strong sense of support from their building principal. In some scenarios, teachers had building support through their co-teaching partner and their building administration. Participant F shared, “One of the years that I taught special Ed, I co-taught in a classroom and we actually did a co-teaching lab where people came in and watched us do different kinds of co-teaching and then we had a meeting after school and debriefed.” This participant also shared that this was set up by their building administration in collaboration with district special education administrators.

Table 9: Quotes from research question three and first order coding: Opportunity and Support

Research Question	First order coding leading to theme	Participant	Sample Quote
RQ 3: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent and intentional collaborative planning time 	Participant F	The closer that I was to the co-teacher, the more effective our co-

<p>structures and supports currently in place do those involved in co-teaching believe contribute to the success of the co-teaching model?</p>	<p>between co-teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development opportunities on the co-teaching model, particularly in parallel and station teaching • Administrators who are knowledgeable and supportive of co-teaching expectations 	<p>Participant F</p>	<p>teaching practices were for students.</p> <p>One of the years that I taught special Ed, I co-taught in a classroom and we actually did a co-teaching lab where people came in and watched us do different kinds of co-teaching and then we had a meeting after school and debriefed. So I have done that as well where we've modeled co-teaching. We did parallel teaching as one of them where we were both teaching at the same time and everybody in school was like, I've never actually done that but they loved it.</p>
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The support and guidance from the co-teaching partner and administrators provided reassurance and validation. This also showed the participants that they were “in it” with the teachers in their buildings and not just a bystander in co-teaching practices. The ongoing collaboration and professional learning opportunities actively involved addressing challenges and providing resources to foster an environment of trust and collaboration, enhancing overall perspectives and effectiveness of co-teaching.

Second-order coding: Deeper evaluation and examination of the transcripts resulted in in vivo coding during the second-order coding process for RQ 3. Participant D shared an insightful thought regarding time to reflect and grow with their co-teaching

partner being crucial to student success, “I think maybe having time to reflect on the co-teaching practices, specifically how those are working, is better than just reflecting on a lesson and creating a new lesson.” All ten participants interviewed believed that having intentional time to reflect with their co-teaching was crucial to the connection between co-teaching implementation and student success. Participant D’s quote stood out due to the nature of the statement being student-centered and not teacher centered.

Table 10: Quotes from research question three and second-order coding: Opportunity and Support

Research Question	Second-order coding leading to theme	Participant Sample	Quote
RQ 3: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what structures and supports currently in place do those involved in co-teaching believe contribute to the success of the co-teaching model?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to grow as educators, specifically in the co-teaching model • Support from your co-teaching partner built through a positive relationship • Intentional pairing of co-teachers prior to implementation 	Participant G	So the hardest challenges I would say would just be student behavior and working together to just find a way to help those students so that they can be successful and all the other students can be successful.
		Participant D	I think maybe having time to reflect on the co-teaching practices, specifically how those are working, is better than just reflecting on a lesson and creating a new lesson.
		Participant B	I feel like you really have to. I think the administrator has to

			think about how they are pairing the ECE teacher and the Gen. Ed teacher. I kind of refer to it and previously it's it's like a marriage. Almost. You kind of have to sit down and think about what are your non-negotiables and kind of work through those.
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The responses to the third research question revealed a relationship between both general education and special education teachers' beliefs about how Opportunity and Support in various forms help to meet the needs of their students and the connections of co-teaching to student success. One veteran teacher shared her experience with co-teaching as a special education teacher, "So I would say it was definitely effective and then working with the general education teachers we like. We would sit down and look at all of the different activities and lessons that you would do within one school day and then break it up over who felt most comfortable with each task and who would take the lead on that task." This veteran teacher shared how their building principal's support for co-teaching and creating a master schedule that allowed time for co-planning was essential to creating opportunities for co-planning. It was also notable that several teachers interviewed mentioned their opportunities for professional development or lack thereof, affected their beliefs towards co-teaching and the connection to student success. Six teachers feel that they did have the proper amount of professional development but

would have also preferred ongoing professional development throughout their co-teaching assignment provided concurrently with implementation.

Theme derived from research question #4: Collaboration and Trust

RQ 4: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what additional support systems are needed for successful co-teaching in a fully inclusive setting?

The research study participants emphasized the importance of teacher perspectives of co-teaching and additional support systems needed for a successful implementation. In addition, the support offered and any additional support needed will directly impact a teacher's perception of the effectiveness of co-teaching and the connection to student success. Nine participants shared the importance of collaboration and trust. Questions 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 of the semi-structured interviews are aligned to the fourth research question and provide insight into the perceptions of general education and special education co-teachers when it comes to additional support systems needed for the successful implementation of co-teaching.

First Order Coding: The quotes highlight the significance of professional development opportunities and scheduling considerations in facilitating effective co-teaching partnerships. The first quote by Participant C underscores the importance of having a master schedule that allows both regular education and special education teachers to have built-in planning time during the day, “When the principal creates a schedule that you know is not conducive to having both teachers available to plan during the day, then that becomes an issue, right.” This aligns with the need for collaborative planning mentioned in the quote, ensuring that co-teachers have dedicated time to co-plan

effectively. Additionally, participant C made a reference to using a walkthrough tool, “We used a walkthrough tool. We had coaches and administrators that came through and used it and then just kind of used that as a gauge to see how well we were doing or what professional learning we may need more of.” This quote indicated a proactive approach to professional learning and development by this participant's administrator.

Table 11: Quotes from research question four and first order coding: Collaboration and Trust

Research Question	First order coding leading to theme	Participant	Sample Quote
RQ 4: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what additional support systems are needed for successful co-teaching in a fully inclusive setting?	Professional development opportunities made available prior to and concurrent with co-teaching implementation for regular education and special education teacher	Participant J	More education for co-teachers or teachers newer to Co teaching. I shouldn't say newer teachers, just teachers that have never really co-taught.
	Master schedule that allows for built-in planning time across all co-teaching assignments	Participant C	...we used a walkthrough tool. We had coaches and administrators that came through and used it and then just kind of used that as a gauge to see how well we were doing or what professional learning we may need more of
		Participant H	Right now in January, I'm getting a new student. I think next week and I met with the teacher and she was like, can we do Co teaching every day? And I was

		Participant C	<p>like, all I have left is my lunch time. That's all that's left in my schedule. I have 20 to 30 minutes every day.</p> <p>And so when the principal creates a schedule that you know is not conducive to having both teachers available to plan during the day, then that becomes an issue, right.</p>
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These quotes illustrate the importance of building trust through intentional relationship-building, shared responsibilities, and support from administrators in fostering effective co-teaching partnerships.

Second-Order Coding: Collaboration and trust are paramount for the success of co-teaching models in education. The theme of professional growth through collaboration emerged through second-order coding and further analysis of the interview transcripts. Educators engaging in co-teaching partnerships often rely on their ability to work harmoniously with one another to support student learning effectively. As stated by Participant A, “Co-teaching can be very powerful, but it's dependent upon who you're Co-teaching with and whether you've taken the time to intentionally work on your relationship with that Co-teacher.” Participant A indicates that co-teaching can be very powerful and can have significant benefits for students when done well. However, the transcript highlights that these benefits are contingent on the compatibility and collaborative efforts of the co-teachers. There is an emphasis on the importance of

deliberately investing time and energy into fostering a positive working relationship with the co-teacher to maximize the potential impact of co-teaching on student success.

Table 12: Quotes from research question four and second order coding: Collaboration and Trust

Research Question	Second-order coding leading to theme	Participant Sample	Quote
RQ 4: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what additional support systems are needed for successful co-teaching in a fully inclusive setting?	Professional and personal growth through collaboration	Participant D	I think that having more opportunities to see Co teaching and other schools would it would be, it would have been helpful versus just having the one I think talking about it.
		Participant A	So Co-teaching can be very powerful, but it's dependent upon who you're Co-teaching with and whether you've taken the time to intentionally work on your relationship with that Co-teacher.
		Participant A	So that was another big factor. Not only did the principal support Co-teaching and push for that, but my direct administrator also pushed for it. And so that allowed for us to have that intentional time that

			was almost like sacred time.
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The results of second order coding emerged the themes of Collaboration and Trust. Highlighted throughout the interview transcripts, there is a critical role of administrators' support in fostering collaboration and trust within a co-teaching partnership for student success. The mention of the principal and direct administrator pushing for co-teaching demonstrates Participant A's administrator's commitment to co-teaching, which created an environment conducive to collaborative efforts. By advocating for co-teaching and providing dedicated time for planning and collaboration, the leadership establishes a foundation of support for co-teaching, throughout the interview transcripts, themes related to how leadership support can facilitate the establishment of trust and collaboration, contributing to the success of co-teaching initiatives.

Summary of Chapter IV

The perceptions of 10 general education and special education teachers were highlighted after an analysis of the semi-structured interview transcripts. Transcripts were coded through deductive and inductive coding. Deductive and inductive coding themes were derived from the quotes and sentiments shared by participants regarding their experiences as co-teachers within the OVEC in grades kindergarten through five. Implications and recommendations are given in chapter five will focus on the teacher's perceptions of co-teaching found in this current chapter. Chapter five will also discuss suggestions for future research as well as recommendations for policy change within education.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
FUTURE RESEARCH

In this chapter, I share the conclusions drawn after interviewing ten teachers across grades kindergarten through five in the Ohio Valley Education Cooperative. These semi-structured one-on-one interviews focused on understanding teachers' perspectives of co-teaching, specifically examining how they perceive the impact of administrator support, the professional development provided to them, and co-planning. Through the coding process and analysis of the interviews, I aimed to uncover and share insights that inform future practices and research in the effectiveness of co-teaching and student success.

RQ 1: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of general education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

RQ 2: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of special education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

RQ 3: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what structures and supports currently in place do those involved in co-teaching believe contribute to the success of the co-teaching model?

RQ 4: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what additional support systems are needed for successful co-teaching in a fully inclusive setting?

Implications

RQ 1: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of general education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

Interpretations

Several key interpretations emerged when analyzing the data regarding general education teachers' perceptions of the connection between co-teaching and student success in co-taught classrooms. A prevalent positive disposition towards inclusion was evident amongst the general education teachers interviewed. This indicated a belief in the advantages of co-taught classrooms not only for students with disabilities but also for their peers when working with an effective and collaborative special education teacher. General education teachers interviewed who recognized and acknowledged the benefits of co-taught classrooms alluded to understanding and holding value in co-teaching practices.

The data reinforced the critical role played by having an effective special education co-teacher when implementing successful co-teaching strategies and connection to student success. The general education teachers interviewed consistently highlighted the importance of collaborating with knowledgeable and skilled special education co-teachers. The semi-structured interview analysis recognizes the coinciding expertise and contributions an effective special education co-teacher brings to the co-teaching partnership. It suggests that successful co-teaching relies on collaborating with a pairing of teachers with skills and knowledge between general and special education teachers rather than solely on the efforts of one of the co-teachers.

Additionally, the interpretations revealed the passion the general education teachers interviewed exhibited in working with students with disabilities in inclusive settings. This passion seemed to extend beyond their job requirements when being chosen to be a co-teacher and indicates a genuine commitment to advocating for inclusive classrooms. It suggests that these educators view inclusion as more than just a pedagogical teaching approach but as a foundation for equity within their schools.

Overall, these interpretations paint a picture of general education teachers who are not only cognizant of the benefits of collaboratively co-taught classrooms and effective co-teaching practices but who also possess a genuine passion for creating inclusive learning environments. This suggests a readiness and willingness among general education teachers to embrace inclusive practices and collaborate effectively when co-teaching with an effective special education teacher to promote equity and inclusion.

Implications

Schools should prioritize initiatives aimed at supporting collaborative partnerships between general and special education teachers. These initiatives should be done intentionally with a clear plan for implementation. Providing resources and professional development opportunities to enhance teamwork and instructional delivery among general education and special education co-teachers should be prioritized.

In addition, the findings emphasized the passion exhibited by teachers for working with students with disabilities in inclusive settings, underscoring the need to nurture and celebrate educators' commitment to inclusive education. Administrators should cultivate a culture within their buildings that values and supports co-teaching practices amongst general education and special education teachers, providing avenues

for professional growth opportunities prior to and concurrent with implementing co-teaching practices. Furthermore, the importance of creating supportive environments that facilitate collaboration and communication among co-teaching teams was highlighted, emphasizing the need for schools to foster shared responsibility amongst co-teachers for student success.

Finally, the data pointed to the significance of having a personal connection and professional compatibility between co-teachers in effectively collaborating. This suggests the importance of efforts to foster the relationship dynamics conducive to collaborative co-teaching practices. In summary, the interpretations drawn from the data underscore the importance of promoting positive attitudes towards inclusion, supporting collaborative partnerships, nurturing educators' passion for inclusive education, creating supportive environments, and facilitating personal connections among co-teachers to enhance student success through co-teaching practices in inclusive classrooms.

RQ 2: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of special education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

Interpretations

The data analysis findings for research question two highlight significant insights into special education teachers' perceptions of the connection between co-teaching and student success. A prominent theme of relationships and empathy emerged, highlighting the crucial role of interpersonal professional connections and understanding when working in a co-teaching environment. Special education teachers emphasized the importance of cultivating strong relationships with their co-teaching partners. Strong

relationships are characterized by mutual respect, trust, and empathy. These relationships are seen as a fundamental part for effective collaboration and, ultimately, student success when related to teacher perceptions of co-teaching. From the semi-structured interviews, it was evident that relationships and empathy are essential components for co-teaching collaboration and, ultimately, student success. Empathy plays a primary role in shaping these relationships. Special education teachers are frequently pulled from their co-teaching assignment for emergencies that may arise such as student behavior concerns or special education team meetings. This requires empathy and understanding from the general education teacher when the special education teacher may not always be as present as they would like to be. Additionally, teachers by nature, typically possess a heightened sense of empathy. This heightened sense of empathy enables them to better understand their students' unique needs and challenges, which is more likely to lead to student success. Within the context of a co-teaching setting, this empathy often flows into their collaboration as co-teachers. Through the lens and disposition of having an empathetic understanding, teachers can more effectively tailor their support and collaboration efforts for student success.

Additionally, the data highlighted the challenges faced by special education teachers, including addressing student behavior issues and attending to administrative duties that may interrupt their co-teaching assignments. Despite these challenges, special education teachers highlighted the importance of recognition of the challenges and demonstrated flexibility from their general education counterparts. This supported the need for supportive and accommodating co-teaching partnerships to effectively address students' diverse needs when in a co-teaching partnership. Lastly, the findings related to

research question two emphasized the collaborative nature of co-teaching, with both general and special education teachers discussing and agreeing upon their respective roles and responsibilities. This was highlighted by the study participants as an area of importance to increase effective collaboration and student success.

Implications

These interpretations have several implications for practice and research around co-teaching to support student success. Professional development and training programs that build strong relationships and foster empathy among co-teaching partners are needed. Co-teaching educators should be equipped with the skills and strategies necessary to establish supportive and collaborative working relationships with clearly defined roles that promote student success.

It is crucial for schools to recognize the unique challenges that special education teachers face when in co-teaching settings and supporting students with various needs across multiple grade levels, such as managing student behavior and handling additional responsibilities. By providing adequate support and resources tailored to these specific areas, schools can help alleviate these challenges and empower special education teachers to actively participate in co-teaching partnerships. This support can enhance collaboration between general and special education teachers, ultimately benefiting student learning and success in co-teaching classrooms. Additionally, the collaborative nature of co-teaching spotlights the importance of clear communication and mutual understanding between co-teaching pairs. Administrators should support in facilitating open communication channels and promote a culture of collaboration and teamwork among

general education and special education teacher pairs to enhance the effectiveness of co-teaching practices.

Overall, the interpretations of the data highlight the importance of relationships, empathy, and collaboration in co-teaching environments. This offers valuable insights for co-teachers, administrators, and future researchers who may strive to promote student success in co-teaching partnerships and inclusive classroom settings to increase student success.

RQ 3: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what structures and supports currently in place do those involved in co-teaching believe contribute to the success of the co-teaching model?

Interpretations

The data analysis findings for research question three reveal the key components and supports that general and special education teachers involved in co-teaching practices believe are important for successful co-teaching. Firstly, the themes of opportunity and support emerged from the participants' language related to research question three. This indicated the critical role of these factors in contributing to effective co-teaching practices and ultimately enhancing student success. The participants expressed a desire for more professional learning opportunities, particularly for professional learning concurrent with their co-teaching assignment. Four participants expressed interest in professional learning specifically related to the six different co-teaching models. The participants also shared a desire for increased support from administrators, highlighting the importance of ongoing professional development and administrative backing and understanding how to promote successful co-teaching partnerships.

Additionally, the data emphasized the significance of intentional co-planning time in facilitating collaboration and instructional planning among co-teaching pairs. All participants shared that they often collaborate via email while passing one another in the hallway, text message, or after school hours but believe intentional co-planning time would allow for increased effectiveness of their co-teaching implementation. Despite recognizing the benefits of co-planning, participants expressed concerns about the insufficient time allocated for this purpose, emphasizing the need for adequate resources and structures to support effective co-planning practices.

Implications

These interpretations have several implications for practice and policy in the areas of co-teaching and promoting inclusive education. Schools and educational institutions should prioritize providing professional learning opportunities and support structures tailored to the needs of co-teaching pairs. Administrators should actively support and facilitate ongoing professional development initiatives for both the general education and special education teacher to enhance co-teaching effectiveness and promote collaborative practices within their buildings.

Secondly, schools should allocate sufficient time and resources for co-planning activities, with the goal of recognizing the important role of collaborative planning when facilitating effective instructional delivery and implementing co-teaching practices. Co-teachers should advocate for and assist in negotiating for adequate co-planning time within their school schedules, ensuring that co-teaching pairs have the necessary opportunities to plan and coordinate their instructional efforts effectively. This could be done by school administrators ensuring that the team lead for the school's special

education department is included in the planning process when creating the master schedule.

The findings also display the importance of building a supportive school culture that values and prioritizes collaboration and teamwork among co-teaching pairs. Administrators should foster and model a positive school atmosphere that encourages open communication, mutual respect, and collaboration, with the goal in mind of enhancing the overall effectiveness of co-teaching practices to promote student success. In summary, the interpretations drawn from the data highlight the crucial role of structures for opportunity and support in fostering successful co-teaching partnerships that enhance student success.

RQ 4: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what additional support systems are needed for successful co-teaching in a fully inclusive setting?

Interpretations

The research participants alluded to and discussed the pivotal role of additional support systems in facilitating successful co-teaching practices. Collaboration and trust emerged as central themes. This emphasizes the importance of fostering positive working relationships and shared responsibilities among co-teaching partners. The quotes highlighted in Chapter Four display the significance of professional development opportunities and scheduling considerations when aiming to support effective co-teaching partnerships. Additionally, the data emphasizes that a proactive approach to professional learning offered and supported by administrators indicates a commitment to fostering a supportive environment conducive to effective co-teaching practices.

Implications

These interpretations have several implications for practice in the realm of co-teaching and inclusive education. Schools and educational institutions need to prioritize the provision of professional development opportunities with an intentional and specific focus on fostering collaboration and trust among co-teaching pairs. The professional development should be provided to both co-teaching partners. Administrators should also support and facilitate ongoing professional learning initiatives to enhance co-teaching effectiveness and promote collaborative practices while also being an active participant in the offered professional development. This will allow administrators to understand the expectations of co-teaching and while learning alongside the teachers in their buildings. Secondly, schools should ensure that scheduling considerations allow for dedicated time for co-teachers to engage in collaborative planning and instructional preparation. This requires a proactive approach to master scheduling, ensuring that co-teachers have a voice in the master schedule planning.

In summary, the interpretations drawn from the data highlight the importance of collaboration, trust, and leadership support in facilitating successful co-teaching. These insights offer valuable guidance for educators and administrators who may be seeking to promote effective co-teaching practices and create inclusive learning environments aimed at student success.

Recommendations

Educational Policy Recommendations

Educational policy recommendations in this chapter should prioritize several key initiatives with the goal of enhancing the effectiveness of co-teaching practices and promoting student success when implementing co-teaching practices. Post-secondary

learning institutions should prioritize professional development opportunities tailored to fostering collaboration, trust, and effective co-teaching practices among general and special education teachers. These initiatives should be offered regularly to support ongoing growth and development. I believe future educators pursuing both general education K-12 teacher degrees and special education teaching degrees should be provided as part of co-teaching practicum requirement and experiences.

Secondly, schools must be required to allocate sufficient time within their schedules for co-teachers to engage in collaborative planning and instructional preparation while recognizing the crucial role of dedicated co-planning time in facilitating effective co-teaching partnerships. Administrators should work with teachers to negotiate and advocate for this dedicated time with school district-level decision-makers. Additionally, fostering a supportive school culture that values and prioritizes collaboration, communication, and teamwork among educators is essential.

Administrators should create regular opportunities for open dialogue, mutual respect, and shared decision-making to enhance the overall effectiveness of co-teaching practices. The educators implementing co-teaching practices should have a voice in the decision-making at the school and district level when related to co-teaching expectations and requirements. These policy recommendations aim to create environments where co-teaching thrives, and all students have the opportunity to succeed.

Recommendations for Future Research

Moving forward, future research in this area should aim to delve deeper into several key areas to enhance our understanding of co-teaching practices and the impact on student success. There is a need for longitudinal studies to explore the long-term

effects of co-teaching partnerships on student outcomes, academic achievement, and social-emotional development. Longitudinal research has the capability to provide valuable insights into the sustained effectiveness of co-teaching practices over time and identify any potential variations or trends that may emerge.

Secondly, researchers should investigate specific factors that contribute to developing and maintaining effective co-teaching partnerships. This includes dynamics of interpersonal relationships amongst co-teaching pairs, communication strategies utilized in effective co-teaching partnerships, and collaborative planning processes and requirements. Understanding these factors can help inform the design of targeted and intentional professional development programs and support structures for co-teachers to ensure that the follow-up support is done with integrity and fidelity.

Future research should explore the role of support from leadership and administrative practices in fostering a conducive and effective environment for successful co-teaching implementation. By investigating the impact of leadership initiatives, policy frameworks, and allocation for resources related to co-teaching practices can provide insights for educational policymakers and administrators who may have an impact on co-teaching requirements in the future.

Lastly, there is a need for research that examines the experiences and perspectives of students who have been part of a classroom with co-teachers. Understanding the experiences and perceptions of students from a co-teaching classroom can inform the future development of co-teaching practices. By addressing these research gaps, future studies and researchers can contribute to the continued goal of enhancing co-teaching practices and promoting student success.

Conclusion

This chapter offers valuable insights into co-teaching practices and their impact on student success, as perceived by general and special education teachers in the Ohio Valley Education Cooperative. Through semi-structured one-on-one interviews focusing on administrator support, professional development, and co-planning, key findings emerged to inform future practices and research to improve co-teaching effectiveness. The interpretations drawn from the data shed light on the perceptions of both general and special education teachers who participated in this research study regarding the connection between co-teaching and student success, emphasizing the importance of collaboration, trust, and supportive environments. These insights highlight the readiness among educators to embrace inclusive practices and collaborate effectively to promote equity and inclusion in classrooms. Ultimately, this chapter serves as a stepping stone towards creating environments where co-teaching thrives and all students have the opportunity to succeed.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

RQ 1: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of general education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

RQ 2: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what are the perceptions of special education teachers to the connection of co-teaching and student success?

RQ 3: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what structures and programs supports currently in place do those involved in co-teaching believe contribute to the success of the co-teaching model?

RQ 4: For those actively involved in a co-teaching model, what additional supports systems are needed for successful co-teaching in a fully inclusive setting?

Interview Protocol

1. How long have you been a classroom teacher?
2. How long have you been involved in a co-teaching model?
3. What is your perception of the impact of co-teaching on student learning through your experiences?
 - a. Do you believe that you were effective in implementing co-teaching instructional strategies? If yes, why? If no, why?
 - b. Given your experience, what, if anything, would you do differently to enhance the impact of co-teaching on student learning?

4. What, if any, specialized training did you receive to support your co-teaching assignment aimed at student success??
- a. If you did receive training, was the training prior to your assignment?
 - b. Have you have training to support your work during your assignment?
 - c. How effective was your training to support student learning through the co-teaching model?
5. Other than specialized training, what structures and supports are in place at your school that contribute to student success through the co-teaching model?
6. Did you find that trust and respect played a role in your co-teaching partnership?
- If yes, how did you and your co-teaching partner build trust in your professional relationship to ensure student success?
7. Did you choose your co-teaching partner(s)? If not, how are they chosen?
8. How important was common planning time to your co-teaching partnership?
- a. How do you find time to reflect upon student progress?
 - b. If yes, were you able to have an adequate amount of planning time with your co-teacher to effectively implement co-teaching practices?
 - c. If no, how do you think common planning time would have benefited student learning? (How do you divide responsibilities between co-teachers, such as grading, behavior, lesson planning, parent contacts, etc?)

d. If you shared planning time but not an adequate amount, what were the barriers to having an effective amount of time to co-plan?

9. Did you and your co-teacher face any challenges as you worked together to support student learning? If so, how did you resolve them?

10. How do you feel that the building administrator(s) supported co-teaching on behalf of student learning?

a. What systems and structures do your administrators have in place to provide support for student learning with the co-teaching model?

b. What additional systems and structures would you like to see your administrators put in place for student learning with the co-teaching model?

11. To further support you as you grow in your profession, what additional training may you and your partner need to support student learning better?

APPENDIX B

TEACHER INFORMED CONSENT

A CASE STUDY: THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, AND CO-PLANNING ON TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF CO-TEACHING

Summary Information

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which professional development, administrative support, and co-planning influence co-teachers' perceptions of co-teaching and to identify strategies for improving co-teaching practices. The study aims to provide insight into the importance of these factors in promoting successful co-teaching practices and offer recommendations for improving co-teaching initiatives in schools. With a clearer understanding of teacher perceptions of co-teaching strategies investigated, co-teachers, building administrators, and district administrators will have the knowledge needed to determine where biases may be relevant, additional professional development is needed, and address gaps in educators' knowledge of co-teaching to better serve the needs of students with disabilities.

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

There are no foreseeable risks other than possible discomfort in answering questions related to their personal perceptions and the potential for identification by other teachers in Ohio Valley Education Cooperative. Region who may read this research study

The possible benefits of this study may include being part of a positive impact on others within the Ohio Valley Education Cooperative and surrounding education cooperatives that also employ co-teaching strategies. You will have the opportunity to share their personal reflections which may be therapeutic and positively influence co-teaching practices within their education cooperative region moving forward. You may also feel the benefits of feeling empowered and able to share recommendations on how to combat some of the barriers with current co-teaching practices within their region.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please continue to read below.

Introduction and Background Information

You are invited to take part in a research study because you have been identified as either an elementary level general education teacher or special education teacher within the Ohio Valley Education Cooperative. The study is being conducted under the direction of Deborah Powers, EdD at the Department of Educational Leadership, Evaluation and Organizational Development.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which professional development, administrative support, and co-planning influence co-teachers' perceptions of co-teaching and to identify strategies for improving co-teaching practices. The study aims to provide insight into the importance of these factors in promoting successful co-teaching practices and offer recommendations for improving co-teaching initiatives in schools.

Procedures

In this study, you will be asked to schedule a time with the Co-Investigator, to sit for a semi-structured interview that will last no longer than one hour. The interview site will be chosen by you but will take place in a quiet environment to limit distractions during the Interview. These conversations will most likely take place via an online platform such as Microsoft Teams. The purpose of the interview questions will serve as the basis for information to better understand your perceptions of co-teaching based upon your individual experiences as a co-teacher. Questions will be specifically related to ways in which professional development, administrator support, and co-planning have influenced your perception of co-teaching.

The Co-Investigator will record the interview via the Microsoft Teams recording feature and record the interview with a voice tape recorder to ensure thoughts are captured. The Co-Investigator will also be taking written notes during the interview. A follow up conversation may occur via phone or e-mail of no more than thirty (30) minutes, which will allow the co-investigator to check for the accuracy and clarification of the notes after reviewing the transcripts of the first meeting. Email may also be used to contact the participants throughout the study, however, clarification of information, as a follow-up, will be done by telephone as needed. If a follow up is done by telephone, the conversation will be recorded with an audio recorder. The overall study duration, including consent forms, interviews, and follow up questions should last no longer, than one month, but your time commitment to this study should be minimal. During the interview process, you may decline to answer any question that may make you uncomfortable.

Results of the overall research study will be shared with you after the completion of the doctoral defense. Results will be shared with you in person or through email.

Your data will be stored and shared for future research without additional informed consent if identifiable private information, such as your name, are removed. If identifying information is removed from your data, the data may be used for future research studies or given to another investigator for future research studies without additional consent from you.

Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks other than possible discomfort in answering questions related to their personal perceptions and the potential for identification by other teachers in Ohio Valley Education Cooperative. Region who may read this research study. The possible benefits of this study may include being part of a positive impact on others within the Ohio Valley Education Cooperative and surrounding education cooperatives that also employ co-teaching strategies. You will have the opportunity to share their personal reflections, which may be therapeutic and positively influence co-teaching practices within their education cooperative region moving forward. You may also feel the benefits of feeling empowered and able to share recommendations on how to combat some of the barriers with current co-teaching practices within their region.

Alternatives

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

Payment

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

Confidentiality

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. We will protect your privacy to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public. Once your information leaves our institution, we cannot promise that others will keep it private.

Your information may be shared with the following:

- The sponsor and others hired by the sponsor to oversee the research
- Organizations that provide funding at any time for the conduct of the research.
- The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Protection Program Office, Privacy Office, others involved in research administration and research and legal compliance at the University and others contracted by the University for

ensuring human participants' safety or research and legal compliance

- The local research team
- Applicable government agencies, such as: Office for Human Research Protections

Security

The data collected about you will be kept private and secure by a password-protected computer and secured server with limited access.

Voluntary Participation

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

Research Participant's Rights

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

Questions, Concerns and Complaints

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Co-Investigator: Heidi Zimmerman (254)-258-3913 or Principal Investigator: Deborah Powers, EdD, Department of Educational Leadership, Evaluation and Organizational Development – University of Louisville College of Education and Human Development, (502) 852-1645.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff and you do not wish to give your name, you may call the toll free number 1-877-852-1167. This is a 24-hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

Acknowledgment and Signatures

This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature and date indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your

questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document though you are providing your authorization as outlined in this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Participant Name (Please Print) Signature of Participant Date Signed

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

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

Date(s) Signed

Phone number for participants to call for questions: (254) 258-3913

Principal Investigator: Principal Investigator: Deborah Powers, EdD, Department of Educational Leadership, Evaluation and Organizational Development – University of Louisville College of Education and Human Development, (502) 852-1645.

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Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Specialist
Jefferson County Public Schools
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Special Education Supervisor
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ECE Implementation Coach
Jefferson County Public Schools
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August 2019-July 2021

Special Education Teacher
Park Hill School District
Kansas City, Missouri
August 2018-July 2019

Special Education Teacher
Killeen Independent Public School District
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August 2016-July 2018

Elementary Classroom Teacher
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