

EXPERIENCES OF CO-TEACHING: CRAFTING THE RELATIONSHIP

By

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Dimple Malik Flesner

To my father, Dr. Satinder Kumar Malik, who inspired and provided for success. You were always with me in spirit, and this is for you.

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As inclusive practices become more prevalent due to new legislative requirements and increased accountability demands, collaboration among professionals is considered essential for meeting the needs of all students. Cooperative teaching between general and special educators presents one viable approach in efforts to serve students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Although two individuals working together and sharing responsibility for a diverse group of children holds promise, there is lack of knowledge about how co-teachers' understandings of working together inform their practice of working together.

The purpose of this study is to describe how four pairs of general and special education teachers in different elementary schools conceptualized and enacted co-teaching. With the guidance of constructivism, the following research questions framed the study: (a) How do co-teachers conceptualize co-teaching? (b) How do co-teachers enact co-teaching? (c) How do co-teachers utilize their individual and shared knowledge as they co-teach? Grounded theory methods were used to analyze co-teachers' understandings and collaborative practices; data sources included teacher interviews and observations to develop a theory of co-teaching.

The grounded theory establishes core themes of co-teachers' work together, including foundational beliefs for beginning co-teaching, properties for enacting co-teaching, and results of

applying co-teaching. The common foundations include belief in inclusion, communication of goals, value of each other, and willingness to collaborate. The shared properties encompass focus on students, negotiation, creation of parity, and utilization of unique skills. Finally, the results of the relationship consist of each pair's commitment to co-teaching and their integration of knowledge and skills. Because each dyad practiced the properties and results to varying degrees, they crafted different partnerships; ranging from symbiosis and coordination to accommodation and tentativeness. The grounded theory along with detailed descriptions of each pair will be useful in helping to recognize issues surrounding teacher understandings and experiences in order to maximize the potential of co-teaching. This investigation will add to the literature base on co-teaching and has implications for researchers, teacher educators, and school personnel.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Background

Political and social forces are coming together in a way that demand school professionals increase the rigor and quality of the education they provide students with disabilities. Increasing academic standards, legal mandates that students with disabilities participate in the general education curriculum, and greater pressure to include students with their general education peers has challenged teachers to provide a more demanding and simultaneously inclusive education. Educating students with disabilities in this context requires the type of innovative thoughts and actions that is born out of intensive, professional collaboration.

The 2004 amendments to IDEA and the reauthorization of Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Act (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) specifically entail that students with disabilities have access to and make progress in the general education curriculum. This legislation establishes a more comprehensive accountability system to hold schools and districts responsible for the performance of students, requiring annual tests in grades three through eight and at least one test in high school. Test scores must be reported for subgroups of students, including students with disabilities, to ensure that all students meet the performance criteria determined by the state to be proficient. If any subgroup in a school does not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward proficiency, the school is labeled as in need of improvement. Low performing schools face reduction in funds, loss of students to voluntary transfers, public exposure, and in some cases, closure, while high performing schools are rewarded financially (National Center of Educational Outcomes, 2006). Such consequences put greater pressure on schools and teachers to bridge the achievement gap for students with disabilities.

In addition to increased accountability demands, there exists a strong expectation that students with disabilities be included in regular education classrooms. As 55.46% of students with disabilities received special education services in general education classrooms for more than 80% of the day in 2002-2003 (U.S. DOE, 2003), the push for inclusion has intensified. However, placement in inclusive classrooms, alone, does not guarantee participation and progression for students with disabilities (Pugach & Warger, 2001). Instead, the effectiveness of traditional, large-group teaching approaches is in question (Hourcade & Bauwens, 2003). General and special educators are discovering the need to share their knowledge toward a common goal within this context of greater accountability for student outcomes and more rigorous standards (McLaughlin, 2002).

While teachers receive a research-based common body of professional knowledge in their training programs, it is presumed that general education and special education teachers possess expertise and experience in different areas (Adams & Cessna, 1993; Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989; Dieker, 2001; Frederico, Herrold, & Venn, 1999). Basically, general education tends to focus on subject matter knowledge and pedagogy, while special education emphasizes knowledge of individual differences and underlying process abilities, alternative means of instruction and assessment, and behavioral strategies and interventions (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003). To meet the challenge of inclusion as well as fulfill new legislative requirements, these two educational fields must come together to address individual student needs. Such collaboration enables general and special education teachers to share knowledge and embrace responsibility for the education of all students. Thus, particular teaching interests and expertise can be used to address specific student needs (Cook & Friend, 1995; Dieker, 2001).

Specifically, classroom teachers receive help from their special education colleagues in developing, delivering and evaluating effective instructional programs (Karge, McClure, & Patton, 1995; McCrory-Cole & McLeskey, 1997) as well as aid in curriculum planning, including modifications, re-teaching, enrichment, and communication with families (Walther-Thomas, 1997). For example, the special educator may contribute more to child-study meetings, behavior modifications, and arranging individualized instruction. General education teachers offer their special education partners information about teaching specific content and about grade-level curriculum. For example, the general educator may contribute more in large group instructional and curricular options (Frederico et al. 1999). However, as they collaborate around students' individual needs, this knowledge becomes more collective (Baker & Zigmond, 1995; Pugach & Wesson, 1995, 2002).

Co-teaching

Gaining momentum in the last two decades as one innovative and feasible approach to inclusive education and collaboration is cooperative teaching. Cooperative or co-teaching is defined as two or more professionals jointly delivering instruction to a diverse group of students in a shared classroom space (Friend & Cook, 2000; Hourcade & Bauwens, 2003). Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend (1989) described this as a practical merger between general and special education in which direct educational services and supports are provided for students with disabilities within the general educational setting. Special educators are expected to move with their students into the general educational environment, redefine professional roles, and establish partnerships with other teachers (Bauwens et al. 1989; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002, 2003).

Individual classrooms and entire school districts are recently using collaborative teaching to solve many of the challenges associated with serving students with disabilities in regular education settings (Gerber & Popp, 2000; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Feedback from general and

special education teachers suggests that co-teaching offers a promising method of sharing responsibility for all students, providing the support needed in operating inclusive schools (McCrary-Cole & McLeskey, 1997; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Snell & Janney, 2000; Walther-Thomas, 1997).

Vaughn, Schumm, and Arguelles (1997) described five basic models of co-teaching in the classroom. The models are flexible in that they are chosen to meet the needs of the students and the instructional task. The first, one teach-one assist, means that both teachers are present yet one leads in delivering instruction, while the other observes or drifts around the room to monitor or assist students individually. In the second model, station teaching, similar to the center approach, both teachers divide the content to be delivered and each teacher assumes responsibility for teaching part of it to smaller groups of students who move between stations. The third model described in the literature is parallel teaching, which allows both teachers to teach the same lesson simultaneously but divides the class into two heterogeneous groups for instruction. The fourth model is alternative teaching in which one teacher works with a smaller group of students to provide review, guided practice, or enrichment. Finally, team teaching means both teachers share the instruction to all students, requiring joint responsibility for the shared lesson and allowing teachers to be creative and interactive in their lesson delivery.

Bauwens and Hourcade (1995) also identified three specific, yet flexible ways co-teaching can be implemented; they are team teaching, complementary instruction, and supportive learning. Team teaching refers to jointly planning and initially presenting information, and then using specific roles for various follow-up activities. Complementary instruction means one teacher leads as the other teacher complements the instruction with learning strategy lessons. The third model, supportive learning, includes one teacher developing and implementing content

while the other teacher develops alternative activities and adapts instruction accordingly to meet the needs of students with special needs. Qualitative and descriptive studies of co-teaching indicate that there is great variety in the implementation of co-teaching programs and models (Boudah, Schumacher, & Deshler, 1997; Dieker, 2001; Reinhiller, 1996; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003).

Since Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend's seminal paper coining the term cooperative teaching in 1989, the number of articles appearing in the professional literature describing this model has increased rapidly (Friend & Cook, 2000; Hourcade & Bauwens, 2001; McCrory-Cole & McLeskey, 1997; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Three comprehensive reviews of the co-teaching literature show that co-teaching, more often than not, resulted in increased teacher learning opportunities and improved educational outcomes for students in inclusive classrooms (Murwaski & Swanson, 2001; Reinhiller, 1996; Welch, Brownell, & Sheridan, 1999). Reinhiller (1996) found that special and general education co-teachers incurred benefits of instructional improvement, renewed enthusiasm, and efficient communication. Welch, Brownell, and Sheridan (1999) also reported positive teacher attitudes and satisfaction with the cooperative teaching partnership. Furthermore, Murwaski and Swanson (2001) conducted a meta-analysis to determine the overall effectiveness of co-teaching as an intervention. They found moderate achievement gains for students with disabilities as a result of participating in co-teaching situations.

Teacher Benefits

Empirical evidence exists to make a case for the positive influence of co-teaching on teacher learning. As teachers engaged in the collaborative relationship, they combined their individual strengths and talents in order to expand their personal knowledge bases (Hourcade & Bauwens, 2001) and grow in their assimilation of skills (Abell, 2000; Austin, 2001). Special educators cited increased content knowledge, and general educators noted the benefits to their

skills in classroom management and classroom adaptations. This growth and pooling of knowledge contributed to the enhancement of classroom activities and the ability to take risks in a safe environment (Abell, 2000; Vaughn, Hughes, Schumm, & Klingner, 1998).

Additionally, research specifies that teachers experienced increased personal and professional growth. Teachers found co-teaching to be a singular source of professional development and support for developing a nurturing community (Murata, 1996). The collaborative relationship allowed them to enhance each other, and as the co-teachers learned from each other, they grew and developed together (Rice & Zigmond, 2000).

Student Benefits

Moreover, research reveals that when general and special education teachers pool their knowledge, they are better able to address student needs (Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Salend & Johansen, 1997; Welch, 2000). Most special education students progressed at or above district expectations in the general education classroom, receiving better scores and making appreciable improvements on curriculum-based measures (Gerber & Popp, 1999; McCrory-Cole & McLeskey, 1997; Self, Benning, Marston, & Magnusson, 1991; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). Students without disabilities also benefited, in that they received more help and small group instruction to contribute to academic progress (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Pugach & Wesson, 1995).

Studies show that students taught employing this cooperative model made social progress as well as academic progress when teachers worked successfully together. Results pointed to improved self-esteem, peer relationships, teacher interactions, and social outcomes for all students (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Vaughn et al. 1998; Whinnery & King, 1995). Students with and without disabilities' perceptions and attitudes were positive about this collaborative model (Luckner, 1999; Pugach & Wesson, 1995). The classroom climate was nurturing and focused on giving and receiving help; children felt a sense of community and

opportunities for caring and being cared about existed within the classroom (Walther-Thomas, 1997).

Challenges of Working Together

Despite the obvious value of co-teaching, it was not easily achieved. Previous research showed that effective communication (Luckner, 1999; Minke, Bear, Deemer, & Griffin, 1996) was necessary for co-teaching, as openness fostered moral support and motivation (Luckner, 1999). Communication about responsibilities, commitment to the relationship, and reflection and ongoing evaluation of the partnership were important facets in the collaborative approach (McCrorry-Cole & McLeksey, 1997; Welch, 2000). General and special educators had to learn how to integrate their roles (Karge et.al, 1995; Trent, Driver, Wood, Parrott, Martin & Smith, 2003) and restructure the teaching procedures used within and across roles.

Although research makes a case for the affirmative impact of co-teaching on instructional practice, many issues about the potential of co-teaching for teacher learning and sharing remain unclear. Evidence exists to show that teachers did not learn from working together, particularly when philosophical differences, pedagogical styles, and backgrounds were not addressed or negotiated (Abell, 2000; Boudah, Schumacher, & Deshler, 1997; Dieker, 2001; Karge et al. 1995; Marks & Gersten, 1998). Often, roles and responsibilities were not equally distributed and shared because of differing experience and knowledge levels.

Special education and general education co-teachers agreed that general educators often contributed more than their special education partners in these inclusive classrooms (Austin, 2001; Rice & Zigmund, 2000). This may have been due to the fact that the special education teacher was considered the visitor in the classroom, and the general education teacher was sometimes regarded as the main teacher with expertise in the overall subject matter and content being delivered. Although the co-teaching arrangement does not mean that both groups of

educators become experts in the other's discipline (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1995), it seemed that teachers struggled to devise strategies for communicating as well as understanding the perspectives of their partners (Salend & Johansen, 1997), so that knowledge could become generative (Abell, 2000).

In fact, some established, widely-accepted models of co-teaching contribute to lack of parity in the relationship, as they require one teacher to lead the majority of the class while the other teacher works with only a few students. One teach-one assist teaching and alternative teaching depend on one of the co-teachers to carry the bulk of the workload. The most collaborative approach, team teaching, involves both teachers sharing instruction for all students, requiring joint responsibility for the shared lesson and allowing teachers to be creative and interactive in their lesson delivery (Vaughn et al. 1997).

Descriptive studies of co-teaching indicate that the subject matter being taught, age and maturity of the students, and the knowledge of the teachers often determine the variations to co-teaching models ((Boudah et.al, 1997; Dieker, 2001; Reinhiller, 1996; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003). However, few studies have investigated why some individuals work well together in utilizing the most collaborative co-teaching approach and others do not, or why individuals choose to team teach.

The different ways in which co-teaching is enacted is evidence of the different ways teachers conceptualize their relationships and how roles evolve as a result of teachers' understandings and beliefs about what it means to work together. Because both teachers enter the co-teaching partnership with expertise and experience in their respective areas, they possess differing views about teaching and learning (Trent et al. 2003). Struggles within the co-teaching relationship are often related to conflict over professional beliefs and practices (Abell, 2000;

Dieker, 2001; Trent, 1998). Achinstein (2002) argues that conflict is central to teacher collaboration and that how teachers manage conflict, whether they suppress or embrace their different beliefs, defines the potential for teacher learning and change in practice.

In fact, the larger body of research in collaboration reveals that different understandings and beliefs about teaching and learning and inability to manage these differences greatly impact individuals' work together. Five studies found that collaborative structures, by themselves, could not foster and maintain teacher sharing and learning.

Abbate-Vaughn (2004) found that teachers in teacher professional communities, in which work together was intended to advance meaningful change in teaching practices, carried such different beliefs, values, and ideals about school curriculum, student discipline, and teacher learning that much of their common time was spent defending their own visions rather than negotiating or defining group goals. In a study of teacher learning cohorts, Brownell and her colleagues (2006) found that personal qualities and background knowledge determined teachers' acquisition and use of practices learned in collaborative groups. Teachers with a strong knowledge base and whose beliefs closely aligned with the strategies were most likely to adopt them; in contrast, teachers who lacked prerequisite knowledge or experienced dissonance in their belief systems struggled in their attempts to adopt an innovation and would abandon it.

In an unpublished dissertation, Ryan (1999) found that teachers in middle school teaching teams who held different conceptions of individual teaching roles, beliefs, and responsibilities about instruction and curriculum varied in the extent to which they engaged in collaboration within their specific contexts. Dissimilarities in beliefs caused teachers to resist collaboration and adhere to their own instructional styles, learning little from teachers who held different viewpoints and maintaining one conception of teaching. In addition, Marks and Gersten (1998)

found that teaching pairs who were classified as high levels of collaborative engagement and who made significant changes in classroom practices shared common beliefs and attitudes; while those with low level engagement did not share similar philosophies and could not find common ground. Marks and Gersten (1998) concluded that for collaboration to be meaningful and beneficial, coaches must consider the agendas and beliefs of those involved in the collaborative process.

Furthermore, Peterson, McCarthy, and Elmore (1996) found that teachers seemed challenged to change practice, despite opportunities and supports for collaborative dialogue around literacy instruction. When teachers held different conceptions of literacy pedagogy, they had difficulty working together and learning from each other.

Statement of Problem

Research in collaboration has established, at least minimally, that philosophies about instruction and knowledge affect how teachers work together. However, we know very little about how a person's conception of what it means to collaborate or work together affects what they do. In effect, individual teachers have a well-defined, engrained belief of what it means to work together, and these beliefs drive what they are able to learn from each other as well as what they are able to teach the students in their classroom (Richardson, 1996). Researchers must study how teachers begin, develop, and maintain collaborative relationships in various contexts. Collaboration is not simply the pooling, or even blending, of knowledge and practices to reconstruct tasks; rather, it involves much more fundamental reconceptualizations and reconstructions—those of personal and professional identities and discourses (Abell, 2000). For this reason, the individual role of the teacher needs to be critically analyzed and examined. This includes past experience and understandings as well as prior learning such as type of preparation,

knowledge base, skill level, previous experience working with others, and teaching philosophy and stance.

Co-teaching studies have not looked explicitly at how teachers' prior knowledge and ideas about collaboration affect their work together; there are many unanswered questions about how general education and special education teachers' differentiated knowledge and views influence their collaborative relationship. How do preconceived beliefs and conceptualizations of working together affect how teachers with differing backgrounds actually collaborate? How do teachers' differentiated knowledge and skill influence their collaboration? In practice, it is not easy to achieve symbiosis as teachers try to co-construct new identities and meanings, and study of the co-teaching relationship and how it evolves is warranted (Trent, 1998; Trent et al. 2003).

To date, much of the literature on co-teaching is practical in nature, with limited in-depth evidence to support theoretical positions, as noted by one review of the literature on cooperative teaching (Welch et al. 1999). Much of the research literature that does exist tends to treat co-teaching as an intervention and looks pointedly at treatment outcomes for teachers and students. Numerous articles and books talk about the importance of working together, yet the research does not examine the process of learning to work together. Some papers discuss teacher survey and self-report data, but these methods are not specific enough to get at the nature of the co-teaching partnership and how it develops. Thus, while the research lays out the outcomes of co-teaching, it does not explore process issues. Although having two teachers simultaneously in the classroom offers great power and promise (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1997), little research investigates co-teaching in order to understand how two individuals with differing knowledge bases and understandings of collaboration come to work together and share responsibility for a diverse group of children.

It is valuable to explore collaborative teaching from the “inside out,” which means to study the values, meanings, and actions of co-teachers engaged in the process. Research based on the experiences of educators involved in cooperative teaching is needed. To gain in-depth understanding of how teachers conceptualize working together and the evolution of this conceptualization, through thoughts and actions, qualitative methods must be utilized. Such studies of co-teaching pairs may provide in-depth information about how the complex, multi-faceted set of thought processes and understandings individuals bring to the classroom interact and integrate. To realize the potential of co-teaching, researchers must respect its evolutionary nature and study it as a process through qualitative data analysis.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this investigation is to describe co-teachers’ conceptualizations of co-teaching and how these conceptualizations are enacted. Conceptualization in this study is defined in terms of teacher beliefs and meanings about co-teaching, as well as how these beliefs and meanings are to be put into action. This research hopes to elucidate how teachers with different backgrounds and educational expertise conceptualize their work together and how they carry out this work. Specifically, this investigation examines what general and special education teachers think, believe, and do in the process of working together. Missing from the co-teaching literature is information on the types of skills, knowledge, and understandings general and special educators enter the co-teaching situation with in order to effectively work together in inclusive classrooms. There are issues of ownership, teaching space, role delineations, philosophical differences, use of language, and prior knowledge. Why do some teachers work together in ways that are mutually beneficial and others do not? How do they use their individual and shared knowledge as they co-teach? What kind of understandings do teachers bring to the table that

enables them to profit from working together? Why is this learning and sharing important to the most collaborative co-teaching approach?

Although particular schools and school districts are embracing the co-teaching approach (McCrorry-Cole & McLeskey, 1997; Snell & Janney, 2000; Walther-Thomas, 1997) and unified teacher education programs are utilizing the co-teaching models in student field experiences (Gerber & Popp, 2000; Hudson & Glomb, 1997), few studies have been conducted to look at the intricacies involved in being a co-teacher. In fact, Murwaski and Swanson (2001) stated that the sheer dearth of research in the area of co-teaching emphasizes the need for future research. There is lack of empirical data about how co-teaching relationships between general and special educators are established or even description of the process of working together.

Findings from this study will be useful in helping educators and researchers understand professional development issues and create activities that build on teacher understandings. Perhaps, if we can understand teachers' conceptualizations about working together and enactment of these conceptualizations, we can maximize the potential of co-teaching. This research will be guided by the following central question: How do co-teachers conceptualize co-teaching? Specific questions used to direct data collection and analysis include: 1)How do co-teachers enact co-teaching? 2)How do co-teachers utilize their individual and shared knowledge as they co-teach?

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Successful co-teaching is predicated on the assumption that teachers will be able to work together in ways that are productive. Such productivity is measured by the extent that individuals learn from each other and pool their knowledge, as they reconstruct context and tasks in order to meet the diverse needs of children (Abell, 2000). Proponents contend that co-teaching is an effective use of the specific and unique skills each professional brings to the classroom; the skills of general educators and special educators are brought together to create teaching approaches and instructional strategies that could not occur if just one teacher were present (Cook & Friend, 1995; Pugach & Wesson, 2002). Teachers engaged in the co-teaching relationship are presumed to be able to combine these individual strengths and talents in order to enhance and expand their personal knowledge bases, as well as help all students (Hourcade & Bauwens, 2001). Therefore, the expectation is that co-teachers will know how to blend their knowledge, abilities, values, preferences, teaching styles, educational philosophies, and cultural perspectives to better serve their students. Moreover, being successful means that co-teachers plan and reflect together, discussing and negotiating program objectives, curricula, assessment, teaching, as well as classroom management techniques, schedules, and grading criteria; and finally, that they enact what they have agreed upon in ways that recognize both members of the teams' contributions (Gately & Gately, 2001; Salend et.al, 2002).

However, the degree to which teachers can work together successfully is based on several key ideas underlying the co-teaching approach. To understand the potential of any strategy, it is important to break down its parts and examine the reasoning behind the particular strategy; to explore the ideas that guide professionals in their decisions to implement and persuade others in

the endeavor. Position papers and co-teaching guides highlight specific ideas that support co-teaching, yet a theory of co-teaching does not exist. In fact, the degree to which these ideas have been or can be achieved has been understudied, leaving the field with only superficial understanding of how collaboration works and the conditions under which it is effective.

Therefore, it is important to examine research aimed at understanding the ideas underlying this collaborative approach. Based on the growing literature base in co-teaching, the researcher asserts that five major ideas support the successful enactment of co-teaching. These ideas are:

- Teachers are able to learn from each other; co-teaching involves pooling of complementary knowledge and practices to reconstruct work.
- Teachers can better address student academic and social needs; co-teaching includes increased instructional and curricular options and arrangements for all students.
- Teachers can cultivate collaborative skills; co-teaching involves learning and developing highly sophisticated problem-solving and negotiation strategies.
- Teachers are motivated to work together; co-teaching includes an inclusionary attitude, a humanistic stance, and a sense of efficacy.
- Teachers have certain contextual conditions in place for collaboration: co-teaching requires facilitation of the process through appropriate supports and resources.

Idea 1: Teachers Can Learn from Each Other.

Research indicates that teachers learned from each other as they engaged in this collaborative instructional model by integrating knowledge, increasing opportunities for professional and personal growth as well as exploring new roles. Austin (2001) demonstrated that in a co-teaching relationship teachers grew in their integration of knowledge. Teachers' self-reports reveal that special educators learned more about group instruction and curricular options, and general educators learned more about individualized instruction and behavior modifications (Abell, 2000; Austin, 2001; Frederico, Herrold, & Venn, 1999). As co-teachers thought and

talked about teaching and learning in ways not available individually (Abell, 2000), they report that their repertoires increased.

Through co-teaching, general and special educators learned how to integrate their roles (Karge et al. 1995; Trent et al. 2002) and restructure the teaching procedures used within and across roles. When two individuals with distinct skills worked in a coordinated way (Snell & Janney, 2000), the entire class was addressed. “In this arrangement, teacher roles were not differentiated, and for the time that both teachers were present in the room, special and general educators were indistinguishable to an observer” (Baker & Zigmond, 1995, p. 171). Research shows although role delineation, specificity, and clarity described the dynamics in the initial co-teaching relationship, as teachers openly communicated and shared knowledge, interchangeable roles and refined instructional practices emerged (Trent, 2003).

Although empirical evidence exists to make a case for the positive influence of co-teaching on teacher practice, some studies had potential teacher problems and tensions as well. If philosophical differences and pedagogical styles were not addressed or negotiated, teachers seemed challenged to successfully work together (Abell, 2000; Achinstein, 2002, Boudah et al. 1997; Dieker, 2001; Karge et al. 1995; Marks & Gersten, 1998). The special educator was viewed as the expert on curriculum adaptation and remediation, who came in solely for the purposes of offering exclusive aid to children with special needs (Rice & Zigmond, 2000). This expertise was not enmeshed with the general educators’ knowledge and abilities, but instead used separately (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002, 2003), which was problematic to teacher growth and learning.

Missing from the literature is information about the processes underlying successful knowledge integration. What individual factors facilitate or hinder teachers learning from each other? How do philosophies, knowledge bases, past experiences working with others, and

individual characteristics play a role? How do they establish parity and harmony within the classroom when they come in with differing past experiences and levels of knowledge? How do teachers blend skills and areas of expertise, take risks, respect and trust each other's professionalism, experiment with new teaching methodologies, and confront differences in order to learn and grow together? Or do they? Why is this learning important to the co-teaching approach?

Idea 2: Teachers Can Better Address Student Academic and Social Needs.

Research reveals that students achieved better overall academically and socially in co-taught environments (Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Salend & Johansen, 1997; Welch, 2000). Students with and without disabilities experienced improved self-esteem, peer relationships, teacher interactions, and social outcomes (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Vaughn et al. 1998; Whinnery & King, 1995). The inclusion of students who have difficulty learning and adjusting created an appreciation of differences among people, increased sensitivity to others, and provided an opportunity for sustained interaction between students who may not otherwise come together (Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Vaughn et al. 1998). Students with disabilities tended to feel good about themselves and accepted by their peers, as research documented that the stigmatization associated with being pulled out for special services was reduced (Kluwin, 1999; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). In addition, students were part of a classroom community as diverse needs were accounted for and appreciated and specific skills developed (Luckner, 1999).

Studies show that students taught with the cooperative model made academic progress as well as social progress. Student performance increased appreciably, and the majority of special education students progressed at or above district expectations without being labeled or pulled out (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Self et al. 1991). Students with disabilities received better grades,

making significant gains on curriculum-based measures (McCrary-Cole & McLeskey, 1997; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). Furthermore, students without disabilities also enhanced their academic progress as they received more teacher help and small group instruction (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Pugach & Wesson, 1995).

The ability to profit from co-teaching arrangements, however, is not always a given. When Murwaski and Swanson (2001) quantified the co-teaching literature in terms of the magnitude of treatment outcomes for students, they determined the findings encouraging, yet limited in scope. Moreover, looking at the quantitative effects of co-teaching on student academic and social progress treats co-teaching as an intervention, rather than the process that it is. Missing from the literature is information about how teachers come to understand and address student needs together and why some co-teaching situations produce change and others do not. While there is discussion of how students perceive the co-taught classroom and instructional arrangements and groupings, as well as some data on academic and social measures, the research does not indicate how those positive effects are achieved as teachers work together. How does the presence of two teachers engaged in collaborative efforts supplement classroom instruction and benefit students with and without disabilities? What kinds of thinking and actions do co-teachers engage in to better address student needs?

Idea 3: Teachers Can Cultivate Collaborative Skills.

Teachers engaged in collaborative efforts often received training and support from peers, administrators, university teacher-researchers and professors, and staff development personnel (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; McCrary-Cole & Waldron, 1997; Self et al. 1991; Trent, 1998; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). In some research studies, teachers were specifically trained in inclusion and the co-teaching model before implementing it within the classroom (Boudah et al. 1997; Karge et al. 1995; Self et al. 1991; Welch, 2000). This training focused on understanding

roles regarding integrating curriculum and instruction, relating to one another, and interacting with students (Boudah et al. 1997), as well as learning how to plan, reflect, and evaluate as a cooperative teaching pair (Welch, 2000). Co-teachers report that training helped them to cultivate the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in co-teaching in order to include a diverse group of learners (Boudah et al. 1997; Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Self et al. 1991, Welch, 2000).

Research demonstrates that teachers can also be prepared at the pre-service level to improve collaboration. In the effort to prepare teachers for inclusive education, unified or collaborative teacher education programs have been developed throughout the nation (Blanton, Griffin, Winn, & Pugach, 1997). These programs seek to provide education majors with the needed interpersonal and collaborative skill instruction and field experiences that can prepare them for the academic and behavior challenges emerging in the classroom (Hudson & Glomb, 1997). Pre-service training at the university level focused on engaging in group projects, attempting the various co-teaching models during student teaching, understanding specific accommodations, and planning with a partner. Thus, offering prospective co-teachers the opportunities to cultivate collaborative and accommodation skills prepared them for the challenges associated with teaching in today's schools (Gerber & Popp, 2000; Hudson & Glomb, 1997; Trent, 1998).

Although studies suggest the need for professional development activities at the pre-service and in-service level as well as consistent reflection and evaluation of the co-teaching approach, there is little data on how collaborative skills might evolve within the co-teaching relationship, and how the evolution of such skills might effect the teachers' partnerships (Abell, 2001; Trent et al. 2003). Missing from the literature is information about whether teachers who

possess these skills engage in greater collaboration with their partners. Can teachers learn to utilize these highly sophisticated skills so that the nature of their conversations change and the ways in which they work together are enhanced? Continued in-depth case study research can help elucidate the complexity of multiple implementation efforts and help to identify characteristics and attributes of teachers that contribute to improved outcomes for students served in cooperative teaching classrooms (Trent et al. 1998).

Idea 4: Teachers Are Motivated to Work Together.

Teachers possessed specific attributes, knowledge, dispositions, and skills that motivated them to collaborate with other professionals in order to meet the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous population (Minke et al, 1996; Murata, 1996; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Olson and Chalmers (1997) identified general education teachers who were the most skilled at including students with disabilities and collaborating with other teachers in their classrooms. Characteristics of these teachers included the following: described their own personalities as tolerant, reflective, and flexible; accepted responsibility for all students; described a positive working relationship with special educators; reported adjusting expectations for integrated students; and indicated that their primary inclusionary attitude was showing interpersonal warmth and acceptance in their interactions with students.

The literature shows that motivation to work together also came from external sources (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002, 2003). The influences of professional, community, and administrative groups persuaded teachers to participate in co-teaching efforts at their grade level (Weiss & Lloyd, 2003). Professional sources included collaborative courses and staff development meetings with other teachers who had effectively implemented co-teaching. Community sources involved parents whose children progressed through school in co-teaching programs and wanted these programs to continue, as well as national requirements that all students pass state-mandated

curriculum and tests. Additionally, administrative pressure reaffirmed the professional and community sources that the teachers noted. Teachers' propensity for collaboration may be motivated by the realization that it is necessary to meet the demands of the profession (Baker & Zigmond, 1995; Gerber & Popp, 1999; Snell & Janney, 2000; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003).

While the research on teacher motivation to collaborate presents many possible sources of motivation, internal and external, there are many unanswered questions. Other components, including ability to work together, to establish parity and integrate roles, and to meet the needs of diverse students, are important in creating an effective learning environment and motivation to teach together. The assumption is that co-teachers are motivated to collaborate around issues of philosophical differences, problem-solving strategies, instruction and curriculum, planning and assessment, and classroom social dynamics. Missing from the literature is whether motivation to work together is enough to successfully co-teach. Does intrinsic versus extrinsic teacher motivation affect how well co-teaching will be implemented in an inclusive setting? If so, in what ways? In addition, how do different types of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards influence the large-scale implementation of co-teaching? How do school and district environments put in place the right types of rewards? How do the teachers' individual skill level and prior knowledge and experiences affect motivation to work together?

Idea 5: Teachers Have Certain Contextual Conditions in Place for Collaboration.

Research supports the notion that certain contextual support structures must exist in order to put collaboration and co-teaching into effective practice (Murata, 1996; Trent et al. 2002; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003). Schools committed to changing their traditional programs to models that facilitate dialogue, collaboration, and problem solving among professionals must plan accordingly (Walther-Thomas et al. 1996). Studies show that investment in long-term support efforts to foster meaningful change and proactively address problems that emerge naturally as

part of the collaborative process, must be made (McCrorry-Cole & McLeskey, 1997; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). Building level issues include gaining school and community support, recruiting willing and qualified co-teachers, visiting model sites, conducting staff development sessions, and making appropriate decisions regarding student placements, teaching assignments, caseloads, and scheduling (Walther-Thomas et al. 1996).

The most persistent problems co-teachers reported in collaborative efforts were related to contextual conditions (Boudah et al. 1997; Dieker, 2001; Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Jung, 1998; Trent, 1998). These problems involved scheduled planning time, student caseloads, resources, and administrative support (Walther-Thomas, 1997). After intensive study of collaborative teaching in elementary, middle, and high school programs, Gerber and Popp (1999) generated recommendations about delivery of services, communication, and administrative support necessary for implementation of co-teaching. The service delivery recommendation included defining collaboration, establishing limits of effective collaboration when resources are overtaxed, maintaining multiple service delivery options, and ensuring program continuation. Communication goals dealt with informing parents and reporting success to multiple audiences. Finally, it was suggested that administrators create strategic scheduling, allow planning time, have only voluntary participation, and annually evaluate the collaborative teaching programs formally and systematically.

Co-teachers in Lehr's case study (1999) identified specific areas of administrative support as essential to accomplishing their collaborative teaching goals and made frequent references to the connection between administrative support and the degree of success or struggle they experienced. Participants outlined factors that could substantially improve administrative policies and better support the success of collaborative teaching, including voluntary participation,

adequate planning time and resources, collaborative training, and high visibility of collaboration. Furthermore, research suggests that administrators can foster a school climate of collaboration and teacher sharing by treating collaboration as an opportunity for professional growth and making dialogue an important component of school culture (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Jung, 1998; Karge et al. 1995; Lehr, 1999; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998).

In special education, scholars advocate the importance of collaborative efforts and suggest contextual conditions that must be in place for teachers to work together (Friend & Cook, 2000; Hourcade & Bauwens, 2003). Missing from the literature base is research on how schools promote this culture of collaboration, how schools move from isolated environments to collegial ones, and how schools explore the intricacies of their particular setting in order to instigate change. The idea is that if teachers are expected to share classroom space where they work together to integrate roles and make insightful decisions about students, contextual conditions can encourage and expedite this process. How are collaborative practices engendered and co-teachers given the ideal conditions in which to work? How do working conditions or contextual issues support parity among teachers and students? What kinds of teacher qualities and teacher leadership are necessary to work through contextual barriers to collaboration?

Implications of Literature

As revealed in this comprehensive literature review, empirical research in co-teaching has focused on teacher and student outcomes. The ideas outlined above have shaped these research studies and affected what has been learned. This work sheds some light on teachers' understandings of working together and the ideas that underlie those understandings.

However, these ideas have not been thoroughly studied, as there are many unresolved issues about co-teaching and how teachers conceptualize this collaborative approach. The research asserts that as teachers work together, they assume different roles and engage in

different actions in the co-taught classroom (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002, 2003). The individual role of the teacher within the co-teaching partnership must be explored. This includes background knowledge and skills, previous experiences collaborating with other peers, educational philosophy, and work ethic. Additionally, issues of power and parity arise when teachers from different backgrounds enter upon a collaborative relationship. These issues shape the roles and actions of individuals in co-teaching, affect motivation to work together, and guide expectations for themselves, each other, and their students (Trent, 1998).

Research based on the voices and real-life experiences of educators involved in cooperative teaching is needed. This research can document and compare the experiences co-teaching teams and identify the obstacles they encounter as well as the solutions they employ to achieve a symbiotic relationship and effectively serve their students (Salend & Johansen, 1997). Can teachers learn how to negotiate, compromise, and integrate knowledge, or are these abilities simply the result of organic relationships that naturally evolve? And, when they do integrate their knowledge, what is the result? Is it always the same result, or do teachers need certain types of knowledge in place before they even begin to benefit from each other?

Successful co-teaching, as it is defined, is not easily achieved. “Genuine, sustained teacher collaboration that produces continuous reflection on practice and constructive action is still rare” (Brownell, Yeager, Rennells, & Riley, 1997, p. 341). In fact, the larger body of research in collaboration suggests that individual teachers respond differently to focused collaborative efforts because of prior beliefs and understandings (Brownell et al. 2006; Marks & Gersten, 1998; Peterson et al. 1996). These collaboration studies have focused exclusively on the practices of general education teachers (Abbate-Vaughn, 2004, Ryan, 1999). Although Marks and Gersten (1998) did include the special education perspective, the special educator was

brought in as a consultant, which dissolved parity. Furthermore, while the literature gets at the idea that conceptualizations of working together somehow impact enactment of work together, research does not look squarely at these teacher conceptualizations.

Teachers enter their professions with a strong and enduring set of beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning, and these understandings greatly influence how they approach any cooperative teaching effort. These teacher perceptions are, in all likelihood, based on personal life experience, teachers' own schooling and instruction, and formal knowledge (Richardson, 1996). In fact, given the often physically and socially isolated nature of schools (Rogers & Babinski, 2002), it is not surprising that teachers do not know how to effectively work together and may not possess solid conceptualizations of what it means to co-teach with another individual. The collaborative teaching approach encompasses the views of both special and general education in the inclusive classroom. It is a glaring omission of the literature to ignore these co-teachers' conceptualizations of co-teaching. Co-teaching studies must look explicitly at how teachers' perceptions about collaboration affect their work together. There are many unanswered questions about how general education and special education teachers' differentiated knowledge and ideas about working together impact their collaborative relationship and their teaching practices.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative investigation is to describe co-teachers' conceptualizations of co-teaching and how these conceptualizations are enacted in the inclusive classroom. Empirical data collected from general education and special education teachers involved in co-teaching partnerships is used to develop constructivist grounded theory. Such grounded theory provides insight into how co-teachers construct co-teaching, and findings can be used to maximize the potential of this collaborative approach.

Theoretical Background

To gain in-depth understanding of how co-teachers conceptualize and enact their work together, constructivism is utilized. In constructivism, individuals are viewed as active agents, developing their own understandings of and knowledge about the world through experiences with their environments (Crotty, 1998). In these understandings and knowledge, different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. Constructivism is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality, is contingent upon human practices; constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty, 1998). According to constructivism, individuals construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting.

In the present research, teachers are actively engaged in developing and enacting their conceptualizations of working together. Teachers' perceptions and interpretations of teaching, or their conceptualizations, are guided by their prior knowledge and experiences. Teachers come into classrooms with beliefs and attitudes about teaching, which have been developed through a

lifetime of schooling and experience (Richardson, 1996). These images of teaching greatly influence how teachers approach their co-teaching relationships. Furthermore, teacher understandings of their partners' knowledge influence the process and development of their work together, as well as direct their actions and decisions in the classroom. These understandings are developed over time and evolve through ongoing interactions.

Constructivism assumes multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creations of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understandings' of the participants' meanings (Charmaz, 2000; Crotty, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constructivist perspective recognizes that the researcher creates the data and ensuing analysis through intensive study with the researched. The discovered reality arises from an interactive process and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts. The researcher frames the study and interprets the interactions, so that the researcher is part of what is researched rather than separate from it. What a researcher views shapes what he or she will define, measure, and analyze (Charmaz, 2000).

In this study, the researcher describes co-teachers' perceptions of co-teaching. The constructivist approach does not seek truth that is single, universal, and lasting. Researcher's attention to detail in the constructivist approach sensitizes them to multiple realities and the multiple viewpoints within them (Charmaz, 2000). Theoretical sensitivity exists, as concepts that represent the phenomenon are identified without pre-determinate biases (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher examines how different variables are grounded, how they are given meaning and played out in the participants' lives (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The variables that affect co-teachers' work together, and their meanings and actions, take priority, as the researcher seeks to interpret how these teachers construct their reality. The researcher

transforms these variables into theories. These theories grounded within the data tend to enhance understanding, offer insights, and provide meaningful guide to action (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Teachers conceptualize their work together in different ways; these conceptualizations become a framework for grasping co-teaching and how to enact it in the classroom. Based on these conceptualizations, teachers utilize their individual and shared knowledge as they co-teach in the inclusive classroom. Constructivism as a theoretical perspective facilitates individual meaning-making, perceptions, and reflections as crucial elements. Hopefully, by better understanding what co-teachers think, believe, and do, educators can use this information to foster collaborative work among other general and special education teachers.

Research Design

The purpose of qualitative research is to gain in-depth knowledge that leads to greater understanding social phenomena, rather than to corroborate predetermined assumptions (Creswell, 1998). The research approach rests on assumptions that reality is socially constructed and that variables are complex and interwoven. To understand the nature of constructed realities, qualitative researchers interact and talk with participants about their perceptions. Qualitative research methodology requires the close examination of a studied experience in its natural setting and produces vivid and detailed descriptions of the experience (Merriam, 1998). Researchers attend to the uniqueness of and uncover a complex, holistic nature of the experience while considering its dynamic interactions within settings (Creswell, 1998; Glesne, 1999).

Qualitative inquiry is descriptive and inductive in nature, searches for patterns, and may result in the formulation of hypotheses and theory. The qualitative researcher's analysis has explanatory and descriptive power, revealing a story about people, processes, and situations. Therefore, qualitative research is appropriate to study how teachers conceptualize co-teaching, as a theory of beliefs about collaboration and collaborative actions develops.

Sample Selection

Four co-teaching pairs were asked to participate using a purposeful criterion sampling method. The purposeful sampling method is appropriate for recruiting group of teachers who demonstrate particular traits and work in similar environments. This study focuses specifically on co-teachers who work in inclusive elementary level classrooms in a midsize school district in North Central Florida. Each co-teaching pair consists of a general education and special education teacher with differentiated knowledge bases; they must work at an inclusive school, plan together, co-teach together on a regular basis, utilize the team teaching approach in their classroom, and be perceived as effective teachers by their colleagues. Studying this distinct group of teachers helps to understand a specific phenomenon, co-teaching, in a rich and deep way.

In order to enlist co-teachers who meet the particular criteria outlined above, district-level inclusion specialists and building administrators were contacted to gain insight into both site locations and participant selection. These inclusion specialists and school principals recommended a distinct group of co-teaching pairs, which they perceived as effective collaborators. The teachers were recruited with the aid of the school board under the permission of the University of Florida Institutional Review Board (UFIRB). The researcher contacted potential participants via email and phone at their respective school sites. Decisions for participation were strictly voluntary.

Teacher information

Based on the results of the selection procedures, four pairs of teachers were identified as effective co-teaching dyads for this study. In the following section, detailed information about each teacher and each pair is summarized.

Kay, 33 years old, and Rachel, 25 years old, co-taught together for the first time during the study. They taught fifth grade reading and language arts to fourteen students from 10:30 to 11:40 am everyday. In her second year of classroom teaching, Kay was the general education teacher in the relationship. She had a bachelor's degree in science in communication sciences and disorders, a master's degree in speech language and pathology, and was earning a specialist's degree in curriculum and instruction. Kay worked as a paralegal where she collaborated with other law colleagues and as a speech pathologist where she facilitated other teachers in their classrooms before she began co-teaching. She had not enjoyed her past experiences working with others because she felt she contributed more than her peers. Also in her second year of classroom teaching, Rachel was the special education teacher in this relationship. She was certified in elementary education and special education with an ESOL endorsement. Rachel participated in triad teaching and partnership work during her teacher education program. She enjoyed working with others in different capacities and looked forward to new experiences.

Last year, both Kay and Rachel co-taught with another fifth grade teacher who treated them as aides. They were very disappointed in those relationships, so they decided to work together and make a difference in the current school year. In preparation for co-teaching, Kay conducted research about the cooperative models and reflected on her collaborative experiences in an inquiry project. Also focused on the relationship, Rachel maneuvered her schedule with other teachers as well as her planning period and lunchtime in order to conference with Kay everyday about student goals and performance.

Cynthia, 35 years old, and Ted, 55 years old, co-taught together for the third time during the study. They taught fourth grade reading to twenty-five students from 8:45 to 9:40 am everyday. Teaching for seven years, Cynthia was the general education teacher in the

partnership. She possessed a bachelor's degree in elementary education and master's degree in special education. Through her teacher education program, she participated in group projects and collaborative studies. Although she did not like giving up control in her homeroom, she felt collaboration was a necessary part of any job, so that individuals could improve their work. Teaching for 32 years, Ted was the special education teacher in the relationship. He had a bachelor's degree in psychology and master's degree in special education in the area of emotional and behavior disorders. During his career, he had collaborated with general education teachers in different functions, was willing to change roles to fit the needs of the classroom, and liked working with others.

While Ted had co-taught with other teachers for ten years and went into four different classes each day, Cynthia was accustomed to teaching in isolation and being the only teacher in her classroom besides college interns. In order to meet diverse student needs within their inclusive school, Cynthia and Ted chose to work together and plan for co-teaching. Cynthia attended workshops and in-services on inclusion and collaboration, while Ted supported his partner's ideas and teaching format as they learned about each other.

Amy, 60 years old, and Erika, 25 years old, co-taught together for the first time during the study. They taught fourth grade writing to twenty students from 9:45 to 10:15 am everyday and 1:00 to 1:40 pm everyday except Wednesdays. In her 17th year in the classroom after teaching for eleven years, taking a twenty-year hiatus, and coming back for the past six years, Amy was the general education teacher in the relationship. She was certified in reading and writing for kindergarten through twelfth grade. Upon her return to the field, she had been an active fourth-grade team member, co-taught with different special education teachers for six years, and enjoyed working with others. In her first year of teaching, Erika was the special

education teacher in this partnership. She held a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in special education with an ESOL endorsement. During her unified teacher education program, Erika participated in a co-teaching pre-internship as well as interned in a co-taught classroom; she enjoyed working with other teachers.

Placed together by their principal, Amy and Erika met each other when they began co-teaching. They learned about each other's area of expertise when they started their work together. Amy was accustomed to taking the lead over the special education teacher, while Erika had learned to share responsibility and establish parity. They established a routine that worked for their time schedules and their students.

Sarah and Lynn, both 28 years old, co-taught together for the first time during the study. They taught third grade mathematics to sixteen students from 11:30 to 12:30 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and writing from 1:00 to 1:45 on Mondays and Thursdays. Entering her first year of teaching, Sarah was the general education teacher in this partnership. She possessed a bachelor's degree in elementary education and was earning on a master's degree in special education. Sarah worked with a partner leading an outreach project and co-taught during her pre-internship in a unified teacher education program. From these positive past experiences, Sarah looked forward to co-teaching. Continuing in her fifth year of teaching, Lynn was the special education teacher. She held a degree in special education in the area of specific learning disabilities. Since joining the field, Lynn established a successful co-teaching relationship with another general educator and was enthusiastic about working with a new teacher.

Put together by their principal, Sarah and Lynn met each other the summer before they began working together. They learned about each other's educational background and prior collaborative experiences when they started co-teaching. Sarah hoped to develop an equitable

relationship, while Lynn wanted to give Sarah room to grow and lead as a beginning teacher. They established a routine to fit their class's needs.

Data Collection

Data was collected over the latter part of the school year, 2006, specifically in March, April, and May, as shown in Table 1-1. I conducted interviews and observations throughout this period.

Interviews

In-depth interviews in qualitative data analysis aim to make sense of the topic under study. Because they allow the researcher to gather data while reducing researcher bias, interviews are the primary source of data in constructivist research (Kvale, 1996; Siedman, 1991). Research interviews vary on a series of dimensions. For the participants to reveal their innermost thoughts and feelings on the particular experience, this study employed a semi-structured interview format. Such a format allows a certain sequence of question formulations, yet also embraces flexibility during the interview process to focus on issues relevant to the participants (Kvale, 1996). Drawn from the broader research questions, the interview questions are more contextual and specific (Glesne, 1999). In this qualitative study, the researcher explained the purpose and posed direct questions from the beginning of the interviews.

I interviewed each teacher four times during the data collection period. My interview protocol is included in Appendix A. These interviews aimed to reveal the nature of the co-teaching relationship and underlying beliefs and perceptions. In addition, the interviews allowed me the opportunity to ask detailed questions associated with co-teachers' planning and instructional practices. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted in each teacher's classroom before or after school or during planning period.

The first two interviews established the context of the participants' experiences and beliefs about working with a partner and asked participants to reconstruct details of their ongoing experience with their co-teacher at their particular school. The first background interview focused on meanings of working together, co-teaching, and collaboration, while the second background interview concentrated on the current co-teaching situation and how skills and knowledge were utilized and shared.

The next interview followed a formal classroom observation and probed on details of the lesson, how roles and responsibilities were distributed, and how decisions were made. The last interview concluded the study, encouraging the participants to reflect on the overall meaning their co-teaching experience holds for them. I hoped to explore the nature of the co-teaching relationship and how it works through these interviews.

Observations

The purpose of observations is to allow the participants to reflect and make sense of the data. I brought my notes and shared what I observed with the co-teachers after each observation, so we could construct the findings together. Participants were formally observed during the last few months of the school year. Scheduled ahead of time, four hour-length observations were conducted with each co-teaching pair. Two of these observations comprised co-teaching lessons, while the other two involved co-planning sessions. Field notes were taken and researcher reflection was included with each observation. During observations, teacher behaviors, teacher interactions, student reactions, and descriptions of classroom environment were recorded.

Following one classroom observation of co-teaching, a formal interview was conducted about the progression of the lesson. After all observations, field notes were elaborated on based on informal conversations with the participants about their instructional lesson or their planning session. By watching the co-teachers in their classrooms and talking with them after

observations, I hoped to capture how they enacted perceptions of working together and how these actions varied or progressed during different situations.

Furthermore, the participants were asked to provide any materials they perceive as relevant to co-teaching and discuss their importance in planning or teaching. These documents included lesson plans, meeting minutes, student work, and teacher journals. Participants' use of these artifacts during co-planning conferences provided further explanation of how they conceptualized their roles and responsibilities in the classroom.

Data Analysis

In this study, data analysis is guided by grounded theory methods, which have changed over the years. Glaser and Strauss (1967) view the method as positivist with objectivist underpinnings, assuming a reductionist inquiry of research problems and an objective reality where a neutral observer discovers data. Positivism can be characterized as a world composed of observable facts in a measurable reality existing external to people (Glesne, 1999). The researcher treats data as something separate from him or her, implying that data are untouched by a researcher's interpretations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Charmaz (2000, 2005) argues that what one knows influences, but does not necessarily determine, what one finds. A constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005) adopts grounded theory guidelines but does not subscribe to objectivist or positivist assumptions. Constructivists, instead, portray a world in which reality is subjective, contextualized, and changing (Glesne, 1999). Charmaz (2005) explains that constructivism does not presume that data simply await discovery in an external world; rather, what observers uncover depends upon their prior interpretive frames, background experiences, and interests as well as the research context, relationships with participants, and modes of generating and recording empirical materials. Thus, constructivist grounded theory places an emphasis on research participants' experiences. In this

view, subjective meanings emerge from experience, and they change as experience changes (Charmaz, 2000, 2005; Crotty, 1998).

Constructivist grounded theory represents a reality that emerges from the details of the data, through microanalysis and constant comparisons. Theories grounded within data tend to increase understanding of a certain experience (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Constructivist grounded theory is especially important to this study because little is known about how co-teachers understand co-teaching and how they utilize their differentiated knowledge when they implement co-teaching in the classroom. By focusing on the data from these co-teachers, grounded theory enables researchers to develop an empirical explanation about how co-teachers conceptualize their work together.

Grounded theory methods comprise specific analytic strategies. Grounded theorists code emerging data as it is collected; three key phases of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding exists (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A list of codes is provided in Appendix B. Open coding is the analytic process through which concepts are identified and categories that represent the concepts are made. A concept is a labeled occurrence, an abstract representation of an event, object, or action/interactions that a researcher identifies as being significant in the data. Once concepts accumulate, the analyst groups them under more abstract explanatory terms, or categories. To further clarify, categories are developed in terms of properties and dimensions. Properties are the general or specific characteristics or attributes of a category, and dimensions represent the location of a property along a continuum or range. Patterns are then formed when groups of properties align themselves along various dimensions; thus, the researcher has the foundation and beginning structure of theory building (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

For open coding in this study, as interviews were transcribed and observations conducted, I wrote initial codes in the margins or on pieces of paper. These codes, called in vivo codes, were derived from actual words used by the participants. Codes were attached to the smallest section of text that related to the topic under study, ranging in size from a few words to a few sentences. Some of the open codes from the data include: optimism; strengths and weaknesses; student benefits; different roles; administrative support. After each interview and observation was coded, questions, reflections, summations, and emerging themes were recorded for use in further data collection and analysis.

Axial coding is the process of systematically relating concepts and categories generated in open coding in order to form more specific understandings of the studied experience. When theorists code axially, they look for answers to questions such as why or how come, where, when, how, and with what results, and in so doing they uncover relationships among the categories. Because linkages among categories can be very subtle and implicit, an organizational scheme, or paradigm, that can be used to sort out and organize the emerging connections is helpful (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The basic components of the paradigm are the conditions, actions/ interactions, and consequences. Conditions represent the structure of circumstances or situations that the studied experience occurs in. Actions/ interactions are strategic or routine responses made by individuals to issues or problems that arise under those conditions. Consequences explain the outcomes of actions/interactions. Although investigating these three components of paradigms allows the analyst to draw hypotheses from the data, constant comparison must be utilized to ensure that all possible incidents or cases are accounted for (Charmaz, 2000).

For axial coding in this study, I fit my codes into relationships that included the co-teaching experience under study, causal conditions, action strategies, intervening conditions, and consequences. These axial codes encompassed co-teachers' practices of co-teaching within the inclusive classroom and the resulting relationships. Some axial codes include: use different co-teaching models; talk outside of class; plan together; listen to partner's views. When all data were collected and coded, the codes were compiled into a list and refined until the list was non-repetitive and non-overlapping.

Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining the theory. A central category, which is internally logical and consistent across the data, is chosen to represent the main theme of the research. Cognitive diagrams and hierarchical structures can illustrate relationships between the central category and other categories. Once theory building is outlined, a theory should be refined through reviewing its schemes for internal consistency. Negative case analysis strives to make theories fit all cases, so that possible outliers simply represent variations of the theory. A theory that is grounded in data should be recognizable to researcher and participants, and although it may not fit every aspect of their cases, the larger concepts should apply (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). When no contradictory cases are found after extensive data searching, the hypotheses are considered more credible.

For selective coding in this study, I looked for core concepts both within and across cases in order to encapsulate the data. These selective codes incorporated common properties and results of co-teaching. The properties defining selective codes include: focus on students; negotiation; creation of parity; integration of knowledge. All coded data for the four co-teaching pairs were found within these main concepts.

Two key elements of analysis in grounded theory are memoing and theoretical sampling. Memos are the basis for selective sampling and coding, and begin immediately during data collection. Memo writing helps to spark the researcher's thinking and encourages examinations of the data and codes in new ways; it helps to further define leads for collecting data as the researcher elaborates processes, assumptions, and actions (Charmaz, 2000). Memos can be both analytical and descriptive, as they come to solidify thoughts and ideas. I kept a notebook of my reflections about theory development as I immersed myself in data collection and analysis. Based on these reflections and thoughts, I asked specific and probing questions during informal interviews, integrating these memos into analysis, as the research progressed.

Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst collects, codes, and analyzes data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop the theory as it emerges (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical sampling aims at uncovering diversity by facilitating the identification of a full range of possibilities that are theoretically relevant to working theories. This process continues throughout data collection until no new information is discovered, until there is theoretical saturation. I constantly reviewed my data and analyzed my emerging themes throughout the process, continually questioning any gaps.

Reliability and Validity

Basically, quality criteria for qualitative research are concerned with how accurately and meaningfully qualitative inquiry reveals a reality; that is, reliability and validity. Numerous terms describe the concepts of reliability and validity including credibility, dependability, trustworthiness, and consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, the underlying constructs of quality criteria remain the same in the pursuit of accuracy and authenticity in qualitative description.

In a qualitative inquiry, the replicability of research findings is considered evidence of reliability (Merriam, 1998). The notion of reliability assumes that repeated measures of a phenomenon producing the same results establish the truth of those results. However, Merriam (1998) explains that human measurements and observations can be repeatedly wrong or inaccurate due to naturally occurring errors. Thus, instead of trying to achieve replicability in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) replace the term reliability with dependability or consistency, which is achieved through the careful documentation of procedure used in generating and interpreting data. In the present study, all decisions made in the process of collecting and interpreting data were carefully recorded along with the purpose and rationale. Such documentation ensured the reliability of this research by providing evidence that the data collection and analysis process was methodologically rigorous and sound.

Internal validity is concerned with how congruent the research findings are with reality, referring to the plausibility of the data and interpretations (Glesne, 1999). Merriam (1998) identified several strategies to enhance internal validity within a qualitative study. For the current research, I incorporated these techniques of member checks, peer reviews, triangulation, and clarification of researcher bias to establish the internal validity of my findings. First, the primary method of establishing validity in grounded theory studies is through member checks. The present research represents the participants' stories, with the researcher as the messenger of their voices and experiences. As I discussed observational data with them and painted a portrait based on their viewpoints, participants were directly involved in the research process. The co-teachers gave feedback throughout the study's progression, which provided a chance to increase the sensitivity of the data. Further, I shared interview transcripts, descriptions, and drafts of the final report with research participants to verify that I was representing them and their interpretations

correctly (Glesne, 1999). Second, peer reviews help find relevance among the specifics of the data for internal validity. A debriefing team provides an external outlet to further protect against researcher bias and allows immersion into professional discourse (Piantanida & Garman, 1999). I talked weekly with colleagues who were also using qualitative methodology, and I regularly met with my committee members about my emerging findings (Glesne, 1999).

Third, the studied phenomenon is examined in a more comprehensive manner through triangulation. To study the experience of co-teaching, I used multiple pieces of evidence for data triangulation. These include formal and informal teacher interviews as well as co-planning and co-teaching observations. Fourth, to clarify researcher bias, it is necessary to provide a subjectivity statement in order to give readers information for determining if the researcher's interpretation is not only grounded in the data, but is also produced through a rigorous process that ensures integrity in the research results. I noted any past experiences, biases, assumptions, prejudices, and orientations that may shape or influence my approach to the experience under investigation and the interpretation of data. I explained my personal stance in a subjectivity statement and kept a researcher's journal throughout the data collection and analysis process. These influences and preconceptions were then be bracketed in order to fully understand the experience from the viewpoint of the participants and not impose an a priori hypothesis (Creswell, 1998).

External validity is focused on the generalizability of findings to similar situations or contexts (Merriam, 1998). Although qualitative inquiry tends to seek out an in-depth understanding of a specific experience, rather than the universal features that can be applied to most situations, generalizable patterns and perspectives can be yielded through thick descriptions, multiple cases, and comparisons across cases. In addressing the external validity of

my findings, I subscribe to the belief that the general lies in the particular; that is, we can transfer or generalize to similar situations subsequently encountered (Merriam, 1998). In this study, multiple teachers with various backgrounds were recruited to represent variations within the research; and a thick, explicit, rich, and detailed description of people, places, and interactions that occur within the inquiry is included to elucidate the potential usefulness of my findings for researchers, teacher educators, and school personnel.

Role of Subjectivity in Qualitative Research

While biases can be set aside, a researcher's own rooted ways of knowing and thinking do still seep in, requiring those preconceptions to be explicitly explained. Thus, my subjectivity must be disclosed because my own values interact with the way I might interpret what co-teachers say and what they do (Peshkin, 1988). Admitting up front that research is presented as interpretation and that the researcher is an instrument of data collection seems a hallmark of qualitative research. Interpretation is not only recognized, but necessary.

For my interpretations to be believable, it is necessary to reveal my own ideas about co-teaching and collaboration to understand it through the voices and actions of the co-teachers. These biases and assumptions can threaten the quality of the study, so they must be explained in a subjectivity statement that includes personal experiences and background knowledge. This statement should help readers understand my position and views toward co-teaching and provide them the information necessary to critically review the study.

My Personal Stance

I entered this inquiry with certain ideas about collaboration and teaching. First of all, I hold a social constructivist worldview. I believe that as humans, while we do not create the natural world, we must make sense of this world through engagement with the objects and people

around us. Invaluable in this construction of meaning is language; thus, our conversations with each other, our dialogue, dictate how we view and process our environment.

In fact, I had a negative experience as a co-teacher largely due to my constructivist principles, which opposed the philosophies of my co-teaching colleague and other school staff. Lack of parity in the co-teaching relationship as well as our insufficient negotiation skills significantly affected this work together. I had only a few years of teaching experience, and my general education partner had taught alone for ten years. From my perspective, she had a well-defined view of what teaching was like, and my view was not valued or understood. Thus, I was treated like a special education aide. My duties were reserved to counseling children with behavior problems, making test accommodations for students with reading disabilities, tutoring struggling students in math, and leading some small groups, while my partner usually headed the entire class. My co-teacher and I did not know how to communicate, overcome our differences, and learn from each other in order to integrate our differentiated knowledge. We rarely utilized the team teaching approach; instead, we focused on parallel or station teaching.

Working with a traditional teacher and nontraditional students meant trying to overcome many obstacles. Because student diversity was rejected, rather than enhanced, and teacher sharing was disregarded, rather than valued, inclusion and collaboration were not evident at this middle school. Of course, by enlisting a co-teacher in the classroom, the school seemed to be moving toward a collaborative model of teaching that would benefit diverse learners. Nevertheless, technical structures of increased time and resources, staff development, and administrative support were not in place. Moreover, the school climate was not conducive to open communication and respect for contrasting viewpoints.

Immediately following this experience, I entered the PhD program at the University of Florida. I am part of a unified program at the doctoral level, Florida Leadership in Teacher Education, in which the focus is on how to prepare teachers for collaboration and inclusive education. I wanted to learn more about collaboration and how to work with other teachers; hence, my central focus during my coursework and primary area of research has been co-teaching. I am a strong advocate for collaborative programs; I believe that elementary and special education teachers should be educated together through a program designed to help them learn to collaborate in order to teach all students. I co-taught a collaboration and inclusion seminar and worked with pre-service teachers for two years in the endeavor to help myself and prospective teachers become more collaborative.

Furthermore, as an Asian female, I am particularly interested in how teachers accommodate for student diversity. With an increasing number of children from varying cultural, social, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds in today's schools, teachers must possess a repertoire of instructional and curricular strategies to reach all learners. Teachers' perceptions and lack of cultural responsiveness can result in psychological discomfort and low achievement in students. Therefore, teachers must be trained to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students within their classrooms through multicultural sensitivity and pedagogical competence. Long-term, well-planned, constructive problem solving is necessary to prepare teachers to be effective in today's classrooms.

These assumptions are not fatal flaws in a qualitative study, but instead must be explicitly confronted. I kept a researcher's journal with weekly entries to articulate my personal thoughts and emotions in an attempt to confront my own biases. This was particularly important because I

did not want my knowledge of co-teaching to lead the participants in revealing their understanding and use of co-teaching. Excerpts from my journal are included in Appendix C.

Study Limitations

Regardless of the strategies outlined to establish reliability and validity, there are limitations inherent in the present research that must be addressed. Grounded theory research comes with its own limitation, in that it assumes that the entire data set must be included. Even negative cases are accommodated and adapted to be included in analysis, which can be problematic from a methodological sense. In this way, data was not constrained so that the epistemology guides the data. Nevertheless, creating codes and categories as the researcher derives themes creates a way to organize and interpret the voluminous data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In addition, the data was collected with only a small sample of elementary-level general and special education co-teachers in a midsize school district in North Central Florida, so it would be inappropriate to generalize these findings to all co-teachers and schools not represented in the sample. However, the information-rich descriptions should provide insight into how to maximize the potential of co-teaching in similar contexts.

Furthermore, keeping researcher bias out of the study was sometimes difficult. The researcher also had to decide how and in what way personal experiences would be introduced into the study. Through the use of a reflective journal as well as peer debriefing and peer examinations, I tried to overcome any difficulties.

Another limitation regards the data collection process. The interviews are vulnerable to self-report bias by the participants and observations are subject to multiple interpretations. I urged the co-teachers to speak honestly and freely about their experiences during interviews in order to ensure accurate findings. Additionally, I interviewed each co-teacher after observing

them co-plan or co-teach to ensure I was seeing things correctly and to continually bring their voice into the study.

Table 1-1. Data collection timeline

Week of School Year	Data Collection/Analysis
March (Week 1)	Overview of project provided Informed consent forms provided Background Interviews 1 and 2 scheduled with each participant
March (Week 3 and 4)	Interviews 1 and 2 Transcribe Interviews 1 and 2 Observations #1 and #2 scheduled with each co-teaching pair Interview 3 scheduled with each participant
April (Week 1 and 2)	Observations # 1 and #2 Interview 3 Informal interviews following observations Transcribe Observations #1 and #2, Interview 3, and informal interviews Observations #3 and #4 scheduled with each co-teaching pair
April (Week 3 and 4)	Observations #3 and #4 Informal interviews following observations
May (Week 1 and 2)	Transcribe Observations #3 and #4 and informal interviews Interview 3 scheduled with each participant
May (Week 3 and 4)	Interview 3 Transcribe Interview 3 Member checks
August	Completion of analysis and first draft of remaining chapters Member Checks
October	Completion of revisions Submission to committee

CHAPTER 4 CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF CO-TEACHERS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe four pairs of co-teachers' conceptualizations about working together and how they put these conceptualizations into practice. The co-teachers' understandings were collected through interview data, and enactments of these understandings were constructed with the researcher through observations and follow-up interviews. In this grounded theory study, selective codes include the shared understandings and properties of co-teaching, while axial codes include the varied enactments of these understandings and properties.

Table 4-1 illustrates these properties and enactments of the different co-teaching dyads, highlighting the selective codes and axial codes found through grounded theory analysis. As the table shows, each pair possessed the same selective codes, yet the axial codes varied across dyads. The first column of the table targets these common selective codes, while the other columns describe each pair's various axial codes. Specifically, the second column shows axial codes of the symbiotic enactments, the third column shows the coordinated enactments, the fourth shows the accommodating enactments, and the fifth shows the tentative enactments. One pair had several enactments of each property, while another had less and the other pairs had even fewer. Basically, the symbiotic enactments were much greater than the tentative enactments. In effect, the symbiotic enactments encompassed the same enactments as every other pair as well as particular actions in which the others did not engage.

This chapter presents an extensive discussion of the properties and enactments from the table in conjunction with data examples of the study's findings. Rich, thick description of each dyad's beliefs and practices of co-teaching are provided within this discussion. Each collaborative relationship is represented as a different metaphor, symbolizing how

understandings were enacted in various ways. Because qualitative research yields a multitude of information containing complex meaningful structures, metaphors can be used to explicate clearly structured patterns within the massive results of data analysis (Schmitt, 2005). This grounded theory analysis uncovered many different codes across pairs, and the different metaphors illustrate the depth and breadth of each relationship based on these codes. For example, because one pair's interviews and observations yielded several codes about the enactments within each property, their relationship has a different name than the pair that possessed less codes within each property. The researcher chose to utilize such metaphors as a powerful way to communicate the variations in the partnerships each dyad crafted. Essentially, these metaphors are designed to help the reader create images of the different ways in which co-teaching can be conceptualized and enacted.

Kay and Rachel: Yin and Yang

The relationship Kay and Rachel shared captures the metaphor of Yin and Yang, symbolizing that co-teaching appreciates the uniqueness and honors the unity of the two teachers. In Eastern thought, yin and yang represent two opposite, yet complementary forces or principles, whose interactions impact all aspects and phenomena of life (Adams & Cessna, 1993). In the same way, Kay and Rachel had distinct, yet blending and essential roles in their co-teaching classroom, based on their skills and knowledge. The yin and yang metaphor includes the following ideals: they are interdependent and exist only together; they support each other and are usually held in balance; and part of yin is yang and part of yang is yin as there are traces of one in the other. The next two sections on beliefs and actions address the symbiotic relationship Kay and Rachel established.

Beliefs about Co-teaching

Kay and Rachel defined co-teaching as two teachers with specific and distinct strengths working together in ways that benefit students with and without disabilities. They believed it is an effective method for helping all children in their fifth grade reading and language class bring up their skills as well as for closing the achievement gap between regular education students and special needs students. While substantial growth may not occur in one year, these co-teachers believed some strides could be made and student improvement increased over time, if they effectively worked together.

However, both Kay and Rachel had recently endured a negative experience while trying to collaborate with a colleague at their school. They co-taught with the same teacher a year before the study only to find their collaborative relationships lacking. Although this teacher allowed them to come into her classroom at the principal's suggestion, she was not open to trying new strategies or listening to constructive feedback. She usually created the lesson plans and expected Kay and Rachel to carry them out. Therefore, while the teacher supported the concepts of inclusion and collaboration in theory, she did not possess the qualities necessary to put these concepts into practice.

From this experience, Kay and Rachel felt strongly that teachers must share certain beliefs before successful co-teaching could even begin; these beliefs were important for laying the groundwork for a collaborative partnership. Their understandings of co-teaching included a willingness to collaborate and a positive outlook, open-mindedness and communication, and mutual respect of each other's abilities.

Kay and Rachel found that teachers must be willing to collaborate and work with each other around the needs of children for inclusion to be successful. This willingness stemmed from wanting to move away from the isolation of the four classroom walls and to work with more

types of children; Kay and Rachel believed in the importance of partaking in a wide variety of teaching experiences and felt intrinsically motivated to work with all students. Kay believed that “co-teaching cannot be pushed upon individual teachers; it is powerful only if people that want to do it find each other, and then, they can form and build that relationship” (3.17.06). This power came from a positive outlook on the co-teaching prospect at its conception. According to Rachel, “both teachers should actually enjoy working with other people and have positive thoughts going in; they have to be willing to make it work and believe that it can work” (3.16.06).

Without these positive feelings about collaboration and inclusion, Kay and Rachel felt that co-teaching could not be put into action. These beliefs helped to establish the framework for a collaborative relationship.

Otherwise, the relationship is problematic, and does not help you, the kids, or the school. Lack of belief in co-teaching, lack of buy-in can make the co-teaching situation negative. Negative personal feelings can develop and then, you are unable to work with the other teacher at all (Kay, 3.17.06).

In addition, the partners must be open to each other’s viewpoints and perspectives and be able to communicate about multiple issues. Kay and Rachel believed that good co-teachers should have the shared goal of reaching all children, and communication around this common goal was key to developing a successful partnership. “You want to work with someone who has similar ideals; it is challenging to work with people who are set in their ways. But, you have to communicate about where you are going and how to get there” (Kay, 3.17.06).

Keeping an open mind and communicating when they disagreed did not seem to be a formidable task for these co-teachers. From the beginning of their partnership, they did not experience strong conflict over approaches to instruction or behaviors of student. When they had

different ideas about how to proceed or resolve problems in the classroom, they remembered their ultimate goal of helping kids and stayed open because it was beneficial to their students.

You have to be good about just giving things a try. We are willing to experiment with new strategies and methods, and then, evaluate it together and make decisions. Only if we are being honest and communicating can we develop interesting, engaging activities together for the kids (Rachel, 3.16.06).

These characteristics of openness and ability to communicate around goals helped to lay the framework for their co-teaching partnership.

Furthermore, mutual respect of each other's skills and knowledge was an important facet of the Kay and Rachel's collaborative relationship. Each teacher valued the background knowledge that the other brought, and they were eager to learn from each other when they started their work together. "I thought I could learn a lot from Rachel. She had been through the special education program at the college, so she knew about special needs and making accommodations," according to Kay (3.17.06). Rachel also believed in Kay's abilities and respected her thoughts and ideas. "I knew that I could grow from working with Kay. She is better equipped in language strategies and instruction because she is also a speech pathologist, and I appreciate her skills. I realized that her strength was my weakness," (Rachel, 3.16.06)

Again, the attitude of mutual respect of different prior knowledge and experiences was vital because this quality helped the children in their classroom. "The students can get the best of both of us. In terms of what we brought to the table, as far as education and experiences. Day to day, they find someone to connect with," according to Rachel (5.25.06).

I know that Rachel is a good person and cares about the kids. I value her opinions. She helps me think about children differently. She is more attuned to student engagement and attitudes, while I look more at test scores. I want things to happen quickly, and her attitude helps me step back and look at the bigger picture; to see different possibilities (Kay, 5.25.06).

This respect for each other's knowledge and abilities was necessary to work together.

After their experience of trying to work with another teacher at their school where they did not feel equal, Kay and Rachel believed that the intrinsic qualities of willingness, communication, and mutual respect discussed in the preceding section were necessary for laying the groundwork for effective co-teaching. “I believe you learn from all experiences, good and bad. I ask myself what I can do different. I am lucky I have been able to establish common ground with Rachel. We can put our beliefs into good practice” (Kay, 3.17.06).

The Practice of Co-teaching

Putting their co-teaching beliefs into practice was a complex, yet positive venture. Kay and Rachel had to cooperate and manage complications together, as the school year progressed. Their goal was to integrate knowledge in order to best serve students, and this integration took work and time.

Co-teaching takes more time and effort than teaching alone. It has to be orchestrated perfectly. I thought another person would make my job easier, but it takes a lot of commitment to get two people on the same page and coming up with an idea that will work well for both of us and help all kids (Rachel, 5.25.06).

These co-teachers’ practice and discussions were focused on their teaching and their students. In order to organize engaging activities for students, Kay and Rachel came prepared with many classroom supplies for their planning sessions. They brought instructional materials, including the kaleidoscope reading book, spelling words, and interventions teacher’s guide, as well as student data and informal notes taken during the previous lesson, to one co-planning meeting. “We evaluate our co-teaching lesson’s success by student response, informal assessments like timed readings or running records, test results, and anecdotal observation,” according to Kay (4.11.06). They discussed how to help different children comprehend and move forward; making adjustments to content, form, and presentation, as necessary.

In order to meet the needs of wide array of ability levels in their classroom, Kay and Rachel planned and reflected together about student performance everyday. During lunch, planning period, and before and after school, they discussed daily student needs and evaluated past instruction. Rachel noted the importance of taking all possible moments to communicate outside of class.

We had to creatively use our time. We stopped eating in the teacher's lounge after the first two weeks of school. We would even go out of our way to find each other for five minutes. We just found opportunities to talk in every free moment we had. It was difficult because I was so involved in what I was doing with so many kids in other fifth grade classrooms that needed support, and Kay was so involved all over the school in different classrooms, but we just did it (Rachel, 3.16.06).

Moreover, the individual needs of students drove the type of co-teaching approach Kay and Rachel enacted in their lessons. They had extensive knowledge of co-teaching pedagogy and used this knowledge to decide which model would best suit their students for each session they taught. After the researcher observed a team teaching lesson, Kay elaborated on the basis of their decisions to teach in different ways.

We take into account the situation, the lesson, the students, and their particular needs. If we talk through all of this successfully, we choose a co-teaching model or structure that fits the situation. We have learned what works best under most conditions through trial and error. It would be a disservice to kids, if we did not use co-teaching to its full capacity (Kay, 4.13.06).

Both teachers were motivated to employ the co-teaching model that best served the children, regardless of whether one might take on more of the workload or put more time into gathering information. "Usually, we choose team teaching, so we share equal responsibility; but sometimes, it is better to divide the students or for one of us to take the lead on a particular subject. It balances out in the end," said Rachel (4.13.06).

During co-planning conferences, Kay and Rachel negotiated and compromised, as they discussed specific parts of the lesson, focusing on student engagement and grasping of concepts.

They shared personal concerns and listen attentively to each other's viewpoints, often offering constructive criticism, if necessary. In a follow-up interview, Rachel commented on their ability to work together cooperatively.

Our discussions change everything we do. We can talk through differences and come together about how the classroom should operate. If one of us sees something differently, we are not afraid to say it. We can say that yours sounds better than mine or mine sounds better than yours. Sometimes, we just go with whoever is feeling stronger about an issue (Rachel, 4.25.06).

Kay also recognized that they were able to talk through differences and come up with solutions readily. "We brainstorm together about all sorts of issues. Neither of us is set in our ways, and we actually want someone else to tell us how to do it better. We just do what makes sense" (Kay, 4.25.06). During their co-planning meetings, each teacher usually proposed ideas to which the other teacher added her own insights or analysis. As new thoughts were stimulated, the ideas changed and Kay and Rachel were more satisfied with the end result.

Furthermore, creating parity and modeling a peer relationship was important to Kay and Rachel. After their negative experience the previous school year when a colleague did not treat either of them as an equal partner, they believed it was important to develop an equitable relationship and convey this equality to their students. This pair felt comfortable communicating about lesson components and instructional decisions during the actual delivery of the lesson. They laughed together and asked each other questions in front of their class. While teaching, students were involved in the co-teachers' active dialogue, as children also supplemented the topic with thoughts and personal experiences. During an interview following a classroom observation, Rachel stated "We have companionship as colleagues and are able to establish a learning community because we model give and take for the students" (4.13.06). Kay agreed, "We have realistic expectations of each other and know that we are both trying our best; and the students see us that way--as equal partners who are giving it their all" (4.13.06).

Kay and Rachel drew on each other's abilities and integrated their knowledge through their work together. They utilized Kay's language arts and phonics background and Rachel's special education and reading background, in order to better meet individual children's needs. They believed they both possessed significant content and specialized knowledge, which could equally contribute to student success. This belief in the importance of their distinct abilities allowed them to further create parity as they delivered their co-taught lessons.

For most of the school year, a typical co-teaching planning session involved Kay verbalizing and taking the lead on different types of language and grammar strategies; and a typical co-teaching lesson included Kay introducing the language part of instruction and guiding students through it. When asked why they planned and co-taught in this way, Rachel noted the importance of utilizing her partner's skills.

Kay has so much language knowledge. She is able to teach language concepts so our students understand them, and she knows a lot about the most effective practice for fluency and how to make that happen in our room. She enjoys teaching it more and knows more (Rachel, 3.16.06).

Further, at the time of the study, Kay was taking education classes toward her specialist's degree at the local state university, so she and Rachel incorporated the new ideas that she learned into their lesson plans. Rachel commented on how they put Kay's growing knowledge into practice, as they co-taught different lessons together. "Kay is bringing research-based strategies for us to try. She is also very detail-oriented and organized from her experiences working one on one and working with small groups of kids" (Rachel, 4.11.06).

The same co-teaching planning session highlighted above involved Rachel verbalizing and taking the lead on different types of reading strategies and making modifications to student materials; and this lesson included Rachel introducing the reading part of instruction and guiding

students through that. Kay mentioned the significance of drawing on her partner's abilities in the classroom.

Rachel reads the stories aloud, questions students for comprehension, and calls on them to read. She enjoys this part of the reading curriculum and knows how to teach it. She also has the special education perspective, so she can make modifications for students as she goes along (Kay, 3.17.06).

Additionally, Rachel's background in special education contributed to making accommodations for struggling students and decreasing behavior problems. Kay elaborated on how they were able to put an effective management system into place as well as reach individual students where they were at because of Rachel's experience. "Rachel has a good understanding working with students with diverse needs. She has great behavior management skills and ideas and can provide appropriate rewards and accommodations" (Kay, 3.17.06).

While Kay and Rachel often took the lead on specific parts of instruction based on the unique skills they came into the co-teaching situation with, these skills became shared knowledge over time. As they discussed different aspects of teaching and learning and put their co-teaching into practice, they learned from each other and integrated their abilities. By the end of the school year, Kay realized that she often helped plan and teach lessons in her partner's recognized area of expertise.

I definitely learned a lot from our work together. We cross over and share so the strengths have evened out. I could go into another classroom and teach reading. Working with Rachel has given me the confidence to work with a wide variety of learners. She has taught me about behavior and making accommodations for kids. She gave me ideas and ways to do it (Kay, 5.25.06).

The co-teaching relationship evolved into a more natural one as the year progressed; they combined their strengths to create rich instructional environments. They had a true commitment to making their partnership effective. Rachel noticed that time had allowed their relationship to develop and become more innate and equal, as they integrated their skills.

Over the past school year, our co-teaching relationship has become more instinctual and natural. At the beginning, it was more planned out. Like “Are you going to say this? Am I going to teach this?” By the end, we had a flow, did not have to nail things down because we had integrated a lot of our knowledge. I know so much about teaching language now. If I did not do or say something, Kay would. If I did, then she could interject with helpful ideas on the same subject, too, so the kids would better understand or look at a different way. We just committed ourselves to make this work (Rachel, 5.25.06).

In a conclusion interview, Kay explained that she and Rachel have been able to complement each other and change in meaningful ways. By combining areas of expertise and sharing responsibility, they developed larger repertoires of skills and grew as professionals.

I knew collaboration was invaluable to helping low kids, but I have learned so much from co-teaching with a peer. You cannot argue with the fact that you increase your own knowledge when you work with someone else. You assimilate their skills, when you work closely with them and observe their teaching. This experience has helped me grow as a person and a teacher (Kay, 5.25.06).

As the data showed, Kay and Rachel represented the symbiotic pair, likened to the yin and yang metaphor. They balanced each other in the co-taught classroom, with the pair learning to merge their roles, so their relationship became fluid and natural. Kay and Rachel enacted different practices together in order to enrich and enhance their partnership and meet their ideals of commitment to collaboration, learning from each other, and integration of knowledge.

Cynthia and Ted: The Dance

The relationship Cynthia and Ted shared captures the metaphor of the Dance, symbolizing that the elements making two individuals effective partners while dancing are present in their collaborative relationship. There exists rhythm, fluidity, and automaticity between the two teachers when they share the classroom (Adams & Cessna, 1993). Cynthia and Ted had developed a sense of accord and rapport over time that allowed them to move and progress well together. Ultimately, one teacher usually led while the other followed, yet the roles could change as the lesson unfolded and as the need arose. When engaged in the dance, the support teacher was able to sense the other’s thought and direction, so that they could emphasize

and strengthen the topic; and the lead teacher was able to release control to their colleague. The next two sections on beliefs and actions address the coordinated relationship Cynthia and Ted established.

Beliefs about Co-teaching

Cynthia and Ted defined co-teaching as general education and special education teachers participating in and sharing all elements of the inclusive classroom. These elements comprise planning, instructing, and evaluating for student growth. They believed collaborative teaching is a way to reach more students, as distinctive types of expertise are used to present content and manage behavior. Because children respond differently to various adults, Cynthia and Ted believed having two teachers with unique skills provided their students more opportunities to learn.

During the study, Cynthia and Ted were in their third year of co-teaching together. They possessed different background experiences and came into the situation with certain ideas. Cynthia taught alone for four years, felt that she had a strong sense of what should be going on in her homeroom classroom, and had difficulty giving up any control over her teaching and her students. Conversely, Ted had been collaborating with general education teachers for ten years, spent 75 percent of his school day co-teaching in different classrooms, and had to mesh his teaching style with three other teacher personalities besides Cynthia's specific style.

These co-teachers agreed that the first year of co-teaching with someone was the most challenging. Nevertheless, they were able to establish common ground through hard work and energy. Cynthia and Ted recognized that beginning co-teachers need certain beliefs in place in order to carry out collaborative teaching to its fullest potential. These beliefs were significant in laying the groundwork for their own co-teaching, which improved and developed over time. These teacher understandings focused on believing in inclusion and being willing to work to

make it happen, communicating about every aspect of the classroom structure, and valuing the other's abilities and talents.

Cynthia and Ted found that co-teachers must believe that inclusion can work and be willing to participate in carrying it out. They worked in a very collaborative atmosphere, as their principal was a supporter of inclusion and encouraged the faculty to share work and ideas. Therefore, teachers began mainstreaming students with disabilities and co-teaching ahead of others in the county, and their elementary school became recognized as a model school. Cynthia and Ted were part of this effort and believed that inclusion was the best approach for students with and without disabilities.

Number one, research has shown that when special education students are put in a more inclusive setting, the achievement gains outweigh self-contained rooms. Besides, it is a more realistic setting for what the rest of their schooling will be like. For non-ESE students, they get accommodations and a variety of ways to learn, too; the curriculum is not lowered for them, but they get the benefit of different explanations and delivery of assignments (Cynthia, 3.24.06).

Ted assented that all children can benefit from inclusion and collaboration. "Kids are getting tougher with a more diversity of problems. There are a lot of students not identified for ESE services that are just low. Teachers working together in the inclusive classroom help them, too" (Ted, 3.24.06).

Even though Cynthia and Ted taught in a collaborative environment, they believed that teachers had to be willing to work together and that not everyone could work in an inclusive classroom. "You cannot force collaboration. Someone either wants to work with you or they don't, and things can change every year" (Ted, 3.24.06). Cynthia felt that the term co-teaching could be misleading to some teachers because it only existed for fifty minutes of her school day, and she was responsible for thirty students without another teacher in the room for the other five hours. "All my kids have different needs. I have to reach out for help and talk to other teachers

when I do not have Ted. You have to be willing to collaborate all the time when you choose inclusion” (Cynthia, 5.27.06).

Without this belief in inclusion and collaboration, Cynthia and Ted felt that co-teaching could not work. This understanding was an essential component for laying the groundwork in their co-teaching.

Furthermore, these co-teachers believed communication was invaluable for a successful partnership. They felt it was important to explain their own teaching styles and philosophies and to find a classroom structure that fulfilled both their needs “I cannot expect Ted to read my mind. I have to tell him my pet peeves and the little things that are important to me in the classroom and then, figure out what is important to both of us” (Cynthia, 3.24.06). This meant letting go of preconceived thoughts and assumptions, as they tried to work together. Ted said, “A good partner is someone who does not believe their way is the only right way to do it. They share their feelings, but have to be able to listen and allow the other person to try new things” (3.24.06).

Of course, Cynthia and Ted believed in communicating about struggling students, in order to best serve their class.

When ESE kids are first identified, these kids and their parents are depressed and do not see any way out of the situation. I believe our goal is to start the cycle of success in the inclusive classroom. We give each other, the students, and the parents a road map to success; so, we have to communicate openly to get everyone on the same page and have that vision of success, too (Ted, 3.24.06).

Cynthia agreed that open communication allowed them to work well together and helped the children achieve more. “Sometimes we have to talk about a specific student and what to do with him or her. Often, they respond better to one of us, so we talk about what we need to do differently” (3.24.06). This communication laid part of the framework for creating an effective partnership.

Moreover, to work together successfully, Cynthia and Ted believed that each teacher had to value the other's unique abilities.

I knew that my classroom could benefit from Ted's expertise. He is a seasoned special educator who has years of experience working with a variety of students. You cannot match that. He knows all the laws and about IEPs and modifications (Cynthia, 3.24.06).

Ted had positive feelings about working with Cynthia, also; in fact, he approached her about co-teaching when another colleague retired.

I knew that Cynthia was a talented teacher, so I would not have to do as much coaching, conferencing, changing around as I do in my interactions with other teachers. She is always going to different workshops and researching different ideas. At this stage in my career, after 32 years of teaching, I am not up to date on new approaches or inclined to find them, and Cynthia brings new energy with her (Ted, 3.24.06).

Their separate strengths helped to lay the framework for working together in the co-teaching situation.

After working together for two years before the study, Cynthia and Ted knew what kinds of understandings were instrumental in helping them collaborate successfully for a third year. Discussed in the preceding section, these beliefs centered on believing in inclusion and collaboration, communicating openly, and valuing each other. "We have a good professional relationship. We have similar beliefs about education, in general and politically. We feel the same about how the world works, which matters and affects how you are as a practicing teacher" (Cynthia, 3.24.06).

The Practice of Co-teaching

Putting their beliefs into practice was a process over time. Cynthia had to get used to having someone else teaching with her; and at first, Ted found that she was curious, yet very rigid and cautious. "The general education teacher has their space invaded, so Cynthia and I have to talk about what the expectations are and how I can help carry the load" (Ted, 3.24.06). As she worked closely with him, Cynthia was able to let go of some control and share it with her

partner. “I have become more flexible. Ted made me realize it was okay to let go because I am not the only one who knows the content and what to do with it” (Cynthia, 6.01.06).

This process was fostered with the co-teachers’ focus on helping their students achieve to their greatest potential. “Definitely, during the time period when Ted and I co-teach, we can meet all students at their reading and writing level, but we have to discuss different issues as they come up” (Cynthia, 3.24.06). They began the school year planning on Thursday afternoons, but other meetings and responsibilities took over, so they usually spoke during any spare moments when they could find each other.

We do what we can to communicate about students that need more than we seem to be giving them. Most of what we need to change comes from informal observations of whether the kids were engaged and moving along with their peers. We then plan accordingly, if it is necessary. But, we have a good system going already (Ted, 5.27.06).

The researcher observed Cynthia and Ted planning for a specific student’s individualized education plan meeting. They discussed the ways they were incorporating the child’s goals into the classroom and how certain accommodations were helping the other students as well. “Sometimes, Ted knows more about what the student needs and sometimes, I do. So, we listen to each other and explore our options,” reported Cynthia in an interview following this observation (5.18.06).

The children’s needs also determined the type of co-teaching model generally used in this inclusive classroom. Although they used team teaching at times, especially when they were able to specifically plan for it, the model usually employed was one lead-one support. Because Ted came into her homeroom class and left before the entire class period was over, Cynthia was the lead. In an interview following a classroom observation, she explained how their roles are divided up in the co-teaching approach, in order to best serve the class.

It is better for the kids to have the continuity with me during the entire lesson. He has to go into another teacher’s class at 9:45 and the language arts portion continues until 10:30.

But, Ted facilitates for the time he is here, and I could not get through to all these kids without him. At times, he does take the lead and I support. Like today, he took over explaining venn diagrams while I helped some individual students (Cynthia, 5.11.06).

During their quick planning conferences for co-teaching, the teachers enacted negotiation and active listening skills. They discussed how the day's lesson went and what could have been done differently to help move any struggling students along. With only few minutes left, they briefly talked about the next day's lesson. Cynthia explained her ideas, and listened to Ted's input. She agreed with his insights and incorporated them into the written lesson plans she brought with her. Ted did not bring any materials with him and relied on Cynthia to take notes. In a follow-up interview, Ted elaborated on how he and Cynthia have an easy manner of communicating about how to teach certain topics and how to help particular students, and they always manage to come to some sort of agreement.

We may have different ideas sometimes, but we respect each other. We do not take it personally if the other person does not necessarily like the idea. If one of us suggests something in a stronger way, we will try it. And if something does not work, we try again with a different way; it is not like "I told you so." We back each other up and are very allowing of the other. It is like a friendship; you just compromise because it is important to the relationship (Ted, 5.11.06).

Even though they enacted different parts, Cynthia and Ted tried to create parity and make their roles as equal as possible when they co-taught. "I am the support, but I have an active role and feel that I am on equal footing with Cynthia; the kids respect me and come to me, too" (Ted, 3.24.06). Cynthia wanted to show the students that they were equal partners, also; they comfortably talked over each other as well as interjected and called on different students with the lesson flowing. "The modeling aspect of inclusion is a large reason co-teaching is so popular. We can role model two people working as partners, and the kids can learn to cooperate and work together, too" (Cynthia, 6.01.06). They talked directly to each other in front of the students

during their reading lessons, with Cynthia calling Ted, “Mr. B.” Her partner shared personal accounts during pauses in her lesson delivery to help strengthen the topic for the class.

It took a few years for this equality and cooperation to occur, however, because their daily interactions were limited. Based on Ted’s previous work with other general educators and on Cynthia’s past experiences teaching alone, they had to give the relationship time to take form and become more comfortable. “Ideally, it would be amazing to see what we could accomplish with this inclusive environment and our students, if we taught together all day. But, we have to carry realistic expectations of how much each person can do,” said Cynthia (3.24.06).

Although Cynthia trusted Ted, she had more responsibility because her name was on all the paperwork, including report cards and comprehensive achievement test score sheets. During an informal interview after a classroom observation, she revealed the pressure she experienced and how she resolved it, in order to let Ted slowly share more of the classroom.

The general education teacher is held accountable for academic achievement because our name appears on everything; so, I feel it is my duty to take more control. But, I realized that Ted could only help me, especially with the low kids. Even though it is a limited space of time, he can throw out different ideas and help bring up their reading scores. We can share the work more when he is present (Cynthia, 5.11.06).

Cynthia realized the importance of using Ted’s expertise and skills and integrating their different knowledge bases. As they shared and worked together in the classroom, they could both contribute their unique strengths to the situation. Cynthia had more knowledge of curriculum and content strategies, while Ted knew more about modifications and special education. As the special educator, Ted believed his duty was to help struggling students and fill in where Cynthia needed him in that capacity; while as the homeroom general education teacher, Cynthia believed she should handle curriculum planning and instructional delivery. They enacted co-teaching based on these prior beliefs and understandings of roles.

“Cynthia usually makes the plan according to Sunshine State Standards and where the kids need to be at different points in the year. I facilitate more with accommodating the struggling kids” (Ted, 3.24.06). Cynthia agreed that she would plan the content and utilized Ted’s skills at the most critical time, during the actual delivery of the lesson, to benefit the most students. “He knows how to work with the low group. He recognizes immediately what they need and gives it to them on the spot” (Cynthia, 3.24.06).

A typical co-teaching lesson involved Cynthia writing an advance organizer on the board and introducing the topic. Ted circulated and helped the students coming from resource room get on task and follow along. He then got on the stool in front of the class and read the story aloud; Cynthia interjected with connections from the book to social studies concepts and with different questions. After the children put away their reading books, Cynthia began the language lesson, as Ted grazed around the room, dealing with inattentiveness and behavior problems. After Ted had a feel for the lesson, he interjected freely with examples to strengthen the topic and facilitate Cynthia’s lead.

The co-teachers outlined each person’s unique contribution to the lesson in a follow-up interview. “Cynthia was instrumental. She led the lesson and laid it out well. She knows the entire general education curriculum these kids have to work with, so she can make connections to other subjects. She is comfortable and enthusiastic in her delivery” (Ted, 4.27.06). “Ted’s special education skills were used. He made sure everyone was on target, helped students stay attentive and focused. He was able to add examples and quietly re-teach whoever was not getting it” (Cynthia, 4.27.06). In order to ensure that all the students understood, Cynthia and Ted incorporated the strengths of each partner into the lesson.

Over their three years of co-teaching together, this pair learned from each other and integrated some of their skills.

Co-teaching makes me a better teacher. I get ideas from each general educator I work with and can use them later. In this situation, I am constantly observing my partner's actions and learning about the curriculum and new instructional strategies. I can share these with my other co-teachers and enact them in those classrooms (Ted, 3.24.06).

Cynthia agreed that she changed over time and that her knowledge base grew as a result of her work with Ted.

I learned from watching him with low kids. Ted is firm, but gentle, so he gains their respect in genuine ways. I have learned to do more gentle coaxing and prompting, rather than launch consequences or punishment. I try some of his behavior accommodations throughout the rest of the day with my class. I have acquired behavior management skills, so that things do not escalate (Cynthia, 6.01.06).

Ted was retiring so this study was conducted during Ted's last year of classroom teaching.

In a conclusion interview, Ted summed up what the enactment of co-teaching meant to him.

In a perfect world, co-teaching means sharing all things, but the reality of putting co-teaching into practice is not sharing everything because there is too much is going on and each partner is different. My role as the special education teacher who comes in for part of the day is to fill in gaps and act as a chameleon. I follow along with whatever the general education teacher needs from me in order to help the kids (Ted, 6.01.06).

As the data established, Cynthia and Ted symbolized the coordinated pair, similar to the dance metaphor. Cynthia usually guided the lesson and slowly gave more power to Ted as she gained some security in the relationship; and Ted tended to follow her actions, reinforce her directions, and take over the lead, if necessary. This pair emphasized the importance of the process of working together and strengthening their partnership over time.

Amy and Erika: The Accompanist

The relationship Amy and Erika shared captures the metaphor of the Accompanist, symbolizing that while one individual takes the lead, the other plays an engaging, yet subsidiary part in the collaborative relationship. Working together allowed the co-teachers to create a well

constructed, synchronized, and interesting lesson for their students. When the vocalist can rely on and trust the accompanist, their communication seems natural and the musical results are much better. Although one teacher took the lead role, the accompanist could utilize their skills freely, which inspired the vocalist. The accompanist metaphor includes the following points: in order to completely support the lead, they must be fully aware of the vocalist's quality and style; when filling and improvising around the vocalist, an accompanist must use good judgment and their own unique abilities; the accompanist must possess knowledge of the composition before the performance. The next two sections on beliefs and actions address the accommodating relationship Amy and Erika established.

Beliefs about Co-teaching

Amy and Erika defined co-teaching as two teachers with specialized abilities working together to stimulate new and creative ideas that help all children. These new ideas came from the exchange of knowledge that each teacher brought to the partnership. They believed that the more knowledge available, the more they could reach the students in their class. As two minds worked together to develop innovative lesson plans and deliver instruction in an engaging way, Amy and Erika believed that co-teaching generated additional dimensions to the same situation, in order to serve the needs of students with and without disabilities.

These co-teachers had different teaching backgrounds when they entered their collaborative partnership. Amy taught in an isolated regular education setting in the 1970s, left the field for 20 years, and resumed teaching six years ago to find that collaboration and inclusion were being pushed. She immediately started working with other teachers around the needs of students with and without disabilities and enjoyed the teamwork she experienced. Erika was a novice, first-year teacher at the time of the study. After completing a unified teacher education program that emphasized collaboration and inclusion as well as incorporated a co-teaching pre-

internship and internship placement, she had learned about the benefits of collaborative teaching and found working with another person to be helpful for her and for struggling students.

In effect, Amy and Erika had positive past experiences working with others, knew the advantages of collaboration, and looked forward to co-teaching. From these background experiences, they possessed particular understandings of what it takes to work with another person and how significant these understandings were in laying the groundwork for a successful partnership. These beliefs included a positive outlook on collaboration and inclusion, ability to communicate, and appreciation of each other's skills.

Amy and Erika found that an effective partnership could not begin without positive feelings about collaboration and inclusion. While Amy realized the gains of inclusion through direct experience working in both separated and mainstreamed environments and Erika learned about the rewards through college classes and mentor teachers' rooms, they were both motivated to work together around the needs students with and without disabilities. The teachers wanted to escape the stereotype of the sole educator in front of a homogenous student population who closes the door of her classroom; and they understood that isolating teachers and separating children did not work.

"Inclusion works. A child changes when they interact with other children without disabilities. They do not know who is ESE and who is not" (Amy, 3.21.06). Erika agreed that students with learning or behavior problems could achieve success in the inclusive classroom and enjoy being with their peers. "The kids like the class better, keeps their attention more. They are more on task and interested in activities" (Erika, 5.02.06). Moreover, Amy and Erika believed that two heads were simply better than one.

How can there be any disadvantage to having two teachers? One teacher may see something the other missed. Sometimes, you are so immersed in the details, that you

overlook the big picture; someone else can point it out. Two people can come up with answers to problems better. I will have the person with me who witnessed what I did and can think of solutions, too.” (Amy, 5.02.06).

This idea that each could accomplish more by working with another individual had to exist from the onset of co-teaching.

You need faith that collaboration works. Some people think that working with someone else is too time-consuming and difficult. So, they do not even want to try it. The truth is you can fill in for each other where the other may be lacking and get more done in less time” (Erika, 3.21.06).

Amy and Erika’s positive background experiences gave them the incentive to teach together. They felt these optimistic feelings about inclusion and collaboration were instrumental in establishing the foundation for a solid partnership.

Additionally, Amy and Erika believed that communication about teaching roles and responsibilities as well as student learning and growth was imperative. “You have to talk and exchange ideas. When you share thoughts, you get new ideas and new ways of doing things to help the kids” (Amy, 3.21.06). Erika agreed, “A good partner is able to communicate well. You want to feel like a co-worker, not like someone is the boss or an employee” (3.21.06).

Being in a co-teaching relationship meant communicating around various issues in order to stay on track with everything related to the inclusive classroom. “You have to be on the same page. When it comes to school, what you are teaching, what role you play, where materials are, what certain students need at any particular time. Otherwise, you are off-beat” Erika commented when asked what she thought it meant to work together (3.21.06).

Amy and Erika listened to each other’s opinions and communicated openly about troubling students. “I know I can come to Erika when I do not know how to handle a specific student. We can discuss different approaches or come up with a strategy together” (Amy,

3.21.06). This ability to communicate with their partner laid part of the framework for these co-teachers' relationship.

Furthermore, Amy and Erika felt that appreciating each other's abilities and putting them to use were important to the process of working together. Amy valued the knowledge that Erika was bringing to students with disabilities.

Erika has knowledge of ESE kids, accommodations for writing disabilities. She can make suggestions on teaching strategies so the special needs students get it. When a child needs to be tested for special education services, she recognizes that, too. I knew my classroom could benefit from her education (Amy, 3.21.06).

Erika also appreciated the distinct skills that Amy's background experience afforded her.

Amy has worked at this school for six years. She knows a lot about teaching writing; other teachers on our team come to her for advice. She teaches it with a certain order and course. She uses a format that the kids need to be familiar with for Florida Writes. She is very knowledgeable about the content. I knew she could guide me with the materials so I could understand the writing curriculum better (Erika, 5.31.06).

This appreciation of their partner's knowledge proved vital to utilizing their unique skills and laying the groundwork for co-teaching. "Because we respect and believe in each other's skills, we use them to help our students. Between Amy's special education background and my writing background, our kids do well" (Amy, 5.02.06).

At the beginning of the school year, Amy and Erika looked forward to embarking on their collaborative relationship. They held similar beliefs about the main facets for establishing this relationship, including willingness to collaborate and include all children, ability to communicate, and appreciation of each other's knowledge, as discussed in the preceding section. "Each person comes in with certain qualities. Erika has the confidence to jump right into the mix. We know where we have to be by the end of the year. So, we just do whatever we need to do to carry out that goal" (Amy, 3.21.06).

The Practice of Co-teaching

Putting their co-teaching beliefs into practice was a satisfying endeavor. Amy and Erika were able to establish a co-teaching relationship that worked for both of them, giving Amy the freedom to take control of the majority of the planning, instruction, and evaluation and offering Erika the ability to handle background features, contribute novel ideas, and accompany her partner's lead. "Our relationship is good, in general. Erika comes in and helps during writing. The morning is direct instruction and the afternoon is seatwork. She will do whatever is necessary to help the kids succeed" (Amy, 3.21.06). Erika assented that she played a supportive role in the relationship. "Writing is a difficult subject to truly co-teach. She handles most of the instruction and I contribute creative details" (Erika, 5.31.06).

In order to serve all the students in their class, Amy and Erika concentrated their efforts on student achievement. This meant strategizing together on inclusion planning days provided by the administration, discussing the week's activities on Monday morning, and touching base quickly each morning before the kids entered the building. Erika discussed how they communicate around student needs and plan instructional activities, after a classroom observation.

Every nine weeks, the inclusion planning days give us an opportunity to sit down together and decide what to do, so we do not have to meet so regularly. We outline a rough plan. At the beginning of the week, we may go over that plan. Each morning, she reminds me of what is happening that day, and we talk about groupings and responsibilities. Basically, we start with a rough draft, and then, as the time gets closer, we fine-tune it (Erika, 5.02.06).

The needs of the students decided the type of co-teaching model that was applied. The lessons that ensued from their brief planning meetings were often alternative teaching structure. "We have an established routine...if some kids are behind, then Erika pulls them to re-teach and individualize instruction. I handle the large group and go on with other activities or let read their stories to each other," Amy explained in an interview after the lesson (5.09.06).

Sometimes, one lead-one support and parallel teaching were used. A typical co-teaching lesson involved Erika coming into the classroom after Amy had settled the students into their seats. Amy gave an advance organizer, while Erika reminded them of the behavior rules and procedures. Amy supplied the instructional content, as Erika circulated to help students who had additional questions. If they divided the class into two groups, Erika took her group to the adjacent room; she usually worked with the children who needed more one-on-one help, whether they had disabilities or not. After thirty minutes of co-teaching with Amy, Erika left to work with another teacher. Amy resumed activities with the rest of the class and handled both groups on her own for the remainder of the writing period.

After the researcher observed a parallel co-teaching lesson, Erika conveyed her dissatisfaction and some potential student problems associated with not being able to finish out the entire period with Amy.

I know it is hard for the kids that I leave early because then they come back and have to deal with a different teacher with different directions and expectations. Amy may not know what I have said, so my group could have a difficult time finishing. We just do the best we can in the time allotted to us (Erika, 5.02.06).

Amy and Erika's morning discussions showed their ability to communicate and compromise around student issues. These five-minute meetings were designed to prepare them for the day's co-teaching activities. Erika came into the classroom and asked about the game plan for the day. Amy went over activities and showed her partner the writing prompts, which the students had been working on when Erika left the day before to attend to another classroom. Erika made some suggestions, and Amy listened to her ideas. They discussed which students need extra help based on their writing content. Erika agreed to work with these students in a small group; she took the worksheets back to her room and planned for the struggling students before class started. "It has become a habit that we go over the plan in the morning and discuss

logistics and how to help certain kids. It gets us on the same page and focused on the students” Erika explained during a follow-up interview (5.09.06).

Even though these co-teachers had unequal amounts of time with their students and possessed different responsibilities, they worked to develop a semblance of parity. This included introducing themselves as equal partners and modeling a peer relationship.

The kids know we are both their teachers. They listen to both of us and see us respecting each other. Erika just jumps right in to whatever is going on, and I treat her as a valuable partner. Everything is an important part of the total picture. I know I could not meet the needs of all my kids without her help. We both play key roles (Amy 5.09.06).

However, Erika felt that although the students viewed the two of them as equal, they were confused about her role. “Because I am new, younger than Amy, and usually pull kids aside, they think I am still in college, like an intern. I know Amy is considered more of a teacher, especially since this is her homeroom” (Erika, 3.21.06).

Creating parity was not an easy task with the different roles they held. Because of her background working with other special educators that were content to support her lead as the main teacher, Amy believed that co-teaching with Erika should progress in similar way. However, Erika was in fact uncertain about the responsibilities that were supposed to be enacted. “Sometimes, I was as unsure about my position as the kids were sometimes. I found myself accepting the roles Amy had already established through her work with other special education teachers (Erika, 5.31.06).

While one took the lead as the other supported, Amy and Erika realized they needed to assume these different roles in order to utilize their unique skills and ultimately try to integrate some of their knowledge. Amy believed that Erika’s responsibility was to make accommodations and modifications to the instruction she planned. She explained how she draws on her partner’s knowledge.

Basically, with FCAT writing, I plan the lesson and Erika gives me input. She strengthens the topic with accommodations and modifications. I plug things in when she makes suggestions about adjusting expectations, adjusting the rubric and goals for all students. She knows how to make success possible for kids (Amy, 3.21.06).

Erika employed her co-teacher's strengths as well to help students understand the content; she believed her partner knew much more about the writing curriculum and thus, let her take the lead on instruction. "Amy knows the curriculum and what the final result should look like. That is why she handles the planning and teaching of writing, while I add ideas to make the lesson more creative or engaging" according to Erika (3.21.06).

In addition, because of her background in behavior problems, Erika managed the majority of the discipline issues in the co-teaching classroom. She created behavior contracts between Amy and her students to be used throughout the day; she also reinforced behavior rules while she was co-teaching.

As these teachers worked together and utilized each other's strengths, they picked up some of their partner's skills. "I learned about disabilities from my work with Erika. We had a child with severe problems who did not know right and wrong. She instilled a behavior contract and realized he had autism; I know to do more research" recalled Amy (5.31.06). Erika learned about teaching writing after working alongside Amy. "I have learned about writing strategies from watching Amy teach the subject and from us going over the materials together" (Erika, 5.31.06).

Erika relocated to a different city the year after the study and began a new teaching position. Although she found a resource room situation, she planned to collaborate fully with her colleagues. In a conclusion interview, she reflected on her co-teaching practice and experience.

Because I am a new teacher leaving after only one year of co-teaching with a peer, I do not know that I have gotten the full experience. Maybe, if I was able to stay longer, it would grow and change into a different partnership. But, this relationship has taught me how

much you can help students if you work together, and I will continue to do that (Erika, 5.31.06).

As the data demonstrated, Amy and Erika embodied the accommodating pair, with one performing as the lead and the other as the accompanist. Amy was the lead teacher who planned the activities and was front and center in the classroom, while Erika was the support teacher on the side who added insights and features to the instruction; the product was a more engaging lesson for the students. This dyad had an acceptable, yet not completely satisfactory partnership in which more teacher growth could have been achieved.

Sarah and Lynn: The Understudy

The relationship Sarah and Lynn shared captures the metaphor of the Understudy, symbolizing that while one individual plays the main role, the other regularly performs in a smaller, supporting role within the collaborative relationship. The two teachers fulfilled divergent duties as they set the stage for individual students to thrive, organizing their classes around activities designed to keep children moving through the interplay. Basically, while one teacher always led the class, the other possessed a helping role as she handled details to keep the instruction running smoothly. The understudy focused on small groups, engaging certain students with her specific talents and abilities. The next two sections on beliefs and actions address the tentative relationship Sarah and Lynn established.

Beliefs about Co-teaching

Sarah and Lynn defined co-teaching as two teachers completely sharing responsibility for the classroom with discussions focused around student growth and how best to achieve it. They believed that unique abilities should be utilized to foster children's individual needs, with time spent on small groups and one-on-one instruction. They felt that children in co-taught classrooms could receive more attention as well as exposure to different teaching methods to meet the wide

range of ability levels and needs. Moreover, Sarah and Lynn believed that instruction should become seamless and have a natural flow, as two individuals worked together.

Both teachers came into this situation with positive past experiences working with others, so they were optimistic. Sarah led a successful college outreach program with a peer to help students in high school who were at risk for failure; she also completed several group projects as part of her education degree as well co-taught in her pre-internship with a partner with whom she still socializes. Lynn had been co-teaching math and writing with a general education third grade teacher for five years since she joined the faculty; she and this other co-teacher had established an effective relationship that was previously studied by university researchers, and she looked forward to working with another teacher in the same capacity.

Sarah and Lynn had high expectations for their work together; their positive past experiences revealed that certain beliefs had to be in place before a successful partnership could ensue. These beliefs were important in laying the groundwork for their co-teaching. They believed that they both needed to be willing to collaborate and include all children, to communicate around their shared responsibility of meeting all needs, and to respect and utilize each other's skills.

Sarah and Lynn felt that co-teachers had to believe in inclusion and work together for children to achieve success. Their school climate was highly conducive to collaboration; teachers stopped in the hall to talk with each other and the walkways were plastered with thematic units that grade-level teams planned together for their various classes. The administration provided teacher incentives, workshops centered on accommodations and teaching strategies, committees focused on school improvement, inclusion planning days, and many other opportunities for faculty to collaborate. Although they received some extrinsic rewards, teachers at this school

seemed intrinsically motivated to collaborate for the purpose of helping their predominantly low-income population of students succeed.

I was thrilled by how collaborative this school was. Everyone here truly cares about kids. They work together to make magic happen. Teachers drive in from the other side of town. There is a sense that being here is important. No one is locked in; they choose to work in this environment. Lynn believes in inclusion; that is one of the most powerful factors for a co-teacher to have (Sarah, 3.21.06).

Lynn agreed that believing in inclusion and collaboration were ideals set at the school, and this standard encouraged her to work there as well. “My other teaching experiences were self-contained and resource where I saw kids feeding off each other. I wondered what it would be like if these kids were introduced to the general education setting with great role models” (Lynn, 3.14.06). Lynn found that inclusion works when she noticed a difficult student she taught in a self-contained classroom during her practicum blossom the following year when that student was included in the general education classroom. This cemented her beliefs in the importance of placing students in the least restrictive environment and working together to inspire joy and success.

Essentially, these teachers understood the benefits of working together to include all children and were willing to collaborate in order to meet their needs. “Teaching can be a lonely profession if you allow it be; I do not want to isolate. Shutting the door is not an option anymore. Maybe while my grandmother taught twenty years ago, but not today” (Sarah, 3.21.06). This belief in inclusion and collaboration was part of laying the framework for the co-teaching partnership.

Additionally, Sarah and Lynn believed that co-teachers needed to openly communicate with each other to help their students. They shared the aspiration of wanting to help students with and without disabilities reach optimal goals, yet they understood that the path to achievement could be different. Thus, communication around student needs was important. “In co-teaching,

you both are working toward a common goal and have to make decisions on how to get there. You may have different methods or ideas, so you have to talk; even when it is difficult” (Sarah, 3.21.06). This meant that each partner had to be open-minded and willing to listen. “A good partner is flexible and hears your ideas and is willing to learn from you. Besides helping the kids, they can teach you, too, when they share their thoughts; so everyone wins” (Lynn, 3.14.06).

Being able to communicate around children’s needs facilitated the teachers and students.

I could not figure out the needs of these my kids by myself. I have students in here from beginning readers to fourth grade level. Some can barely add and subtract, and some are ready for the fourth grade math. It is nice to bounce ideas off someone. The feedback I get from Lynn is priceless compared to anyone else, even structured observations. She sees me in the thick of it, and can communicate how to make things better in my instruction (Sarah, 3.21.06).

This communication was part of the foundation for developing an effective co-teaching partnership.

Furthermore, Sarah and Lynn believed it was paramount to respect the other person and use their skills within the co-teaching setting. The partners must value each other’s abilities and engage both their strengths in order to educate in the least restrictive environment. “Sometimes, someone else can get through to struggling students better because they have different abilities. The second person is a safety net; to help those kids from slipping” (Sarah, 3.21.06).

These co-teachers possessed different personalities and were eager to use each other’s talents to benefit their class.

I got a good vibe from Sarah right away. She brings a fresh just out-of-school attitude with great theories and ideas, research and studying from college. She has lots of energy and reminds me of things I forgot or never learned. She is determined to make things work and her enthusiasm is contagious. I knew that I could learn from our work together (Lynn, 3.16.06).

Sarah believed she could benefit from Lynn’s background, also, and wanted to utilize her partner’s knowledge with her homeroom class.

Lynn has a degree in special education and a deeper understanding of what the low kids need. She knows about disabilities, about accommodations and modifications and how to implement them effectively. She can teach me about different approaches and strategies to help all sixteen kids in my room (Sarah, 3.21.06).

This attitude of valuing and using the other's abilities to serve more children helped to establish the framework for Sarah and Lynn's relationship.

Sarah and Lynn were entering upon a new co-teaching partnership and were excited about working together. They held specific beliefs that they thought were imperative to make their relationship succeed. As highlighted in the preceding section, these understandings dealt with willingness to collaborate and include all children, communication toward goals, and respect for each other's knowledge. "I feel positive and open-minded about working with Sarah. It is tough to get used to someone else, no matter what—how they teach and set up the classroom. But, you have to be willing to try because your work impacts each child" (Lynn, 3.14.06).

The Practice of Co-teaching

Putting their co-teaching beliefs into practice was challenging for Sarah and Lynn. They were able to achieve a level of partnership that they found acceptable, but they sought to improve their work together and to become more communicative of their wants and needs. Because Sarah was a first-year teacher, Lynn tried to give her as much space as possible to try new things and experiment with her own ideas, so she often let her take control.

I was caught between helping too much or not helping enough because Sarah is just beginning. I wanted her to feel secure in her own teaching before making too many suggestions. I hoped to allow her to get a feel for teaching third grade without a lot of input from me (Lynn, 3.16.06)

Unfortunately, Sarah craved Lynn's help more, but struggled to effectively communicate this to her. She revealed her frustration after a co-teaching lesson with her partner.

My concept of what a co-teacher actually does seems different than my partner's. I think we should do more together; instead she comes in everyday and plays a small role. But, I admit that I have trouble approaching her and concretely giving her examples of problems or laying out what I need (Sarah, 5.02.06).

Regardless of inability to communicate, Sarah and Lynn's focus was on their students.

Although the two struggled in their attempts to achieve unity and seemed unaware of each other's inner discord, they did what they could to help the children in their class. "We have really been able to help the children because there are two of us. My lowest kids do not qualify for special education, just low IQ and low performing. We reached them because of the number of hands" (Sarah, 5.24.06).

The researcher observed two co-planning sessions between Sarah and Lynn, yet both teachers admitted these meetings were rare and scheduled for the benefit of the study. They did express desire to continue planning together weekly because of how much it helped them feel more in sync when they co-taught. They both brought their lesson plan books and tried to focus their preparations around the needs of their class. Sarah also brought student data and discussed ideas to help certain students, and Lynn added successful strategies that were employed in her other co-teacher's classroom.

Sarah and Lynn generally engaged station teaching with small groups to give their students more individualized instruction. These groups were their way to reach the most children and for each teacher to instruct how they felt comfortable. Although they did not plan together for daily lessons, they divided the mathematics unit into several sequences and decided groups together based on student ability levels at the beginning of the school year.

At first, these co-teachers did try to discuss and negotiate certain issues in the classroom. When they started working together, Sarah and Lynn took time to learn each other's views on procedures and expectations of how the classroom should function, in order to best serve their

class. They found that they had different ideas about how to teach math. However, these co-teachers were able to listen and compromise about math instruction when they openly talked to each other.

Sarah had a lot of ideas about community building and children working in centers with hands-on learning. She wanted to do more than academics. I let her do what she wanted and supported her. Partway through, Sarah realized she was behind in math and told me her worries. She asked for help, and we went a different way. We just had to see that something was not working and then discuss it and change accordingly (Lynn, 3.16.06).

Nevertheless, they were unable to develop parity in their co-teaching practice over the course of the school year. The researcher observed a typical station teaching lesson. Before they broke the children up into groups, Sarah led the class in from recess, reminded them of the materials they needed, and disciplined as necessary during the transition. Lynn immediately sat down with her first group and focused on explaining time concepts, leading them through a worksheet. Sarah used manipulatives to teach money to her group, while keeping tabs on a third group working by themselves on problems she had written on the board. The groups rotated twice during the period, so that each child worked with both teachers and worked independently. When Sarah had to take a telephone call at the front office, Lynn watched over the entire class as she answered questions from Sarah's group practicing with their manipulatives and from the independent group completing word problems. Sarah returned, and they resumed their earlier roles. At the end of the lesson, Sarah summarized the day's activities and gave out homework.

Sarah discussed the progression of the math lesson highlighted above in a follow-up interview. She commented on the lack of parity in their enactment of co-teaching, but she had hopes that it could become better and more equal with increased communication and time.

Generally, Lynn is responsible for just her group, while I manage the entire class. I am trying to be realistic and be satisfied with this arrangement. At least, there is freedom in that no one is telling me what to do. But, we do need more equal roles because I have too much on my plate. I do not enjoy being the lead for planning and evaluation all the time. I have to talk to her more (Sarah, 5.16.06).

Markedly, Lynn viewed their roles as comparable and thought the students saw them as equal partners. Because of working as a co-teacher for five years in another classroom, she had different expectations of the relationship after co-teaching for only one year with Lynn. “I am introduced as their teacher, too, and our relationship will just build with time. The kids know we are partners” (Lynn, 5.16.06). Furthermore, she was used to working as a small group instructor in the other classroom. Lynn reported that her other co-teaching colleague was content with the roles and responsibilities each of them took. As the special educator, Lynn was used to leading remediation or supplemental activities, while the general educator engaged the students in instruction and curriculum. This prior understanding led her to expect the same arrangement in Sarah’s homeroom class.

Regardless of their different conceptions of Lynn’s enacted role and their parity as co-teachers, Sarah and her partner were able to utilize each other’s knowledge in order to include all children.

My co-teacher’s approach to teaching is drill and practice, which is different than me; but the kids need that so they are ready for the FCAT. She explains the material in a straightforward way and gets them through. Lynn is concerned with getting them ready for high-stakes testing and making sure they have seen all concepts. She likes to use worksheets to give the kids an overview of the different concepts. She has a real momentum with them (Sarah, 3.24.06).

Lynn wanted to apply the knowledge Sarah brought to the table as well, as they co-taught together.

Sarah is very student-centered. She talks to them in a real way and uses her own life experiences to help students. She wants them to take ownership for their learning. She likes hands-on math lessons and trying new kinds of things, so the students enjoy what we are teaching them; that is different than my tactic of direct instruction, but they need variety and more stimulating activities, too (Lynn, 3.16.06).

Besides utilizing their unique strengths, these co-teachers learned some tips from watching each other in their work together. “Lynn’s clear and concise explanations have helped me be that

way. She is calm and brings that out in me, too” commented Sarah (5.24.06). Lynn agreed that she learned from working alongside Sarah. “She establishes good relationships with students and parents. Sarah is constantly assessing the kids and calling parents. It reminds me to do more of that” (Lynn, 3.16.06).

This study helped Sarah and Lynn to be more reflective about their relationship and the ways to improve it. As they co-teach together in the future, they wanted their partnership to flourish. Sarah discussed her gains from the researcher’s interview process and her hopes for the following school year.

This study included some thought-provoking questions. It made me really examine what I wanted and how to get it. It made us plan together more and think about what it means to be a partner. My work with Lynn has gotten better as a result of being part of this research. I will make efforts to utilize her help more next year. I want more of her because she is so good at what she does (Sarah, 5.24.06).

As the data verified, Sarah and Lynn characterized the tentative pair, while one played the main role and the other was the understudy. Sarah was the primary teacher who spent more time at her job, planning lessons, evaluating students, and managing the entire class, while Lynn was a helper who kept her station going with her specific abilities. This pair strained to get past superficial communication, was reluctant to offer each other constructive feedback, and perceived their partnership differently from their co-teaching colleague.

Summary

Every pair shared commonalities, including beliefs about laying the foundation for co-teaching and properties necessary to enact co-teaching. These beliefs and properties signify selective codes uncovered in the data analysis process. The foundational beliefs were willingness to collaborate and include all children, communication of goals, and mutual respect and value of each other’s abilities. The properties were focus on students, negotiation, creation of parity, and utilization of each partner’s unique skills in the effort to integrate knowledge. However, the co-

teaching pairs enacted these properties along various dimensions. These enactments denote the axial codes found through grounded theory analysis. Based on the varied enactments and further shaped by each pair's commitment to co-teaching, ability to learn from their partner, and capacity to integrate their skills, divergent collaborative relationships resulted; from symbiosis and coordination to accommodation and tentativeness. The following chapter discusses the foundational beliefs, continuum of properties, and resulting relationships, expounding on the grounded theory behind the data.

Table 4-1. Co-teachers' practices of co-teaching.

Selective Codes		Axial Codes			
Properties of Co-teaching	Symbiotic enactments	Coordinated enactments	Accommodating enactments	Tentative Enactments	
Focus on students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use different co-teaching models based on student needs 2. Make time to talk outside of class 3. Plan together for lessons 4. Reflect together on student performance and engagement 5. Analyze and evaluate student data together 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use different co-teaching models based on student needs 2. Make time to talk outside of class 3. Plan together for lessons 4. Reflect together on student performance and engagement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use different co-teaching models based on student needs 2. Make time to talk outside of class 3. Plan together for lessons 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use different co-teaching models based on student needs 	
Negotiation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen to partner's views 2. Openly share personal concerns 3. Follow whoever feels stronger or more passionate about an issue 4. Give constructive criticism and feedback 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen to partner's views 2. Openly share personal concerns 3. Follow whoever feels stronger or more passionate about an issue 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen to partner's views 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen to partner's views 	
Creation of parity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce each other as equal teachers 2. Model peer relationship to students 3. Communicate openly during lessons 4. Have realistic expectations of each other 5. Give the relationship time to develop 6. Share workload and time put in equally 7. Employ team teaching on a regular basis 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce each other as equal teachers 2. Model peer relationship to students 3. Communicate openly during lessons 4. Have realistic expectations of each other 5. Give the relationship time to develop 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce each other as equal teachers 2. Model peer relationship to students 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce each other as equal teachers 	
Utilization of partner's unique skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take different roles and responsibilities in the classroom 2. Incorporate partner's skills into lessons and classroom routines 3. Each teacher plans various activities 4. Each teacher leads various activities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take different roles and responsibilities in the classroom 2. Incorporate partner's skills into lessons and classroom routines 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take different roles and responsibilities in the classroom 2. Incorporate partner's skills into lessons and classroom routines 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take different roles and responsibilities in the classroom 2. Incorporate partner's skills into lessons and classroom routines 	

CHAPTER 5 THE GROUNDED THEORY OF CO-TEACHING

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe a grounded theory for how general and special education teachers understand and enact their conceptualizations of co-teaching. The grounded theory emerged from data that was focused on teacher perceptions about their work together and the practices that contribute to this work in the co-taught classroom. These understandings and enactments were discussed in chapter four with metaphors showing the various levels of co-teaching partnerships that ensued for each dyad. Developed through cross-case analysis, the grounded theory revealed how four pairs of co-teachers constructed their co-teaching.

The grounded theory in this study provides an analytical explanation about what teachers believe about co-teaching and what they do in their practice. Using interviews and observations, I identified core themes associated with the co-teachers' constructions about working together. As the data from the teachers' classes was compiled, these themes emerged through constant questioning and comparing. The development of the themes and their links to each other within the co-teaching relationships comprise the grounded theory, an interpretive scheme on the nature of co-teaching as conceptualized and operationalized by four co-teaching dyads.

Figure 1 depicts the themes of foundations, properties, and results of co-teaching; and how they are related to each other based on the perceptions of the different pairs. The foundations of co-teaching, the square shapes at the top of the figure, explain the pairs' shared beliefs about laying the groundwork for collaborative teaching. The properties of co-teaching, the circular shapes in the middle of the figure, center on the pairs' shared practices in enacting collaborative teaching. The results of co-teaching, the shaded rectangular shapes at the bottom of the figure, elucidate the factors associated with crafting a successful co-teaching partnership. While the

table from Chapter 4 presented a summary of the different practices each dyad engaged in for the properties of co-teaching based on axial and selective codes, the conceptual figure describes how these properties are related to foundational beliefs and resulting relationships to present a framework of co-teaching. As the flow of arrows indicates, the different foundational beliefs affected the different properties, which then affected the results. In the subsequent sections, description of the grounded theory developed in this research study ensues, providing detailed information about the themes that constitute co-teaching in the inclusive elementary level classroom. The individual components of Figure 1, as well as their relationships and interrelationships, are explored in order to explicate the connections between the figure and the qualitative data.

Foundations of Co-teaching

The four co-teaching pairs consistently believed that certain understandings provided the foundation for collaborative teaching. The shared understandings that helped lay this foundational groundwork included believing in inclusion, communicating goals, and valuing each other. These common beliefs fostered each pair's willingness to collaboratively teach in the inclusive classroom.

Belief in Inclusion

In order to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body, the co-teachers believed in inclusion. This meant they all wanted to teach a wide variety of children and felt that students with disabilities should be placed in the general education classroom along with their non-disabled peers, so each child could profit from the inclusive atmosphere. Each co-teaching dyad worked in an inclusive school, was encouraged to help struggling students make adequate yearly progress by their school leaders, and understood the importance of educating all children together.

Co-teaching pairs thought placing low-performing students in the regular education classroom could help children socially as well as help them make educational strides over time. For instance, Kay and Rachel wanted to bridge the achievement gap between the students identified as not meeting adequate yearly progress at their school and the students who were succeeding at the appropriate level. Likewise, Ted and Cynthia felt the inclusive environment could foster the growth of children who often fell through the cracks and were not eligible for special education services, as they received modifications, too. Moreover, all co-teaching pairs believed that interacting with positive role models and working in cooperative learning groups was important for students with disabilities.

Further, their beliefs in inclusion were evident in the job choices they made. For example, the accommodating and tentative pairs sought positions in a predominantly low-income school where children with disabilities were included for most of the school day, and teachers drove in from miles away to help these challenging students. Sarah commented on teacher choice to work in inclusive situations. “There is a sense that being here is important...they choose to work in this environment. Lynn believes in inclusion; that is one of the most powerful factors for a co-teacher to have” (Sarah, 3.21.06).

This foundational trait of believing in inclusion led the different dyads to work together. They understood that including children with disabilities in the general education curriculum entailed collaborating with colleagues around student needs. “All my kids have different needs...you have to be willing to collaborate all the time when you choose inclusion” (Cynthia, 5.27.06).

Communication of Goals

The co-teachers discussed the importance of being able to communicate goals and ways to obtain them within the co-taught classroom. This communication encompassed letting go of

preconceived ideas, being open to different opinions and perspectives, and actively listening to each other. Interview data highlighted that each dyad believed communication was key in starting as well as successfully progressing through their co-teaching partnerships and working together.

All pairs knew they had to collaborate around a variety of issues, including learning objectives, daily instruction, student behavior, teaching styles, roles and responsibilities, and classroom rules and routines. The co-teachers realized they must evaluate any prior assumptions about teaching and learning and instead, develop new classroom practices together. If the symbiotic or coordinated pair had different ideas or needed to change tactics as the school year advanced, they recalled the significance of being open to each other's views in order to best serve their classes. This openness allowed them to create structures each partner felt comfortable with as well as help their students, as they continued their work together. Furthermore, the accommodating and tentative pair also highlighted the importance of communicating around student needs and addressing changes to lesson delivery, as needed. Every dyad discussed flexibility and listening skills; the feedback they could give each other on improving teaching practice was invaluable for the students in their classes.

Conferring about the different aspects of the inclusive classroom, making connections at the same level, and allowing each voice to be heard meant that teachers could feel like equal team members. Each person had to respect the opinion of the other teacher. Erika remarked, "A good partner is able to communicate well. You want to feel like a co-worker, not like someone is the boss or an employee" (3.21.06). This belief in open communication between partners drove them to collaborate about different areas of the classroom and listen to each other.

Value of Each Other

The co-teaching pairs thought that working together effectively hinged on valuing each other's expertise. Based on their educational focus as well as their background experiences, each teacher came in with different knowledge. This foundational characteristic of mutual value entailed appreciating partners' individual talents and abilities as well as understanding how to use these skills in the co-taught classroom.

Because every partner within the co-teaching dyads possessed distinct proficiencies that could help students, all pairs felt it important to recognize and capitalize on the unique strengths of their colleagues when they approached their partnerships. For instance, Kay valued the special education expertise and reading insight that Rachel learned in her teacher education program, and Rachel valued the language and phonics instruction skills Kay had acquired from her work as a speech pathologist. Likewise, Cynthia appreciated Ted's many years of experience working with students in special education and his knowledge of individualizing instruction, and Ted appreciated Cynthia's talents as a general educator and her knowledge of research-based strategies. Amy also respected Erika's knowledge of accommodations and the needs of children in special education, and Erika respected Amy's awareness of general education content strategies and grade-level curriculum. Additionally, Sarah valued the skills Lynn possessed in working with children with disabilities and designing interventions to help those students, and Lynn valued the fresh enthusiasm and knowledge of theories Sarah had from her university coursework.

All the different pairs felt that their combined knowledge bases could not only benefit the children in their classes, but could also help them increase their own skills. They believed they would learn from each other in their separate areas of expertise and then understand each other's fields more completely. Each general educator hoped to glean knowledge of special education

interventions and accommodations, while each special educator wanted to acquire skills in general education content and research-based approaches. “In this situation, I am constantly observing my partner’s actions and learning about the curriculum and new instructional strategies” (Ted, 3.24.06). Such beliefs compelled each dyad to work together and try to learn from each other.

Willingness to Collaborate

Based on these common understandings of including children, communicating with their partner, and valuing each other, the teachers believed that they had to be willing to collaborate in order to make co-teaching work effectively. This willingness included a positive outlook and optimistic feelings about their work together even before embarking on their partnerships. While pairs had different past experiences working with others, these experiences positively influenced their views about co-teaching with their current partners, as they all recognized the importance of having a willingness to collaborate.

The different dyads realized that collaboration was a shared choice and responsibility. If partners did not understand collaboration or were not willing to work at making it successful, then co-teaching would fail. The symbiotic pair was involved in a difficult cooperative teaching situation prior to working together in which the individual they co-taught with superficially agreed to collaboration, but lacked dedication to carry it out. From this previous experience, Kay and Rachel learned that collaboration must be optional for faculty and that people who want to work together must seek each other. They understood the commitment co-teaching required, including common beliefs of including students with disabilities, communicating openly, and respecting each other.

Likewise, the coordinated pair also perceived that collaboration could not be forced upon faculty; even in their highly collaborative school environment, many teachers still resisted and

did not fully understand what co-teaching entailed. Partners in the coordinated pair, Cynthia was used to teaching alone most of the time and Ted was accustomed to working with different colleagues throughout the school day; yet they both expressed positive feelings about collaboration and the prospective benefits from it due to their shared beliefs in inclusion, ability to communicate, and esteem for each other.

Similarly, partners in the accommodating and tentative dyads ascertained the significance of being willing to collaborate through different past experiences. Amy, in the accommodating pair, and Lynn, in the tentative pair, developed this willingness through experience co-teaching at their inclusive school over the last few years; they saw the significance of inclusion, open communication, and utilizing the other teacher's knowledge in their work with different colleagues. Their partners, Erika and Sarah, learned about the importance of a positive mindset toward collaboration through university coursework and internships. Based on their readings and mentored experiences, these novice teachers came to similar understandings as their colleagues about mainstreaming children, communicating, and using their unique skills.

Because individuals felt their partners possessed motivation to work together and understood the concept of shared will, all dyads commented on their enthusiasm about entering their co-teaching relationships. Their common understandings of inclusion, communication, value of each other, and their different past experiences working with others only strengthened their beliefs in the importance of being willing to collaborate in order to enhance the classroom. They all realized that teachers must have a fundamental desire to move away from isolation, to share ideas around student needs, and to engage in innovative teaching methods.

Properties of Co-teaching

The four co-teaching dyads consistently identified specific properties that constituted their practice of collaborative teaching in the inclusive classroom. These common properties were

focus on students, negotiation, creation of parity, and utilization of each partner's unique skills. Certain shared beliefs discussed in the previous section influenced each property; in fact, the strength of the core belief of willingness to collaborate impacted the practice of properties and the characterization of relationships. Interviews following classroom observations and co-planning sessions explicated each pair's enactments of the different properties. Many of these enactments could fit under more than one property, but the researcher made decisions about which practices best corresponded within each property. The co-teaching pairs practiced these properties to varying degrees, with the symbiotic pair engaging in the majority of practices related to the properties and the tentative pair engaging in the minority.

Focus on Students

The co-teaching pairs' beliefs in inclusion and in communication led them to focus on their students as they worked together. They all had students with a wide variety of needs, including learning disabilities, emotional and behavior problems, and slow focus and limited attention spans. This property was at the center of every teacher's intrinsic motivation and willingness to work together—to benefit each of the students in their class. In effect, each pair focused on individual students, but what seemed different were the ways they believed they should work together and the conditions under which they had opportunities to do so.

Based on their classes' needs, all the co-teaching pairs used specific co-teaching models. Depending on the topic of instruction, the symbiotic pair used each of the co-teaching approaches, often employing team teaching, to facilitate student growth in certain areas. In order to make decisions about which co-teaching strategy would be optimal, they had to communicate about different student needs and goals. Kay commented on the significance of utilizing each approach. "We take into account the situation, the lesson, the students, and their particular needs. It would be a disservice to kids, if we did not use co-teaching to its full capacity" (Kay, 4.13.06).

When they felt that Kay's language background and Rachel's reading background would equally contribute to student understanding and they could teach new topics interactively, they team taught. If they needed to work with students in smaller groups, they employed parallel teaching; and when re-teaching or enrichment was necessary, they agreed on alternative teaching. Finally, if they sensed it was important to divide the content being delivered into various parts, they made stations around the room.

Because Ted was only available for part of the reading lesson and Cynthia felt she should take the main role as the homeroom teacher in order to give students continuity and consistency, the coordinated pair generally utilized one lead-one support. Also interested in helping their students, the accommodating pair used parallel teaching and alternative teaching, which gave their class the benefits of small group and remedial instruction when Amy needed Erika to help struggling students in the limited time they co-taught together. Lastly, to provide their class with the benefits of more one-to-one instructional interactions and various teaching strategies each partner was skilled at, the tentative pair utilized station teaching, which catered to the students' different learning modalities.

Communicating outside the classroom and planning together encompassed important facets of focus on students as well. Kay and Rachel took every possible moment to communicate, including their mutual lunchtime and planning period as well as before and after school. This pair planned together each day for lessons armed with instructional materials, teacher guides, and informal notes; and they constantly reflected together on student performance based on engagement, behavior, and daily work. The symbiotic pair felt it was important to analyze and evaluate student data together everyday in order to help their students through each co-taught lesson. This constant reflection and analysis meant they often changed

their practice to fit student needs, as they discovered new ways of teaching when they communicated. Their discussions about students helped them learn from each other and impart more knowledge to their students.

The other pairs tried to plan for certain activities, yet in contrast to Kay and Rachel, they did not commit to planning everyday or even on a regular basis. The coordinated pair only periodically planned together and reflected on student growth together when individualized education plan meetings were imminent or if there was a problem with a particular student. These partners, Cynthia and Ted, often caught up with each other in the lunchroom or after school to discuss the current or next day's events and the needs of certain students based on lesson topics. Although changes were uncommon, this pair was willing to alter their routine to fit the needs of certain students who required more attention or a different instructional method. Ted elaborated about planning for different classroom practices based on student need. "Most of what we need to change comes from informal observations...we then plan accordingly, if it is necessary. But, we have a good system going already (Ted, 5.27.06).

The accommodating pair also seemed to touch base on the fly; Amy and Erika briefly talked before writing period and went over the lesson plan for the day, adding or deleting features as needed. Amy commented on her preference to keep classroom practice the same. "We have an established routine that works well for the kids, so we do not need to discuss it everyday or change it constantly," (Amy, 5.09.06). Additionally, the tentative pair rarely planned together or collaborated about classroom structures, though Sarah and Lynn sometimes checked in with each other in the hall or at the beginning of class about specific students.

Because all pairs believed in including children with disabilities in the general education classroom, they collaborated to different degrees as they focused on accelerating individual

students' education while trying to accommodate their own classroom schedules. The symbiotic pair showed the greatest commitment to collaboration and focus on students, as they enacted all the different co-teaching models as well planned and reflected together daily. Although they made efforts to employ the co-teaching strategy that would work best for their classes and to discuss student learning as the need arose, communication about students varied across the other pairs. The coordinated, accommodating, and tentative dyads did not collaborate around student needs consistently; instead, they formed a pattern of working together and rarely reflected on this established procedure or changed it.

Negotiation

The co-teachers' mutual understanding of the significance of communicating goals affected their ability to negotiate various issues when they worked together. As all the dyads tried to discuss student needs, respect each other's opinions, and settle on different matters together, the desire to collaborate and the facility to negotiate were most evident during co-planning meetings or brief discussions observed by the researcher. Some dyads had better skills of negotiation than others or used them more frequently because they communicated and planned together to a greater extent.

Parts of active negotiation entailed listening attentively to each other's input and sharing personal concerns. The symbiotic and coordinated dyads followed whoever felt stronger or more passionate about a topic. Kay and Rachel offered constructive feedback and criticism during their discussions, as they were able to talk through differences easily and come to resolution; they put a lot of energy into open communication because they were committed to working out any problems. Correspondingly, Cynthia and Ted did not take it personally if their colleague disagreed with their ideas; rather they explored all their options and came to agreement, supporting each other in their judgments and learning each other's preferences over time

If a proposal did not work out, these two pairs simply went back to the drawing board and tried other alternatives. Therefore, the co-teachers felt more satisfied with the new idea they generated through their collaborative conversations and continued to candidly discuss issues in the future. Rachel commented on the importance of open communication about different topics. “Our discussions change everything we do. We can talk through differences and come together about how the classroom should operate” (Rachel, 4.25.06).

Similarly, the accommodating and tentative pairs listened to each other’s views related to their students and made general decisions for the class together. However, they communicated and planned together much less than the symbiotic and coordinated pair. Thus, they did not reach the level of negotiation that the other two dyads achieved through hard work and time. During their brief morning conferences, Amy and Erika shared ideas about the upcoming lesson and listened to each other’s input; but, they usually left the writing lesson as planned or only made minor adjustments because they did not communicate differences of opinion. Further, at the beginning of the school year, Sarah and Lynn discussed their different inclinations toward teaching math and made modifications to instructional strategies as the year progressed, but they did not negotiate in any other way throughout their partnership.

Wanting their colleagues to feel comfortable within the co-taught classroom, the accommodating and tentative pairs accepted each other’s different ideas about teaching and learning without trying to negotiate any different type of arrangement. Both special education teachers, Erika and Lynn, let their general education partner take the lead and rarely commented on different ways of running the class. While Amy, Erika’s partner, liked this quality of acceptance, Erika wanted a larger role; yet only verbalized this to the researcher. Likewise, while Sarah, Lynn’s partner, revealed that she did not like this trait of her partner following her lead

because it meant too much work for her, Lynn was content with her smaller role. In effect, Lynn kept her ideas to herself because she wanted to let Sarah, the beginner, get her footing in the classroom. Erika and Sarah seemed reluctant to openly communicate with their co-teaching colleagues and tried to avoid any hurt feelings in their new relationships, so they did not negotiate to a large degree. Sarah commented on her inability to communicate with Lynn. “I admit that I have trouble approaching her and concretely giving her examples of problems or laying out what I need” (Sarah, 5.02.06).

The degree to which each dyad was able to communicate goals and come to some type of consensus about them impacted their ability to negotiate. Through extensive effort over time and a strong willingness to collaborate, the symbiotic and coordinated pairs learned how to navigate through challenges and compromise about differences. They understood the importance of honestly stating their opinions and discussing various aspects of the classroom, assured in their partner’s support. The accommodating and tentative pairs were challenged to effectively communicate and negotiate because they did not want to risk upsetting their co-teaching relationships. They seemed to readily agree with each other’s ideas when in fact they kept certain thoughts to themselves, afraid that stating their desires might negatively impact the relationship.

Creation of Parity

The capacity to develop parity in their co-teaching partnerships was fostered by the extent of each dyad’s value of each other and communication. Such parity meant the general educator and the special educator were evenly represented in the co-teaching relationship, as they tried to enact equitable parts in the inclusive classroom. Furthermore, each teacher’s background experiences working with others also influenced the creation of parity.

For children to respect both of them and come to either of them with any problems or questions, all of the co-teaching pairs introduced each other as equal partners from the beginning

of the school year. In each of these classrooms, students were used to working with different people, including pre-interns and interns, through the schools' partnerships with the university. Therefore, children learned that adults helped them and thus, students regarded all teachers equally.

Prior to their work together, the symbiotic pair had a negative collaborative experience where they were treated as helpers; thus, they learned the importance of valuing each other as equals and discussing roles, so neither felt slighted or dissatisfied. For this dyad, creating parity involved developing a successful peer relationship in which both teachers contributed equally to the instructional delivery of concepts and showed give and take. Because they valued each other's knowledge, Kay and Rachel shared the teaching load and time put in to planning and evaluating. Moreover, they employed team teaching on a regular basis where they shared comparable responsibility for the lesson and interacted equally with the class. These co-teaching colleagues communicated openly during lessons as they laughed together and asked each other questions in front of students.

The coordinated pair had divergent backgrounds working with others and creating parity took more time. While Cynthia was used to teaching alone and seemed hesitant to give up any control, Ted was used to working with other faculty and carried out the task that each teacher needed. However, they learned to develop equality over their three years together, deciding their different roles based on the knowledge each one brought to the table. Although Cynthia took the lead in her relationship with Ted, the coordinated dyad felt they were on equal terms and communicated comfortably during lessons. They talked openly and equally in front of students and freely interjected ideas into lessons the other was leading. From this dyad's guidance, children learned to treat each fairly and cooperatively work together.

In the attempt to develop parity, the symbiotic and coordinated pairs understood that they needed to give their relationship time to grow and had to hold realistic expectations about what each person could contribute. Both pairs had tight work schedules and the special education colleagues performed multiple roles in the school. Thus, the symbiotic and coordinated pair had to value their partner's time and communicate openly about any contextual barriers that were working against collaboration. Rachel, in the symbiotic pair, elaborated on the need and willingness to overcome contextual constraints in order to work together effectively. "It was difficult because I was so involved in what I was doing with so many kids in other fifth grade classrooms that needed support, and Kay was so involved all over the school in different classrooms, but we just did it (Rachel, 3.16.06). Cynthia, in the coordinated pair, remarked on the reality of co-teaching and time allotted to work together. "Ideally, it would be amazing to see what we could accomplish with this inclusive environment and our students, if we taught together all day. But, we have to carry realistic expectations of how much each person can do" (Cynthia, 3.24.06). This sense of their partner's limited time and unlimited responsibilities allowed these co-teaching pairs to find satisfaction in their work and develop equal footing satisfactory for both individuals in the partnership.

In contrast, the accommodating and tentative pairs were challenged to make their partnerships equitable because of prior beliefs and practices working with others. The more experienced teaching partners in each pair were used to working together in certain ways from their collaboration with others in the past. Although they appreciated their partners and believed they were equal, Amy, in the accommodating pair, was accustomed to taking the lead while the special education teacher helped. Moreover, Lynn, in the tentative pair, was accustomed to giving the lead to the general education teacher while she assisted. In contrast, their colleagues

had learned the importance of shared responsibility and parity in their recent co-teaching pre-internships. However, as novice teachers, they did not want to interrupt the established pattern of co-teaching, so they did not express their desire to engage in more team teaching. Erika, in the accommodating pair, was afraid to communicate her need to be more involved in the classroom, and Sarah, in the tentative pair, was afraid to communicate her need to be less involved.

Therefore, the accommodating and tentative dyads were unable to establish parity and find a semblance of equality, which was agreeable to each partner. Erika talked about why she felt lack of parity existed in her relationship. “Because I am new, younger than Amy, and usually pull kids aside, they think I am still in college, like an intern. I know Amy is considered more of a teacher, especially since this is her homeroom” (Erika, 3.21.06). Sarah also discussed her view of the insufficient roles in her partnership. “My concept of what a co-teacher actually does seems different than my partner’s. I think we should do more together; instead she comes in everyday and plays a small role”(Sarah, 5.02.06).

In effect, some of the co-teaching pairs created parity, while others realized its significance in co-teaching, yet could not establish it. Kay and Rachel achieved true symbiosis and Cynthia and Ted worked in a coordinated manner, but the other dyads struggled to develop parity beyond introducing themselves as equal teachers to their students. Although the accommodating and tentative pairs believed in the importance of communicating needs and valuing each other, they were unable to effectively do so in order to become equal partners. The co-teaching pairs’ different background experiences also contributed to their enactment of the creation of parity, and thus, some were more committed to developing parity while others were less willing to collaborate around it.

Utilization of Partner's Unique Skills

The co-teachers' shared beliefs in the value of their partner's skills and knowledge directly influenced how they utilized their partner's unique skills in the co-taught classroom. They all saw the importance of using each other's separate strengths to help their students achieve more; consequently, the pairs collaborated to varying extents about how to enact their abilities. Background experiences and prior beliefs about their different talents also impacted these enactments.

Each partner within all four dyads took different roles and responsibilities in their classrooms. The symbiotic pair believed they could learn from each other and valued each other's ability to instruct students in different parts of the curriculum. Each teacher in this dyad also felt that she could make a significant contribution to the class and collaborated in ways that allowed each partner to make those contributions. Therefore, they participated equally in planning and led various activities based on their unique content knowledge. For example, Kay usually took the lead on the language arts part of the lesson, and Rachel generally took the lead on the reading comprehension part of the lesson. Kay commented on her special education partner's unique content knowledge. "Rachel reads the stories aloud, questions students for comprehension, and calls on them to read. She enjoys this part of the reading curriculum and knows how to teach it" (Kay, 3.17.06). Furthermore, these colleagues incorporated their partner's background skills into general lessons and classroom routines. They included strategies Kay learned in her advanced education classes into their reading lessons, and Rachel relied on her detail-oriented plans and organization skills. Kay, in turn, relied on the accommodations and modifications Rachel suggested to language materials, as well as introduced behavior techniques she recommended.

The other dyads also assumed different responsibilities and incorporated their partner's talents into co-taught lessons and classroom routines. However, the remaining three pairs did not recognize that their partner held content knowledge that was different from theirs that might be useful to the co-teaching situation. Rather, the remaining pairs believed that their unique strengths lay in their educational field, so the general educator attended to curriculum and the special educator focused on interventions. For the coordinated pair, Cynthia usually planned lesson content according to state standards, gave the advance organizer, and took the lead on instructional delivery; while Ted facilitated by adding accommodations and modifications for struggling students, working one-on-one with children, and strengthening his partner's lead with concrete examples. Cynthia remarked on her special education partner's expertise. "He knows how to work with the low group. He recognizes immediately what they need and gives it to them on the spot" (Cynthia, 3.24.06). Each person supplied their unique backgrounds to the classroom structure, as Cynthia engaged students in the curriculum, making connections to other subjects, and Ted supported students with disabilities, quietly re-teaching and re-directing as necessary. They established this manner of utilizing their unique skills over time and believed it was the most effective application of their knowledge.

Likewise, for the accommodating pair, Amy generally planned the writing lesson in preparation for the annual student achievement test, introduced the topic and agenda for the day, and led the instruction; while Erika, enhanced her partner's lead by suggesting ideas to keep the students more focused, adjusting expectations for success, and managing behavior problems. Amy viewed herself as the writing expert and Erika as the behavior specialist. However, Erika did not appreciate the role of behavior reinforcer and wanted to deliver more whole-group instruction. Yet, she felt obligated to follow Amy's lead because of her expertise in the subject

area. Erika commented on her general education partner's extensive knowledge. "Amy knows the curriculum and what the final result should look like. That is why she handles the planning and teaching of writing" (Erika, 3.21.06). Thus, the dyad incorporated Amy's writing talents and curriculum knowledge in their co-taught lessons and Erika's special education skills and behavior disorders background into their classroom routines.

Correspondingly, for the tentative pair, as the lead, Sarah planned the math lessons as well as supervised the entire group, while Lynn, the understudy, worked with small groups during their cooperative teaching. Lynn believed herself an effective small group and remedial instructor and felt Sarah should concentrate on the general education curriculum. Sarah valued Lynn's special education background and believed she should contribute more time and energy to instructing all the students together, but she was tentative to ask for that assistance during the current school year. "I will make efforts to utilize her help more next year. I want more of her because she is so good at what she does" (Sarah, 5.24.06). During the study, Sarah tried to put both their talents to use when she planned math stations by integrating drill and practice strategies with dry erase boards and worksheets at Lynn's station, and utilizing her own student-centered approach with manipulatives and hands-on activities in the station she managed.

The particular talents of each co-teacher proved valuable in the inclusive classroom. These teachers appreciated the knowledge that their partners brought to the table and were willing to collaborate to different extents on how to incorporate that knowledge in the co-taught classroom. Kay and Rachel had the exceptional situation of possessing different areas of content knowledge, so they both felt each could equally contribute to instruction and curriculum and drew on each other's strengths in many capacities. Furthermore, the symbiotic and coordinated pairs appreciated their own skills as well as those of their partner's and were content with how abilities

were utilized. In contrast, due to background experiences of how the co-taught classroom should operate and how skills should be divided, the beginning teachers in the accommodating and tentative pairs wished for different responsibilities and exploitation of skills.

Results of Relationship

As an outcome of their work together, the four co-teaching dyads established varied relationships. The results of co-teaching comprised their commitment to co-teaching and the integration of knowledge and skills. The strength of particular properties, negotiation and creation of parity, impacted commitment, while the utilization of unique skills, influenced integration. Discovered throughout the data collection and analysis process, especially during informal interviews following observations and in the conclusion interview when individuals reflected on their overall co-teaching experience, their commitment to planning and working together in their partnerships further shaped their knowledge integration.

Commitment to Co-teaching

The co-teaching pairs maintained different degrees of commitment to their partnerships. This commitment was an outcome based on each dyad's ability to communicate in order to negotiate and develop parity. While each dyad and partner within a dyad believed they must demonstrate a willingness to collaborate, their enactments revealed that their commitment to the co-teaching endeavor varied.

All the pairs held similar beliefs about working together and tried to commit to their different co-teaching relationships in practice; however, the level of commitment to working together varied across pairs. The symbiotic pair showed the most properties and practices toward committing to their partnership. During the year before the study, Rachel noticed how intensely her colleague worked with different students, approached her principal about co-teaching with Kay, and gave up her lunchtime to effectively plan and establish goals for the next school year.

As soon as they decided to teach together, Kay researched and studied the different models of co-teaching, shared these insights with her partner, and discussed how to employ them in the classroom. Thus, this dyad committed to each other by seeking their partners, making time to plan and negotiate goals, and gaining co-teaching pedagogy. Moreover, they committed to their colleagues by treating each other as professionals and creating parity, as they equally contributed to the relationship in terms of work and time. In their discussions, they respected each other's opinions, readily undertook different tasks within the co-taught classroom, and shared all successes and challenges. "It takes a lot of commitment to get two people on the same page and coming up with an idea that will work well for both of us and help all kids. We share everything in co-teaching" (Rachel, 5.25.06).

Once they began co-teaching together, this dyad had to overcome contextual constraints of time schedules and additional workloads. Essentially, they made a decision to give this particular relationship their time and energy so they could learn from each other and help their class; Kay and Rachel then worked diligently toward those goals. They planned together daily and compromised their own hectic schedules to ensure quality time together. "I have responsibilities all over the school and being pulled in one direction or another. But, I knew I had to make co-teaching work, so I could learn more and adequately prepare these kids for middle school" (Kay, 5.25.06). Moreover, Kay and Rachel were the most willing to participate in the interview and member check process because they sought to improve their co-teaching through talking with the researcher, reflecting on their own practice, and communicating their views of the relationship's progression to each other.

In order to develop a successful co-teaching partnership, the coordinated pair also demonstrating practices indicating their commitment to working together. Two years before the

study, Ted contacted Cynthia about teaching together in the inclusive classroom. He also allowed her gradually give up control while they co-taught and supported her in instructional and curricular decisions. When they started working together, Cynthia attended county workshops and in-services on inclusion and co-teaching, shared these research-based ideas with her partner, and selected the ones that were feasible for their class. Therefore, this dyad committed to co-teaching by choosing to work together, learning about the benefits of inclusion and collaboration, and helping each other through the process.

Furthermore, the coordinated pair negotiated their parts and developed parity over time. Their attempts to create parity involved each partner playing an active role in teaching and an interactive role with students during the fifty minutes they taught together everyday. Cynthia and Ted appreciated each other's ideas, established shared values, and contributed to student learning in different ways. Although they recognized how other responsibilities prevented them from completely committing to the relationship by regularly planning together and equally sharing the workload, these colleagues were satisfied with the roles they performed and partnership they developed. "We have a good professional relationship...we feel the same about how the world works, which matters and affects how you are as a practicing teacher" (Cynthia, 3.24.06).

Contrastingly, the accommodating and tentative pairs were committed to co-teaching in that they chose to co-teach for the benefit of the children in their inclusive settings and practiced some of the properties in this co-teaching venture. However, they did not achieve equitable relationships in which each partner was completely satisfied with roles and responsibilities. These teachers were enthusiastic about co-teaching when they were placed together by their principal, yet they did not have the option of selecting their partners and could not negotiate in order to establish common ground. Amy and Erika, as well as Sarah and Lynn, did not make

time to plan or learn about each other's teaching philosophies or background experiences. They had trouble communicating openly from the onset of co-teaching and instead, seemed to superficially discuss areas of interest.

Additionally, Amy had prior beliefs about how the relationship should progress based on her past work with other special educators, while Lynn had similar ideas based on her past experiences with other general educators. Their respective partners, both beginning teachers, accepted these preconceived roles even though they possessed extensive knowledge about co-teaching approaches and collaborative practices through their recent college work. As the year progressed, Erika and Sarah felt their relationships were unequal, yet they lacked the ability to openly discuss these problems. While Amy and Lynn seemed unaware of their partners' struggles, they also did not initiate communication or candid discussion of important issues. Hence, these two dyads did not commit fully to making the co-teaching relationship work effectively for each partner; they could not manage to develop parity, find contentment within their separate roles, or negotiate difficulties. Nevertheless, both pairs felt they worked hard and grew from their year of co-teaching. Erika commented on the importance of collaborative teaching for helping students. "I do not know that I have gotten the full experience. But, this relationship has taught me how much you can help students if you work and teach together" (Erika, 5.31.06). Sarah agreed with the potential of co-teaching to help children and to move the relationship to different levels. "This study included some thought-provoking questions. My work with Lynn has gotten better as a result of being part of this research. And we have reached more kids" (Sarah, 5.24.06).

Integration of Knowledge and Skills

As a result of committing to co-teaching and utilizing each person's unique skills, the dyads learned from each other and then integrated their knowledge to varying degrees. Such

learning came from working alongside their partners over the past school year, as they began to share their different skills and abilities. Such integration meant they had assimilated each other's talents and abilities into their own repertoires of knowledge and could employ them effectively. Because they communicated and collaborated to a greater extent, some pairs learned more from their colleagues than others, and were thus able to integrate their separate skills.

From the start of their relationships, all the dyads observed their partner's teaching, interactions with students, and personal mannerisms in the classroom. Based on these observations as well as their discussions when they planned, the symbiotic pair was able to utilize each other's strategies as their own and integrate their skills within the inclusive classroom. Kay supplemented her partner's reading instruction with different examples during their co-taught lessons, and Rachel augmented her colleague's language instruction with her own thoughtful illustrations of sound. Kay and Rachel became proficient in each other's separate fields of education, as they discussed different areas of teaching and learning when they co-planned and co-taught. In fact, the two actually planned and taught in their partner's recognized area of expertise by the end of the year. Kay felt confident in leading reading activities and instilling behavior consequences for classroom management, and Rachel could use many different types of language and phonics strategies to teach students. "I definitely learned a lot from our work together. We cross over and share so the strengths have evened out" (Kay, 5.25.06). By drawing on each other's abilities and integrating their knowledge, the pair was able to develop stimulating instructional activities and create rich learning environments for their students.

In the same way, the coordinated pair learned from their work together and drew on each other's skills. Although this dyad did not communicate and plan together as much as the

symbiotic pair, Cynthia felt she became more adept at special education interventions and Ted felt he acquired more knowledge of general education instructional strategies. Unlike the symbiotic pair, however, they did not combine their knowledge bases so as to employ each other's skills while they co-taught together. Rather, they used their colleague's skills in other situations. Cynthia acquired behavior management techniques to apply with her students when her partner was not present, and Ted shared different instructional and curricular preferences with other general education colleagues. Cynthia commented on what she learned from studying her colleague. "I learned from watching him with low kids...I have learned to do more gentle coaxing and prompting"(Cynthia, 6.01.06). As they increased their own knowledge bases from their co-teaching, the symbiotic and coordinated dyads felt that they had changed in meaningful ways. These changes were important consequences of committing to and learning from each other, and the two dyads could utilize their newly acquired skills in the future and in other educational realms.

In order for their partnerships to become more natural and comfortable everyday, the symbiotic and coordinated pairs gave their co-teaching the opportunity to develop and change. Kay and Rachel learned to read each other's thoughts, communicate nonverbally, and relay important ideas to each other and to the students during lessons without breaking stride; as the year progressed, their relationship appeared seamless. "Over the past school year, our co-teaching relationship has become more instinctual and natural...we had a flow, did not have to nail things down because we had integrated a lot of our knowledge." (Rachel, 5.25.06). Because they had co-taught together for three years at the conclusion of the study, Cynthia and Ted allowed their relationship to grow and flourish as well. They could often finish each other's sentences and moved swiftly through instruction; thus, they learned to work in a more

coordinated way and establish a system of automaticity. Both of these pairs felt they had learned from the experience and grown as colleagues, teachers, and professionals. “I enjoy working with others and can learn from different experiences. Co-teaching makes me a better teacher” (Ted, 3.24.06).

Similarly, the accommodating and tentative dyads learned from studying each other’s actions in the classroom and going over materials together. Amy noted that she learned more about working with children with disabilities after observing Erika carry out behavior contracts and work one-on-one with children, and Erika agreed that she learned about teaching writing to a small group after being guided by Amy through different strategies. “I learned about disabilities from my work with Erika...I know to do more research” (Amy, 5.31.06). Analogously, Sarah learned to be calmer and to use clearer and concise explanations for her students based on her partner’s special education techniques, and Lynn remembered to establish more rapport with both children and their parents from her partner’s learning community ideas. “Sarah is constantly assessing the kids and calling parents. It reminds me to do more of that” (Lynn, 3.16.06).

However, the accommodating and tentative pairs did not truly draw on their partner’s area of knowledge and integrate their skills; rather, they continued to utilize their separate strengths throughout the school year. Although Amy and Erika picked up some skills from each other, these colleagues only communicated and planned together to a small degree; thus, they did not grow as collaborators from their co-teaching experience. In addition, Sarah and Lynn applied their own specific abilities to the co-teaching situation and did not acquire much from each other beyond a few general tips. This dyad lacked communication skills and did not make time to plan or learn from each other either. Though the accommodating and tentative dyad focused on helping the students in their inclusive classroom, they did not commit to their particular

relationships in such a manner that helped their knowledge bases grow. In effect, these two pairs did not seem to change from their work together or to incorporate new knowledge into their personal repertoires.

Summary

In conclusion, the grounded theory for this research study signifies how four co-teaching pairs conceptualized and operationalized co-teaching in the inclusive classroom. This theory consisted of core themes that arose from the teachers' construction of their work together. These themes elucidated foundations for beginning co-teaching, properties for enacting co-teaching, and results of applying co-teaching. The teachers held similar ideas, yet some pairs' actions did not always correspond to their beliefs. Therefore, each dyad varied in their commitment and ability to craft an integrated partnership.

While each pair was nominated for their effective collaboration, shared related understandings and practices, and considered successful teachers; the ensuing partnerships fell on a continuum, ranging from symbiosis and coordination to accommodation and tentativeness. These different levels of partnerships evolved from the various properties of co-teaching as well as from the results of the relationship. Some dyads negotiated and created parity in their commitment to the relationship as well as drew on each other's unique skills in order to integrate knowledge, while others struggled to communicate about roles and responsibilities or plan together and learn from their partners. Basically, the symbiotic pair implemented the co-teaching commitment and knowledge integration to the greatest extent and thus established a thriving relationship.

Although each dyad practiced their co-teaching understandings to different degrees, each person believed in inclusion, communication, value of each other, and willingness to collaborate; and all four pairs tried to enact the properties of focusing on students, negotiating, creating

parity, and utilizing unique skills. Furthermore, even if each teacher did not completely focus on their own professional growth, they worked together to implement techniques and approaches for promoting student growth. In essence, each co-teaching dyad crafted a successful relationship.

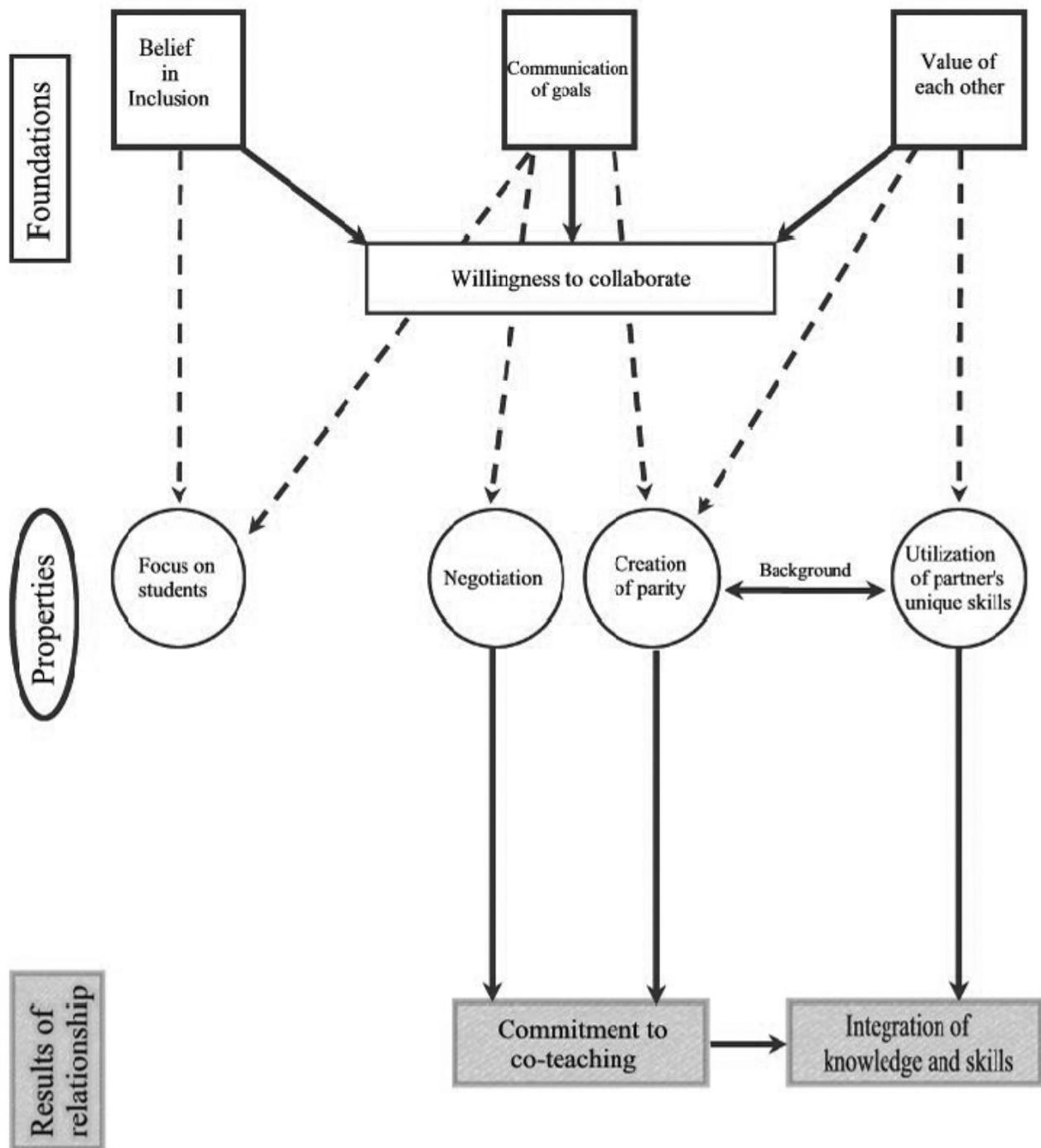


Figure 5-1. Co-teachers' perceptions of co-teaching.

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore what general and special education co-teachers conceptualize co-teaching and how they enact their conceptualizations within the inclusive classroom. In order to fulfill increased accountability demands and new legislative requirements, many schools and districts are embracing the cooperative teaching approach to include students with disabilities in the general education curriculum. However, there is lack of empirical knowledge about how co-teachers' understandings of working together inform their collaborative practice in these inclusive environments.

Existing literature suggests that successful co-teaching hinges on several underlying ideas, which involve teachers engaging in specific thoughts and actions as they work together. These ideas include co-teachers learning from each other; better addressing student academic and social needs; cultivating collaborative skills; being motivated to work together; and having certain contextual conditions in place. While the particular ideas have shaped research studies and affected what has been learned about co-teaching, there are yet unresolved issues about how teachers construct their work together. In effect, the larger body of research in collaboration reveals that teachers respond differently to collaborative efforts based on background experiences and prior beliefs about teaching and learning. Thus, although the literature assumes that beliefs affect actions, it does not look specifically at teacher conceptualizations in order to understand how teachers enact their work together. This study was designed to examine the conceptualizations of co-teachers as they enacted their collaborative beliefs and practices in inclusive settings.

To understand what co-teachers think, believe, and do in order to effectively co-teach, grounded theory methods were employed. Four pairs of elementary co-teachers, recommended by district personnel and administrative leaders, participated in the study. For data collection, teacher interviews, classroom observations, and classroom artifacts provided rich, in-depth information. Each teacher was formally interviewed four times during the research, while informal interviews followed co-planning or co-teaching observations. The interviews represent the primary data source in grounded theory methodology, as they elucidate the nature of teachers' practices and their underlying beliefs and knowledge. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher incorporated member checks and peer reviews during the data collection process.

Data analysis co-occurred with data collection, and the researcher constantly asked abstract, theoretical questions relevant to the details of the data. Through the three key phases of data analysis, (i.e., open, selective, and axial coding), a theory about co-teachers' understandings about collaborative teaching and consequent practices was carefully developed. Grounded in the data, this theory explained how four different co-teaching dyads' constructed their work together. The grounded theory answers the main research question: How do co-teachers conceptualize co-teaching? Also included in the theory was what teachers actually do when they work together and how they use their knowledge in the co-taught classroom. These practices were related to supporting research questions: How do co-teachers enact co-teaching? How do co-teachers utilize their individual and shared knowledge as they co-teach?

Descriptions in chapter four provide extensive information about what each pair believed about co-teaching as well as how they applied their understandings as they co-taught together. The different levels of partnership, which ensued as an outcome of the various practices of prior

beliefs and shared understandings, comprised this chapter. Chapter five represents a composite and cross-case analysis of the interplay between teacher foundational beliefs and enactments of co-teaching properties as well as the results of the relationships. Together, these chapters present both descriptive and analytic evidence about how elementary general and special education co-teachers conceptualize their work together.

In summary, the grounded theory depicts core themes of how four co-teaching pairs conceptualized and operationalized co-teaching in inclusive atmospheres. These themes are related to the foundational beliefs necessary to work together, properties for putting co-teaching into practice, and the subsequent results of teaching with a partner. The common foundations include belief in inclusion, communication of goals, value of each other, and willingness to collaborate. The shared properties include focus on students, negotiation, creation of parity, and utilization of unique skills. Finally, the results of the relationship consist of each pair's commitment to co-teaching and their integration of knowledge and skills. Because each dyad practiced the properties and resulting relationship factors to varying extents, they crafted different partnerships; ranging from symbiosis and coordination to accommodation and tentativeness. While the relationships extended along this continuum, all pairs recognized the importance of the foundations, properties, and results in fostering collaboration, promoting their work together, and helping their students. Therefore, each co-teaching dyad tried to establish effective co-teaching partnerships in order to meet the needs of their classroom.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how the findings of the study support and expand the current literature base on co-teaching and collaboration. The researcher also proposes implications for the research community, teacher educators, and school-based personnel. This purpose is addressed in great detail within the following sections.

Discussion

Findings from this research study explicate what co-teachers understand about working together and how they apply that understanding into their relationships and their practices. Specifically, these findings support and extend what is known about co-teaching as well as teachers' perceptions and enactments of the collaborative approach. In addition, findings contribute to the empirical knowledge base about how co-teaching pairs craft relationships that result in differing levels of synergy and balance. In the following section, three areas of the study are discussed: (a) co-teachers' views of co-teaching supported in the literature; (b) co-teachers' properties and results of co-teaching not yet considered in the literature; and (c) co-teachers' individual differences in practices and their ensuing relationships.

Views of Co-teaching

The findings of this study support and expand co-teaching research, which shows that sharing classroom space and working side by side requires buy-in from teachers (Jung, 1998; Trent, 1998; Minke et al. 1996; Murata 2002). In order to lay the foundation for an effective collaborative relationship, teachers in the present research believed both partners must share certain understandings. These understandings include: believing in inclusion, communicating goals, valuing each other, and willing to collaborate. Evidence from co-teachers' self-reports in other studies corresponds with these beliefs in that individuals motivated to work together possessed such dispositions upon entering cooperative partnerships (Minke et al, 1996; Murata, 1996; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003). All teachers cited that working together requires willingness and a belief that two heads are better than one. In fact, according to Olson and Chalmers (1997) and Snell and Janney (2000), general education teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward students with disabilities and toward their special education partners are among the most important issues influencing collaborative efforts between special and general

educators. As the present research also illustrated, an inclusionary stance and recognition of a partner's potential contribution to the classroom can lead to a mutual desire to collaborate.

Furthermore, in this study, the co-teachers' ability to communicate fostered a willingness to work together and influenced the level of partnership that developed between each dyad. Previous research contends that if both teachers are to build a strong collegial relationship based on trust, balance, and value, then their perceptions of teaching and learning must be openly discussed (Jung, 1998; McCormick, Noon, Ogata, & Heck, 2001; Noonan, McCormick, & Heck, 2003; Snell & Janney, 2000). For example, Walther-Thomas, Bryant, and Land (1996) demonstrated that teachers could not lay the groundwork for co-teaching without first getting to know each other and communicating goals, and Marks and Gersten (1998) found that communicating and matching philosophies were fundamental to high teacher engagement in collaboration. These research findings align with the shared foundations that the four pairs of co-teachers in this study felt were important.

In addition, findings from this study establish the significance of background experiences on views of collaboration and co-teaching, as the larger body of collaboration literature in general education infers (Abbate-Vaughn, 2004; Brownell et al. 2006; Elmore et al. 1996; Ryan, 1999). In the present study, each co-teacher's prior experiences working with a partner impacted their approach to their partnerships and their conception of roles and responsibilities. The different dyads discussed how background experiences with other colleagues strengthened the importance of a willingness to collaborate and communicate as well as shaped their views of parity and utilization of skills.

Properties and Results of Co-teaching

This study extends current literature by examining actions in conjunction with beliefs and conceptions of co-teachers. The majority of research on co-teaching has been limited to self-

report data by teachers and administrators and their perceptions of collaboration rather than using observational data to determine if teachers' perceptions are consistent with their actions. Because the relationship between beliefs and practice is interactive (Richardson, 1996), their disconnection in a study fails to give a complete portrait of a participant's understanding and knowledge. Moreover, Richardson (1996) and Pajares (1992) suggest that a separation of beliefs and actions is not possible. The co-planning and co-teaching observations of the four dyads in this study add a dimension to the literature base that has been overlooked.

Although this was a small-scale study with four pairs of co-teachers, it contributes depth and detail to the research base by elucidating the properties and results of co-teaching in practice. As they engaged in this collaborative approach, teachers in this study emphasized specific properties and results of co-teaching that have not been explicitly identified in existing literature. All participants recognized, through their actions, the importance of focusing on students, negotiating, creating parity, and utilizing their partner's unique skills and the results of committing to the relationship and integrating knowledge. Even if they did not fully engage in each of these properties and results, the teachers understood their importance and tried to enact them in order to establish successful partnerships.

This study reinforces and extends literature to demonstrate variations between the theoretical beliefs and the implementation of co-teaching. Weiss and Lloyd (2002, 2003) conducted grounded theory research where they explored the roles of special education teachers and identified contextual conditions that influenced a co-teaching program. They found that roles varied from support specifically to students with disabilities to team teaching, some of which deviated greatly from the co-teaching literature. Special educators who felt they did not know the content area well, did not have a choice in participation, and did not acquire acceptance from the

general educator, provided lower level support and often engaged in alternative or parallel teaching that was loosely coordinated. On the other hand, special educators who felt confident in the content, had choice in participation, and planned with the general educator, provided active and coordinated support and often employed team teaching. These differences in collaborative teaching are similar to the variations across studies by Rice and Zigmond (2000), Trent (1998), and Wood (1998). Those researchers also examined co-teaching practice to find that roles and teaming situations varied depending on professional, community, and administrative support as well as opportunity to prepare, plan, and learn from their partners.

This study, similar to previous studies, showed that special education teachers' roles and responsibilities in the co-taught classroom varied; however, it shed light on different factors underlying these variations. In the previous studies, researchers tended to concentrate on teacher benefits and roles, limiting discussion to contextual barriers and pressures. In contrast, this research explained why co-teaching teams engaged in different degrees of collaboration based on the power of their foundational beliefs as well as their separate background experiences and preconceptions about working with others. Basically, the co-teachers beliefs in inclusion of children with disabilities and in communication of goals led them to focus on students and collaborate around student needs. This belief in open communication also impacted their negotiation skills and creation of parity. Further, their belief in valuing each other influenced parity and utilization of each partner's unique skills. Moreover, these core beliefs as well as their past experiences affected their willingness to collaborate, which led the different dyads to practice co-teaching to diverse levels.

The symbiotic pair engaged in the greatest collaborative practices, while the tentative pair engaged in the least. This dyad committed to the partnership and integrated knowledge to a large

extent through the strength of their shared beliefs and prior negative experiences they mutually experienced co-teaching in their school. To a lesser degree, the coordinated pair also committed to each other and integrated some of their skills over time; as they understood the necessity and process of relationship building based on previous work with others and research on inclusion. Because they were unable to communicate, create parity, and negotiate differences, the accommodating and tentative pairs did not achieve high commitment and integration. Although they held similar beliefs about working together and chose to co-teach, these partners struggled to establish common ground; their dissimilar backgrounds and inability to communicate goals impeded their enactment of properties. Due to different preconceptions of co-teaching, the tentative pair was especially challenged to communicate and plan together so as to change classroom practice and share knowledge. This study, unlike previous co-teaching research, explored both teacher beliefs and practices in an attempt to develop a complete understanding about co-teaching; thus, building on past research that focused only on views of working together or only on the distribution of roles in practice. The current research examined how views of collaboration impacted roles and responsibilities as well as why co-teachers implemented different co-teaching practices.

In summary, this research study highlights the relevance of examining both teacher understandings and practices in developing a theory of co-teaching. Unlike other studies focused solely on teachers' perceptions of their roles or on teacher roles, the present study explained not only teachers' beliefs about co-teaching, but also how they implemented those beliefs. By looking at these two components of co-teaching, the researcher found in-depth information about why teachers are willing to collaborate and how they commit to this collaboration. Therefore, findings from this study provide comprehensive and valuable information about how beliefs

interact with actions and what results from this interaction to make co-teaching practice successful.

Individual Differences and Ensuing Relationships

Overall, the four dyads of co-teachers who participated in this study held similar conceptualizations about working together. They understood the importance of certain foundations and properties of co-teaching, as they enacted an array of practices within the inclusive classroom to help students. Despite these shared understandings, the teachers demonstrated differing levels of collaborative enactment and thus, their resulting relationships varied. Though they all talked about the properties, some pairs had a better grasp of how to execute those properties and develop balanced partnerships.

The findings from this co-teaching study are reinforced by collaboration studies in general education, which illustrate that professional collaboration can yield different results for different teachers (Abbate-Vaughn, 2004; Brownell et al. 2006; Elmore et al. 1996; Marks & Gersten, 1998; Ryan, 1999). Teachers bring their own skills, beliefs, and motivations to the collaborative process; and because they build on different bases of knowledge, background experiences, and prior beliefs, they may apply practices in different ways. Furthermore, teachers inclined toward a particular idea or predisposed to a certain strategy may vary in the degree to which they implement those ideas or strategies and the quality of implementation (Brownell et al. 2006). Based on these revelations, it is not surprising that teachers in the present co-teaching study varied in their enactment of practices and their ensuing collaborative relationships. The accommodating and tentative pairs enacted some of the co-teaching properties to restricted degrees, but they could not move past superficial communication to create equal roles, negotiate differences of opinion, and learn from each other. Thus, they established acceptable, yet not completely satisfying relationships with their partners. As they engaged in different properties

and drew on each other's knowledge, the coordinated pair developed a healthy relationship over time. Finally, based on the quality and quantity of their practices, the symbiotic pair established an equitable and synergistic relationship; this partnership focused on their commitment to co-teaching and integration of knowledge and skills.

Essentially, in terms of enactment of properties and results, the symbiotic dyad crafted the most successful co-teaching relationship. Because their work together presents a comprehensive picture of what co-teaching can look like when teachers are fully engaged, committed, and learning, it is important to note the significance of the co-teaching properties and results identified in their relationship. In particular, applying the properties of negotiation, creation of parity, and utilization of knowledge in co-teaching practice resulted in high commitment, sharing, and integration. The symbiotic pair's views of collaboration, of themselves, and of each other impacted their level of partnership as well. Because they valued their own knowledge as well as the knowledge their partner brought to the table, they equally incorporated each other's skills into co-taught lessons and routines. Moreover, this dyad's study of collaboration and inclusion, choice in partners, opportunity to communicate and determine goals, and background experiences working with others also influenced the resulting relationship. Kay and Rachel learned about co-teaching approaches for inclusive classrooms, sought to work with each other, compromised other tasks to plan together, and shared a common past experience with another colleague; these factors heightened their commitment and ability to integrate their separate areas of expertise. These properties, views, and factors must be considered if effective and balanced co-teaching partnerships are to result.

Implications

Findings from this study indicate that co-teachers conceptualized and operationalized working together in ways, which reveal important foundations for starting co-teaching,

properties for enacting co-teaching, and results of developing co-teaching. Although each teacher held similar views about collaboration, the four pairs crafted a different relationships based on their particular background experiences, strength of core beliefs, and use of practices. These findings have implications for future research in co-teaching and for current practice in teacher education and schools.

Implications for Research

Educators lack a research-based understanding of how general and special educators understand co-teaching and how they put those understandings into practice in the inclusive classroom. The grounded theory from this study showed that certain foundational beliefs must be in place before collaboration can begin and that specific properties contribute to the enactment of collaborative teaching. In addition, this study suggests a framework or theory for constructing a successful co-teaching partnership that can result in symbiosis, if teachers commit to the relationship and integrate their skills. While co-teaching dyads in this research shared beliefs, their practices and ensuing relationships varied. Different factors contributed to these diverse levels of partnership, including background and prior beliefs, ability to communicate and create parity, and motivation to learn from and draw on each other's skills. In essence, the teachers' conceptualizations of working together and enactment of practices to enhance their work were complex and deeply interrelated.

This study establishes the need for more research to increase the empirical knowledge base about co-teacher's understandings and practices of working together in inclusive settings. Although the current study provides some initial knowledge about how co-teachers perceive co-teaching, further research about how general education and special education teachers work together to construct their collaborative relationships is warranted. In order to replicate or substantiate the findings from the small sample of co-teaching pairs in this study, more research

is needed. Researchers must continue to investigate why different forms of collaboration result and what the consequences are for individual teachers and for co-teaching dyads. More importantly, future research should focus on how these outcomes serve students with disabilities. Hargreaves (1994) asserts that “there is no such thing as ‘real’ or ‘true’ collaboration or collegiality. There are only different forms of collaboration and collegiality that have different consequences and serve different purposes” (p. 189).

In effect, findings from this study point to more topics and unanswered questions in the area of co-teaching that must be explicitly examined. This study explored why some teachers learn to work together in ways that are jointly beneficial and others do not based on background experiences and prior beliefs. Further research in co-teaching can elaborate on these findings. What kinds of differentiated knowledge bases enable teachers to learn from each other and assimilate skills? How does their ability to integrate knowledge affect the students in their inclusive classroom? What types of communication and negotiation skills do they need in order to develop parity and balance within the co-taught classroom? Can they be taught these highly sophisticated skills of collaboration? How do they commit to their partners and to their relationship given the complicated context of schools? Analysis of this type of data should reveal which patterns of thinking, communication, and actions facilitate and which impede the emergence of symbiotic relationships and improved instructional practices in inclusive environments. Researchers need to investigate these issues related to background, discourse, skill level, and sustainability in order to move past cosmetic educational reform to widespread, significant benefits for teachers and students.

Based on the relationships that were established in this study, cooperative teaching is a potentially efficacious approach for fostering increased sharing and learning among teachers.

However, to realize this potential, researchers should consider the evolutionary nature of co-teaching and study it as a process through qualitative data analysis. This consideration entails conducting longitudinal studies focused on teacher voices and real-life experiences through the implementation process. Prolonged engagement must be a component of further studies to honor how cooperative teaching evolves and progresses within different contexts. Grounded theory research and phenomenological studies can reveal rich, in-depth information about how the multitude of thoughts and ideas individual teachers possess interact as they work together. Moreover, social constructivist methods and discourse analysis can illustrate what kinds of dialogue teachers engage in to negotiate roles and responsibilities as well as overcome obstacles and challenges. Such qualitative research can compare the understandings and actions of diverse co-teaching teams as they learn to work together and try to shape successful co-teaching partnerships.

Implications for Practice

This study has useful implications for teacher education and professional development as well as for schools and individual classrooms. Its findings imply that general educators and special educators can work together successfully and create symbiotic relationships. What teachers believe and do has a significant impact on the partnership that develops in the co-taught classroom, and a specific set of teacher understandings and actions can support commitment and knowledge integration. Therefore, it is important for teacher educators and school-based personnel to understand the nature of collaborative teaching and how to implement collaborative practices in inclusive settings.

Teacher education and professional development

Because collaboration is a process that changes over time, beliefs and skills can be transformed over time as well. As the findings from this research show, teachers interact in

different ways when they co-teach in inclusive environments, and prior beliefs and ideas may amend or evolve during this interaction. Teacher educators have the task of helping teachers develop a shared vision for student learning, crafting an understanding of curriculum and instruction, and teaching the principles of a learning community (Brownell et al. 1997). By integrating general and special education programs and working more closely with schools, teacher educators have opportunities to help pre-service and in-service teachers examine their views on collaboration, reshape those views, and consequently, further their understandings about and abilities to work collaboratively (Blanton et al. 1997). Thus, it is important to explore the opportunities and challenges that exist for such a transformative process. Do teacher educators need to clarify their thinking about what special versus general educators might bring to the table? Do they need to clarify their thinking about what the collaborative skills are that teachers will need and what kind of situations might best promote them? Teacher educators can prepare teachers in ways to meet the academic and behavior challenges emerging in the classroom and ultimately promote collaboration in school environments.

However, it is difficult to change the way teachers think about teacher and student learning and to overcome preconceived beliefs and attitudes (McDiarmid, 1990; Olson & Chalmers, 1997). Teacher candidates arrive at college with strong philosophies and images of teaching, which are acquired through personal life experience and formal knowledge (Richardson, 1996). In order to unpack how these entering ideas impact practice, teacher educators must tap into teacher beliefs of working together. This means asking them to confront and challenge their preconceptions (McDiarmid, 1990). To acknowledge and meet this charge, teacher educators must promote certain experiences at the pre-service and in-service level. They must provide courses and practical experiences that pay greater attention to the development of highly

sophisticated skills of negotiation and communication, as well as examples of teachers effectively co-teaching in inclusive settings.

Laying the foundation for collaboration in order to confront beliefs, negotiate understandings, and change instructional practices, is demanding work, however. Teacher educators often work in a culture that reinforces individualism, where faculty are concerned with research and scholarship within their discipline (Ducharme, 1993). This climate does not support collaborative effort and teacher education. Challenges of collaboration, and specifically cooperative teaching, include instructional differences, opposing philosophies, lack of skill, limited school support, and time constraints (Rice & Zigmond, 1995). Analysis of these barriers suggests that professional dialogue and open communication can occur when educators are provided professional development, skill instruction and opportunities for skill development, and supportive structures for confronting beliefs (Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Teachers cannot be expected to change their behaviors and prior beliefs without useful preparation for collaborative teaching and a supportive environment for pursuing this approach (Fennick & Liddy, 2001).

School-based personnel

School-wide support of collaboration is essential for teachers to accomplish co-teaching goals and to develop successful co-teaching relationships. Dyads in this study worked in collaborative environments, where inclusion and co-teaching were prevalent and advocated by faculty. Other studies focusing on motivation and context issues showed that co-teachers made frequent references to the connection between administrative support and the degree of success they experienced working together (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Jung, 1998; Karge et al. 1995; Lehr, 1999; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). Factors that could substantially improve administrative

policies and better support the success of collaborative teaching include voluntary participation, adequate planning time and resources, collaborative training, and high visibility of collaboration.

Furthermore, administrators can foster a school climate of collaboration and teacher sharing by treating collaboration as an opportunity for professional growth and making dialogue an important component of school culture. Such a collaborative work ethic can directly shape prospective and practicing teacher collaboration and co-teaching. Staff development aimed at both helping teachers acquire knowledge and skills that facilitate collaboration and providing them with the flexibility and autonomy they may need to implement co-teaching is also a necessary ingredient in promoting teacher collaboration.

Moreover, for teachers to learn to work together, they must establish common goals at the beginning. This study highlighted the significance of laying the foundation for co-teaching before embarking on the relationship. Additionally, in this study, the most successful pairs came in with differentiated knowledge bases and possessed self-efficacy about their contributions to the inclusive classroom, which helped them to utilize and draw on each other's skills. Because certain dispositions and skills are important for collaborating and co-teaching in inclusive programs, co-teacher relationship scales have been developed (McCormick et al. 2001; Noonan et al. 2003). These scales explore co-teacher philosophical beliefs, teaching approaches, personality components, and professional styles to understand similarities and differences in how partners relate. Scales can be used with co-teacher dyads to encourage discourse about the importance of creating and maintaining a positive relationship with each other.

Conclusion

Nationwide, the public is voicing a need for more effective and efficient teaching and enhancement of quality instruction (Karge et al. 1995). The collaborative model may be accepted as one approach to this need. Pairing two teachers together has the potential for each to teach at a

higher level than could be accomplished alone, combating the isolation of schools and engaging in meaningful dialogue and reflection (Rogers & Babinski, 2002). When they are trying innovative methods of instruction and truly planning, sharing, and reflecting together, more children can be reached. Cooperative teaching supports and facilitates a trend toward greater integration and inclusion of students with disabilities while maintaining and enhancing the provision of appropriate education for all students (Pugach & Wesson, 1995). Achieving successful collaboration requires a certain mindset (Olson & Chalmers, 1997) as well as specific skills (McCormick et al, 2001), it is essential to know if and how this mindset and skills can be developed and promoted.

This research study documents particular foundational beliefs, properties, and results of co-teaching that foster co-teaching in practice. The symbiotic pair enacted co-teaching with the results of completely committing to the partnership and integrating their separate knowledge and skills. They came into the partnership with specific ideas about how their work together should progress and progressed toward these goals from the inception of co-teaching. These colleagues possessed a frame of thinking and the types of communication skills that allowed them to work together in ways that were mutually beneficial and satisfying. They were prepared and willing to put their ideas and skills into action to serve their students. The previous sections from this chapter, the discussion and the implications, highlight how to support teachers in crafting such a relationship in inclusive atmospheres.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Background interviews:

1. What do you think it means to work together?
 2. What makes a good partner?
 3. What are your past experiences working with a partner or colleague?
 4. Have these past experiences influenced how you feel about co-teaching with your current co-teaching partner? (Please explain)
 5. What do you think about co-teaching?
 6. Why do you think co-teaching has become a popular vehicle for serving students in schools?
 7. What does co-teaching mean to you?
 - What do you want to see or do as a co-teacher? What would the perfect co-teaching situation be? What would you be doing? What would the other teacher be doing?
 - What don't you want to see or do as a co-teacher? What would make a co-teaching situation negative? What types of things do you think two teachers would do to make the co-teaching situation fail or be less than optimal?
 8. Why did you volunteer to co-teach?
 9. Why is faculty at your school engaged in co-teaching this year?
 10. Characterize the collaboration at your school. How is it supposed to work? How does it work?
-
1. Describe your current co-teaching relationship.
 2. Describe your partner's approach to teaching. What kinds of skills and knowledge does your partner bring to the table? Have you utilized those skills and knowledge when co-teaching? Explain
 3. How do you plan a lesson with your co-teacher? Probe on how he or she uses partner's skills when planning or teaching.
 4. How do you teach a lesson with your co-teacher? What roles do you play when teaching? Why do you choose to teach this way? How do you evaluate the success of your teaching with your partner?
 5. What is the impact of co-teaching on your work with students? Does the other teacher get you to think about children differently? If so, how? Do your interactions ever result in your changing some aspect of your teaching practice? If so, how? How does co-teaching with another teacher influence your ability to include children with disabilities? And students who struggle in school?
 6. How do you make decisions about responsibility and roles?
 7. What do you do when you disagree about how to approach instruction or the behavior of a student?

Following a classroom observation:

1. Tell me about the lesson you taught with your colleague (probe for details on planning strategies, assignment of roles, lesson objectives, teaching methods).
2. Evaluate the success of your lesson.
 - (a) Why did you think it was successful (or not)? What part did your partner play in the lesson's success?
 - (b) How did you and your colleague approach the lesson? Did you both have equal responsibility? How did you decide the goals of the lesson? Activities? Evaluation?
 - (c) To what extent did the students learn what you intended?
 - (d) What roles did you and your colleague play? Were you satisfied with these roles?
 - (e) If anything, what would you have done differently? How will you and your colleague respond to these issues next time?

Conclusion interview:

1. Tell me about your teacher preparation or education. What kind of certification or endorsements do you have? How many years of teaching experience do you have? What kind of preparation do you have to co-teach?
2. How would you evaluate your work with your partner this year?
3. What, if anything, has surprised you about co-teaching? Your partner? (remind him or her that it can be positive or negative)
4. How well-prepared were you to co-teach before you started? Explain.
5. Have there been any benefits? To you? To the students? Explain.
6. Have there been any disadvantages? To you? To the students? Explain.
7. What, if any, struggles with co-teaching do you have? How do you resolve these struggles?
8. Describe the climate at your school. Is it conducive to collaboration? If so, how? What resources do you have available to foster co-teaching and collaboration?
9. How has your co-teaching relationship changed or evolved over the school year? What do you think about these changes? How have these changes impacted you as a teacher?
10. Have you learned from co-teaching with your colleague? If so, what have you learned? What has helped you to learn from your colleague?

APPENDIX B
CODES

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enthusiasm 2. Similar work ethic 3. Optimism 4. Positive outlook 5. Good experiences with partner 6. Poor experiences with partner 7. Group projects 8. Administrative support 9. Good climate 10. Cannot force 11. Two teachers 12. General and special education 13. Different ideas 14. Different backgrounds 15. Different skills 16. Strengths and weaknesses 17. Help each child 18. Student growth 19. Student-centered 20. Paths to goals 21. Sharing 22. Process 23. Time 24. Fill in gaps 25. Fill in deficits 26. Plan lessons 27. Reflect on performance 28. Analyze data 29. Use strengths 30. Reinforce other 31. Lead 32. Support 33. Share workload 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Background 2. Talk outside 3. Plan together 4. Reflect together 5. Evaluate together 6. Listen to each other 7. Share concerns 8. Follow whoever feels stronger 9. Give constructive feedback 10. Introduce as equal 11. Model peer relationship 12. Communicate during lessons 13. Realistic expectations 14. Time to develop relationship 15. Different co-teaching models 16. Different responsibilities 17. Different roles 18. Incorporate partner's skills 19. Learn from each other 20. Symbiosis 21. Coordination 22. Accommodation 23. Tentativeness 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Willingness to collaborate 2. Believe in inclusion 3. Communicate goals 4. Value each other 5. Focus on students 6. Negotiation 7. Parity 8. Utilize unique skills 9. Integrate knowledge

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 34. Share time 35. Model peer relationship 36. Interject freely 37. Realistic expectations 38. Lead different activities 39. Parallel teaching 40. One teach-one support 41. Team teaching 42. Station teaching 43. Alternative teaching 44. Practice other skills 45. Develop activities 46. Take risks 47. Support lead 48. Equal responsibility 49. Add accommodations 50. Add modifications 51. Reinforce behavior 52. Small groups 53. Reluctant help 54. Unequal roles 55. Equal roles 56. Outside pressure 57. Stimulate ideas 58. Observe partner 59. Wide variety of students 60. Away from isolation 		

APPENDIX C
EXCERPT FROM RESEARCH JOURNAL

Week of April 10 - 14

Kay and Rachel:

This is what co-teaching should look like; this pair works so well together. They take co-teaching to the level it should be utilized at. Neither feels less than and they talk to me freely. How do they find time to co-plan everyday and to communicate so easily during these discussions? Make decisions focused on curriculum issues as partners. Very equal. Constructive feedback; give and take. Talk through each part of lesson for each day. Talk about kids' engagement and grasping of concepts. How to move kids forward and help them to understand. Rachel knows how to put things together more concretely for the kids, with her special ed perspective. Kay focuses on details of language conventions.

Cynthia and Ted:

Cynthia seems to dominate in the relationship. She has an assertive personality, and Ted is a bit complacent. Maybe because he is retiring this year. He still contributes a lot to the kids and to the classroom, but he definitely follows her lead. They work well together, like each other, are not afraid to disagree or make alternative suggestions. But, I would want more of an equal role, as the special education teacher. Ted seems to just go with the flow, which seems to work for them. He needs more time in the classroom. Seems spread all over the place. But, at least, the students get his expertise for a little while.

Amy and Erika:

Erika is the behavior enforcer. Maybe because she is African American, like most of the children in the class. She disciplines them, while Amy teaches. I would hate this role. Good teacher, bad teacher. Erika seems to have accepted this role, but she has a lot more to offer. I wish she would verbalize her ideas to Amy because I do not think her partner has a clue. They seem stuck in a routine that is hard to let go of. I watched Erika with a small group, and she has so much patience and knowledge. She could do more than she is able or willing. Amy is so used to leading that she sees no other way.

Sarah and Lynn:

There is no doubt that Lynn plays the aide role. When Sarah watches the entire class and focuses on each student, Lynn talks with a few students. She is more their buddy at times. This inclusive setting looks like my self-contained classroom with an aide because of the roles each teacher has taken. This reminds me of my negative co-teaching experience, too, except my partner wanted the lead. The roles and responsibilities are similar. This is not co-teaching. They need to talk! Lynn is trying to give Sarah space and control, but Sarah wants more help. I wonder what the co-teaching looks like between Lynn and her other colleague across the hall. Supposedly, both teachers are happy with the situation.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dimple Malik Flesner was born with a dimpled smile on October 24, 1973, in New Delhi, India, where her name is actually quite common. At the age of three, Dimple's family moved to the United States. They lived up north until she turned eight, and then moved to the Sunshine State, landing in Orlando with lots of visits to adventure parks. She came to Gainesville, assuming she would get a four-year psychology degree at the University of Florida and move on. However, she realized her love of the classroom and teaching and obtained her master's degree in special education at the University in 1998.

Remaining in Gainesville after graduation, Dimple began her teaching career as a special educator for grades K – 3, mentally handicapped in a self-contained setting at Stephen Foster Elementary. Next, she taught a fifth grade at-risk population at Williston Elementary, and then progressed with her students to Williston Middle School to co-teach sixth, seventh, and eighth graders with a general educator. After three years of teaching, she decided to continue her studies in education and pursue her doctorate as a Florida Gator. She was awarded a fellowship through the Florida Leadership and Inquiry in Teacher Education grant, funded through the Office for Special Education Programs.

Dimple's doctoral level studies have focused on collaboration, inclusion, teacher education, and qualitative research methods. In addition to coursework, she explored assistantships that would expand her knowledge in these areas. Dimple worked on a grant through the Department of Special Education to study definition and enactment of collaboration in two urban schools. She also taught an integrated teaching course through the School of Teaching and Learning designed to help prospective teachers develop the necessary collaboration and accommodation skills to work in inclusive environments. She supervised co-teaching pre-interns, worked with mentors, and engaged with school faculty to establish a

collaborative model of teaching and learning and collaborative work ethic among the professional development community. Furthermore, she engaged in many collaborative research projects with colleagues and committee members that utilized different qualitative procedures for collecting and analyzing data.

During her doctoral program, Dimple was actively involved in the Special Education Association of Doctoral Students. She was also a member Council for Exceptional Children and the Teacher Education Division. Although she was part of various research efforts, her passion is in the area of general and special education collaboration. She hopes to pursue this endeavor in her future teaching positions and make a difference in the lives of teachers and children.