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An Evaluation of Co-teaching Models and Best Practices to Meet the Needs of Providing Equitable Educational Opportunities for English Language Learners

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AN EVALUATION OF CO-TEACHING MODELS AND BEST PRACTICES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF

PROVIDING EQUITABLE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

A MASTER'S THESIS SUBMITTED TO
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate and evaluate best practices in a co-teaching setting between two licensed educators, one being the content teacher and the other an English Language Learner (ELL) specialist. The focus is on mainstream classrooms that are not sheltered; in this setting English language learners (ELLs) are able to remain in the classroom with their non-ELL peers while receiving equitable content instruction directly from a credentialed content specialist with differentiation and accommodation provided by the ELL specialist. With the move away from traditional pull-out methods, many schools and districts with high ELL population now look to incorporate co-teaching models as a possible solution to bridge the achievement gap between ELLs and their native-English speaking peers.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Current Demographics of English Language Learners in the United States

It is undoubtedly known that in our modern age, English is dominantly the lingua franca of business, published research, and communication. A simple internet search would populate numerous job postings for English tutors, teachers, and professors worldwide ranging from toddlers to graduate students. As the English language continues to demand priority both in the educational and commercial worlds, the demand of fluency in the English language continues to separate those who are able to command the language from those who lack the proficiency to understand and convey meaning using English. It can be argued that the requirement of the use of the English language can be viewed as institutionalized racism; however, this regulation can also be viewed as simple as, *when in Rome, do as the Romans do.* In a country such as the United States, where immigration, both legal and illegal, is prevalent, it cannot be ignorantly enforced that assimilation and/or naturalization of people whose first language is not English equates to immediate language acquisition. This is evident when considering that even a child, from birth to their first coherent word, is in the process of acquiring their "native" language. The Linguistic Society of America explains that language acquisition is an active process, "in stages, and different children reach the various stages at different times" (Birner, 1994, n.p). Now if this is true of first language acquisition, how much more complex is it for a student to acquire and master English as a second, third and possibly fourth language?

Background/History of English Language Learners Programs in the USA

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2017) and its

subdivision, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), an average of 9.2 percent of all public

school students are English language learners (ELLs). The range of supported K-12 ELLs across

the United States varies greatly, from the 1.0 percent identified in West Virginia to the 22.4

percent of all public school students in California. The majority of ELLs are found in cities and

their surrounding suburbs - especially in the western states of California, Alaska, Colorado,

Nevada, New Mexico and with exceptions for Texas and Illinois. Each of these states has at

least 10 percent or higher ELL enrollment. In contrast, the states with the lowest ELL

enrollment are Vermont, Mississippi, and West Virginia (NCES, 2017).

ELLs come from various backgrounds. They represent multitude of home languages,

ethnic and racial make-ups, and a varying degree of generational presence in America;

birthplace is not represented in the data representing ELLs, therefore it should not be assumed

that all ELLs are comprised of purely immigrants. Many ELLs are natural born citizens of

America, with 9.5 percent of ELL students flagged as White and Black. "Spanish was the home

language of 3.7 million ELL students in 2014-2105, representing 77.1 percent of all ELL

students" followed by 7.6 percent of K-12 public school students whose home language is

Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese (NCES, 2017). In addition to language support, 13.8 percent of

ELL students are also identified as students with disabilities.

Achievement Gap and Factors that Contribute to the Achievement Gap

According to the NCES (2017), "the achievement gaps between ELL and non-ELL

students in the NAEP reading assessment were 36 points at the 4th-grade level and 44 points at

the 8th-grade level"(n.p).   As previously mentioned, ELLs comprise of many different ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds, but as a group, they continue to perform academically poorer than their non-ELL counterparts. In a world where schools, educators and curriculum designers struggle to meet the needs of diverse learners, providing accommodations to meet the needs of ELLs is another component to include in an into effective pedagogy and comprehensive curriculum. There are many factors, some that transcend all groups and others that are specific to other groups, that contribute to this lacking performance. Unfortunately, most of these factors are out of the students' control. These factors include but are not limited to accessibility of equitable education and schools, financial constraints, stability of home life, educators with the appropriate credentials to meet the needs of ELLs, and attendance issues as a result of these oppressors. In a situation to survive or thrive, ELL students are often faced with choosing one or the other, the mere need to survive continues to outweigh the presumed luxuries of education.

The diversified needs of ELLs continue to challenge and force the world of education to accept the fact that a single model approach cannot and will not be the answer for closing the achievement gap for ELLs. The classroom needs to include specific, and sometimes unconventional pedagogical strategies that match its audience members. Of the many factors that contribute to the poor achievement of ELLs, instructional methods and qualified educators are factors that can be addressed tangibly. Traditionally, there has typically been only one teacher per classroom. This teacher has been responsible for their classroom and has been viewed as the sole authority in instructing and maintaining the achievement of the students. However, just as a content teacher receives training in their subject matter in order to be an

expert in the field, the ELL teacher receives training in the content area of language acquisition, a content that requires expertise and credentialing. The support and expertise of an ELL educator is needed within a classroom alongside the content-area teacher to ensure that the ELLs' language and subject needs student are holistically met. Co-teaching, the presence of both expert teachers in a classroom, provides the means to meet the language and content needs of ELLs.

Guiding Questions and Purpose of Study

The purpose of this thesis is to identify, understand, and explore the different co-teaching methods/approaches in order to provide a differentiated and accommodated learning environment for ELLs and to determine, based on research, which approaches are most the least effective in helping ELLs with language acquisition and obtaining academic achievement. The guiding questions are:

1. What is co-teaching and what research based best practices that are needed in order for effective co-teaching to occur?

2. Within an inclusive classroom, which co-teaching models are most effective in increasing student language acquisition and academic achievement for English Language Learners?

Definitions of Terms

Co-teaching is defined as a method where two teachers are both present and readily available to provide and support instruction within a classroom, with at least one teacher credentialed in English language learning and the other credentialed in the specific content area. Co-teaching is also known as collaborative teaching, team teaching, and cooperative teaching. In co-teaching, both teachers must have completed a qualified teacher preparation program and are fully licensed from a state licensing entity. A *model* is a pedagogical approach

that is research based and supported and implemented consistently. *Academic achievement* is measured by the advancement of a student's language score and/or level, grade point average (GPA), college acceptance and entrance, high school graduation (obtaining a high school diploma), and/or exiting out of an ELL program. An *inclusive classroom* or *inclusion* simply refers to the mainstreaming of students with special needs such as in special education (SPED) or ELLs resulting in a heterogeneous classroom. An inclusive classroom is a means to providing a least restrictive environment for the special education student(s) and their general education peers. Inclusive means that all students, regardless of abilities, receive the same expertise instruction from a content teacher and have the same content objective as their peers. *Collaboration* refers to common preparation time with both teachers to discuss classroom practices that include lesson planning, goals and objectives, standards, student data, and assessments (this should not be confused with the term collaborative teaching).

Conclusion

The purpose of chapter one sets the precedence for introducing and building background knowledge in regards to English language learners in the United States. In chapter one, statistics offer insight into the quantitative measures of academic achievement for ELLs in comparison to non-ELLs, the demographics and the diaspora of ELLs in the United States are outlined, and the socioeconomic demands that significantly compete with educational opportunities are enumerated. The guiding questions focus on research-based and commonly accepted definitions of co-teaching, research-supported best practices of effective co-teaching, and the identification of the most effective co-teaching model(s) as a result of an increase in language acquisition and academic achievement. Finally, chapter one concludes with

definitions of terms specific to language acquisition and English language learners. Following

chapter one, chapter two will discuss in detail the expert opinions of what co-teaching entails,

the recognized co-teaching models, the history and created purpose of the co-teaching model,

and current trends in co-teaching including best practices.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Before assessing and evaluating the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of a co-teaching model, there needs to be the identification and explanation of what co-teaching entails and the different models that are available for implementation. The literature reviewed in this section will help provide answers and clarification that compare and contrast each model in order to distinguish each model. The literature in this section will focus on co-teaching models but may be inclusive to other matters such as co-teaching in special education, classrooms outside of the United States, classrooms located in multiple locations inclusive of urban, suburban, and rural areas, and authors who are educators, researchers, doctoral candidates, editors, and administration. The first section of this review will be dedicated to the representation of the various co-teaching models, and the latter section will focus on the presentation of effectiveness models, all as a result of the reviewed literature in this chapter two. The assessment will be based on research and data and evaluated based on the applicability of such models within the constraints of the demographic in which the application is catered.

The search and location for the literature in this chapter were performed via popular databases including Academic Search Premier, EBSCO MegaFILE, ERIC, and JSTOR. The search was limited to full text scholarly articles that were peer reviewed and ranging from the year 1980 to the current year of 2018. The articles focused on co-teaching model (and all of its related titles such as collaborative teaching, team teaching, cooperative teaching), and best practices, ELL, ELL education, inclusive classroom, push-in model with some inclusion of special education (SPED) since co-teaching is also a method highly used in SPED services. The key words used in the searches included but were not limited to "ELL," "ELL education," "ELL best

practices" "history of co-teaching," "history of ELL education," "co-teaching," "team-teaching,"

"collaborative teaching," "co-teaching models," "co-teaching research and data," and "push-

in".

History of Co-Teaching

Co-teaching is not a new concept or approach in transforming the classroom. In fact,

the co-teaching model has been in existence for several decades and has been introduced,

reviewed, researched, and reinvented for quite some time now. Team-teaching was first

introduced in the 1950s as an answer to teacher shortages and the "belief that such a model

would enable schools to offer interdisciplinary and individualized instruction to students"

(Friend, 1993, para. 4). The model was created for general education teachers to collaborate, a

noticeable difference in comparison to the current trend of collaboration between a specialized

teacher with a content teacher. Co-teaching continued to gain momentum with the enactment

of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975. Even with the shift of students

with special needs moving from pull-outs and specialized classrooms back to the general

classrooms, the initial move of "mainstreaming" students proved unhealthy and unsuccessful

due to the lack of "specialized assistance within the regular education classes" (Peery, 2017,

para.4).

The above referenced law (IDEA 1975) states that individuals, regardless of ability, have

the right to be included in a general classroom with their peers. Mainstreaming without

continued support was not the answer and reverting back to the outdated methods of

excluding students with special needs from the general classroom is illegal. The natural solution

would be to implement co-teaching. Co-teaching provides students with a specialized and

individualized learning experience while allowing both teachers to complement and support each other based on their separate areas of expertise and experiences (Friend, 1993). After all, the idea of having another "adult" physically in a classroom as an additional support has been clearly voiced and supported by many educators (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993). However, even as the idea of co-teaching continued to evolve, opponents of this method offered criticism towards the efficacy and efficiency of the team-teaching model. During the 1980s, the method still fairly new in methodology, looked more like a consultation between the specialists and the general education teacher. The specialists provided strategies for the general education teacher rather than taking a hands-on approach and teaching in the classroom (Friend 1993). As the years have progressed, the definition and clarification of what co-teaching looks like, sounds like and feels like continues to be refined. Co-teaching has become more widely known, accepted, and implemented. The movement has shifted from an elementary setting to the secondary level "as a method of addressing the inclusive movement" (Dieker, 2003, para.2).

To summarize, team teaching is not a new push or idea in the world of education. Team teaching began as a means to meet the shortage of teachers and to create a more inclusive learning environment. Co-teaching has always been met with hesitation, but as our classrooms have become more diverse in need, mainstreaming students does not provide equitable education for students who still require special needs. Currently, more and more districts have turned to co-teaching as a means of meeting both requirements. The rising trend however still has its opponents of districts, administration, and teachers. More research and data are needed to show its effectiveness and how the co-teaching model can meet the challenge of

being inclusive yet specialized. In the next section, co-teaching will be defined and some key

best practices will be identified.

<center>What is Co-Teaching and What are Its Best Practices</center>

Co-teaching is the process by which two teaching professionals are actively engaged and

invested in the educational experience and achievement of all students within their classroom;

teachers are responsible for planning, instructing, assessing, and maintaining a classroom both

as an individual expert in their field and as a complimentary partner in the team duo

(Murawski, 2015). Co-teaching is a dynamic approach, with expectations from teachers,

administrators, and students as full participants in order to reap the benefits. Among the

participants, team-teachers take on the main roles and with that, co-teaching requires that co-

teachers do more than simply play nice – co-teaching requires that teaching paradigms shift

from "teaching in silos to teaching in tandem, from owning the front of the room to sharing

space, from sending students with special needs out of the classroom to thoughtfully

differentiating for diverse learners" (Murawski, 2015, n.p).

The expectation for the success of co-teaching does not fall alone onto the classroom

teachers alone. The administration also plays an integral part in promoting and supporting the

effectiveness of collaborative teaching. Team-teaching requires that the administration sets

the culture and pace for how the practice is viewed and modeled. Co-teaching requires explicit

planning time for the educators outside of their teacher preparation time. Logically speaking,

teachers are complex human beings with particular strengths and weaknesses; they adopt and

implement different strategies and classroom management techniques. Teachers need to be

allotted time to decide and understand the practices and routines of one another in order to

minimize the misunderstandings that may occur as a result of simply not knowing what the

other expects and teaches. When there is no explicit planning time, that is an indication that

co-teaching is not occurring and that the model is set up for failure.

Administrators should adopt and clearly outline what the definition co-teaching and its

intricacies. All parties should be able to identify clear examples of what co-teaching looks like,

feels like, and sounds like (Murawski, 2015). The school culture should understand what team-

teaching entails. Without that collaborative culture enforced and promoted, educators will be

hesitant to share their classroom, students will not understand the purpose of two teachers,

and parents and investors will question the cost effectives of the model (Murawski, 2015). The

administration should also be aware of their level of influence and who or what actually

motivates and influences their teachers. Outside influence, whether from the district or other

education institutions are available and should be considered when introducing the

collaborative model. Teachers may be more likely invest their time and energy into co-teaching

when they feel confident that co-teaching isn't simply another fad or initiative forced upon

them by higher authorities (Murawski, 2015).

In summary, co-teaching is a shifting dynamic aimed at providing equitable access to

curriculum and differentiated instruction while creating an inclusive classroom representative

of our society. Co-teaching involves the partnership of teachers, the administration and

students. Appropriately designated planning time is necessary for the method to be effective

and the school culture should include and promote co-teaching classrooms as the norm. As the

education system continues to reinvent itself in order to meet the challenges of teaching a 21st

century audience, co-teaching demands attention and resources that districts, administrators,

teachers, students, and community investors will need to configure into the already-established norms. In the next section, six co-teaching models will be identified and explained, compared and contrasted, and evaluated to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Co-Teaching Models (Configurations)

The collaborative teaching approach can metaphorically be represented as a buffet line or cafeteria plan. As we continue to grow and expand our understanding of the learner, our repertoire of instructional methodologies must grow as well. There is not one collaborative model that is superior to another model; one must consider their audience members' needs and learning styles before implementing a particular model. The learners and classroom community will vary between schools, and in different geological locations. Each model has its strengths and limitations that will be highlighted in the following paragraphs in no particular order. There are six widely known and identified approaches to collaborative teaching. Each explanation will also contain a hypothetical classroom example in order to demonstrate the differences and similarities in comparison to the other models. As each model is presented, the notion is that co-teaching involves two or more licensed teachers who share responsibility for a classroom including instruction, maintenance of the classroom, and accountability for student achievement (Friend & Cook, 2000).

The six models as identified and explained by the Connecticut State Education Resource Center (2004):

- **One Teaches, One Observes** – This model is most effective when teachers want to gather data about student learning, behavior, and/or engagement. Teachers plan ahead that one teacher will deliver the instruction while the other teacher observes and

records detailed information. Teachers should also set explicit goals/objectives during

the observation. The observing teacher does not partake in instruction and instead

focuses solely on collecting data. The observation could be done from a stationary

position or by walking around the classroom. The data should then be analyzed and

evaluated by both teachers afterwards. Data should be used to detail and modify future

lesson plans and/or modify lesson to include differentiation and accommodations. The

data also serves as a formative assessment of the objectives.

This model could be used when introducing a new unit in solving systems of linear

equations. As one teacher provides and models the steps in the elimination process,

one teacher would observe and collect data on how many students were engaged and

following along, which students were struggling to keep up, which students were

completely off task, and which students were ready to move on to the next steps.

During planning time, the two teachers would then analyze the data and evaluate

whether the lesson needed to be remediated or enriched, if the method of instruction

was effective, and/or how to differentiate the material to engage all students.

- **One Teaches, One Assists** – In this model, one teacher provides the instruction while

    the other teacher provides support and assists the students. The teacher who is

    providing support does not assist the teacher as a teacher assistant (TA), but instead

    their focus is on the students. The assisting teacher circulates around the room and

    provides "unobtrusive assistance to students as needed" (SERC, 2004, para. 5). The

    purpose behind this approach is to minimize interruptions by providing personalized

    learning and answering questions, welcoming comments, listening to concerns, and/or

checking for understanding. They goals here are to maintain a volume that does not disrupt the main lesson and to develop seamless transitions while providing assistance. An example of this model could be played out during day two of the previously mentioned math lesson. One teacher provides a quick remedial lesson on the elimination process, checks for understanding and transitions to the new method of substitution. As the teacher continues to move with the rest of the class, the assisting teacher may check in with students who were identified previously as struggling and provide a tutorial at a slower pace. The teacher may accommodate by providing step by step written instructions on a separate piece paper for the student at this time or the teacher may accommodate and eliminate problems that could be accessed later when student demonstrates comprehension. In this manner, the struggling student can progress with the introduction of the new material.

- **Parallel Teaching** – In parallel teaching, both teachers are providing the main instruction at the same time. but with two separate groups. This is especially important in a classroom where there are 30 or more students. Minimizing teacher ratio to an explicit 1:15 would encourage student engagement and allow for more opportunities to hear from students. Both teachers don't necessarily have to teach in the same manner, but there is a common learning goal and/or objective. Teachers in parallel teaching have to be aware of each other's presence in the room since they don't want to compete or distract from each other's groups. This technique may require some practice and a strategic way to best use the space within their classroom. Parallel teaching can be used in a classroom where the lesson may require first language instruction.

In this scenario, a bilingual instructor may group students with the same home together and provide instruction in their first language. In the same math class mentioned previously, the concepts could easily be understood if words like *elimination* and *substitution* were provided in the student's first language so that they could connect to prior knowledge. Students would then be able to maintain the pace of their peers, and demonstrate comprehension of the material.

- **Station Teaching** - In station teaching, both teachers are teaching at the same time, but they are teaching different content. This is mostly seen at the elementary level. Students are divided into groups and will meet with both teachers (stations). The number of groups or stations can vary but each teacher should have their own station, teaching their own content. This method allows for a much lower teacher to student ratio, and for more material to be covered during a class period. Station teaching may require the students to be taught how to rotate, when to rotate, and what materials are needed at each station.

Following the math example, station teaching allows for the teacher to provide instructions for both elimination and substitution during the same teaching period. Once students complete both stations, they can move onto a third station – a station designated for independent work/practice.

- **Alternate Teaching** – This technique is similar to parallel teaching in that both teachers are teaching at the same time with the same objectives. However, alternate teaching focuses on the special needs of a particular group of students whereas parallel teaching is simply lowering the teacher/student ratio lower. In a sense, alternate teaching is a

specific type of parallel teaching. Another component of alternate teaching is the number of students in each group. In alternate teaching, the number of students in that particular specialized group should remain small. This is done specifically to meet the needs of the specialized group which should be no more than 5 students.

For the math example, the alternate teaching teacher may provide enrichment for the top 7 students who are showing they are ready to progress where their peers are still needing more time. This specialized instructional group will benefit from being challenged and still be at the same pace as their peers.

- **Team Teaching** – The final sixth co-teaching model is team teaching. In this model, both teachers are instructing all the students at the same time. There is no separation of space and/or students; this method relies heavily on the fluidity and *teamwork* of the two teachers. Naturally, teachers who team teach are aware of each other's teaching styles and share in the work. They are not echoing each other so that the students hear the material twice, but instead bring their own expertise into the content. By doing so, the teachers are offering various perspectives of the same material. This technique works well for students who are able to work at the same pace but may need to hear the instruction in a different way.

For example, language learners may get lost in the language of math when teachers use words like eliminate or substitute, but they understand synonyms such as take away or replace. This is not a means to replace academic language, but to help students activate prior knowledge to attain comprehension. The ELL teacher then would offer

interjections during the lesson to connect the synonyms and reinforce the academic

language later in the lesson.

The six co-teaching models are techniques or configurations of how two fully qualified

and credentialed teachers are able to support and work alongside one another within the same

classroom to bring about the best and most effective ways of meeting student needs. These

collaborative models can and should be used in conjunction with one another. One method is

not better than another, but in particular contexts, certain models are more effective than

others. In this next section, there will be a review of studies that involve co-teaching within a

classroom from various stakeholders' perspectives including researchers, teachers, parents,

students, and administrators. Some studies focus solely on co-teaching in an ELL context, while

others focus mainly on co-teaching as a means of creating an inclusive classroom for all

learners, including ELL and special education. The study will begin with a general discussion of

co-teaching and then move into co-teaching from an ELL perspective.

Effectiveness of Co-Teaching: Quick Fix or the Real Deal

With the mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), districts across the nation struggled

to meet the needs of providing a least restrictive environment (LRE) for students of varying

needs including ELLs. The traditional method of pull-out classrooms are in a direct violation of

this act. Districts that are looking to mainstream ELLs as a means of compliancy should be

careful due to the equity of access to quality and appropriate education as seen in a 2017

lawsuit filed by the St Paul Human Rights Department on behalf of ELLs and their parents (Kaw

et al v. Independent School District #625). The lawsuit states that a Saint Paul Public Schools

high school located in Saint Paul, Minnesota mainstreamed two students into content

classrooms without adequate support and as a result their grades suffered and they were not able to understand the material due to language barriers. It is important to note that students who are mainstreamed still require language support. "The co-teaching model is designed to include disabled students in the regular classroom, but in a manner which provides the necessary accommodations to be successful" (Nichols, Dowdy, & Nichols, 2010, p. 647). Nichols et al. (2010) goes further to explain the different models and the roles of teachers who are involved in co-teaching.

Positive and negative factors were identified by Nichols et. al (2010) and used to evaluate the effectiveness of co-teaching and the possible longevity of the methodology. Keefe and Moore (2004) found that although the presence of two teachers benefited all students, the special education teacher felt that the large number of students in the classroom inhibited the teachers (especially the special education teacher) from serving students who needed more individual attention; the classroom size demanded more than from the teachers resulting in the loss of attention to the students who truly required it. Another issue was that mainstreaming a student who needs accommodations would require that the student move at the same pace as their mainstream counterpart. This is especially important for state and national standardized testing. Many students who needed a differentiated approach fell behind and were not appropriately prepared for the tests. However, placing students in the the same classroom as all the other students allowed special education students to lessen that special education stigma (Keefe & Moore, 2004).

Keefe and Moore (2004) concluded with a survey of school preparedness for co-teaching implementation. A questionnaire was given to twenty-four school districts, 8 had

more than 2000 students, 8 had between between 1000 and 2000 students, and 8 school

districts had less than 1000 students. All 24 school districts indicated that co-teaching had been

initiated (the level in which that initiation took place was not mentioned or clarified) and that

no co-teaching preparation or professional development had occurred prior to the initiation.

The study concluded that the initiation of co-teaching in all 24 districts was a result of the NCLB.

The study also showed that the lack of proper and consistent preparation for co-teaching in all

24 districts showed that the implementation of co-teaching was hastily completed to meet

NCLB compliancy. The final conclusion then would be that the initial implementation for co-

teaching is not for the benefit of the students, but rather a means for compliancy. The actual

outcome and achievement of students were not studied or mentioned. In the next study, an

ethnography was done to examine the impact of co-teaching in an urban kindergarten setting.

In a study by Bronson and Dentith (2014), the partner-teaching pairs had positive and

high academic impact on student achievement. The ethnography studies one particular co-

teaching pair located in an urban kindergarten classroom with the majority of students coming

from African American backgrounds. The study stemmed from a larger study that "evaluated

classroom size and team teaching structures in Kindergarten classrooms in several high poverty

urban schools" (Bronson & Dentith, 2014, p.506). The reason why this particular classroom was

chosen for further study was because of the higher reading scores among all children in the

classroom, evidence of a positive learning environment, and caring relationships among the

students and teachers (Bronson & Dentith, 2014). The authors emphasized that this classroom,

out of the entire group that was studied, was the only classroom to have all three of these

factors present. It is also important to note that this is was an ethnography, and therefore mostly based on observations and interpretations by the two researchers.

The findings found many strengths and downfalls which attributed to the co-teaching environment. The researchers concluded that adult collegiality, a positive culture of learning, and high student achievement were all direct results of partner teaching. Observations showed that both teachers, along with a teacher's assistant, worked well and harmoniously. This was evident through the consistency of each observation. All three adults were able to interchange their roles and responsibilities showing their respect and trust in one another. They were in constant communication over lesson plans, student progress and behavior, and reflected together about the day's happenings. The teachers also created a positive and welcoming classroom environment and culture. Praises and redirections were provided by all three adults, using the same methods. The classroom was highly-structured but also student centered with the adults well versed in their roles as support to student learning. Bronson & Dentith (2014) stated that "this was a positive early childhood learning environment" (p.511). Finally, the third strength attributed to the team teacher adults was high student achievement. Achievement in this study was determined by their reading levels/abilities as compared to the other school studied. Students were considered proficient if they were reading a level C or higher by the end of Kindergarten. It was noted that at least 8 students were reading at levels higher than required of a Kindergarten student entering the first grade.

Though Bronson & Dentith (2014) concluded that their observations "support[ed] existing notions that teaming can contribute to create a climate in which teachers improve their classroom management and instruction," they also acknowledged the limitations and hesitation

to attribute all the positive outcomes to team teaching (506). The study also acknowledges that the team did not follow the theorized efforts of how to build a team teaching culture. They never received any training or professional development prior to pairing up. Other than allowing the teachers one hour a week to work specifically on their lesson plans, the administration did not provide any instructional leadership or support to the co-teaching pair. In addition, the lack of *teacher talk* between the pair was also limited their productivity of team teaching (Bronson & Dentith, 2014, p. 513). Teachers ought to be able to identify key strengths and limitations, and analyze and evaluate their current methodologies and pedagogical styles in order to make room for improvement. The effectiveness of team teaching involves transforming and reflecting on improving effectiveness. Team teaching is most effective if teachers do not rely solely on higher authority for guidance and validation, but rather look to each other as well (Chamerlin, 2005). The following study focused on quantitative data comparisons between classrooms composed of one adult present in the classroom to classrooms where two or more adults were present.

The effectiveness of co-teaching was also studied by Sweigart and Landrum (2015) by simply collecting quantitative data on known teacher practices that were beneficial for student achievement based on the number of adults in a room. The study included elementary, middle, and secondary high schools and compared classrooms from each setting that had one adult present to classrooms where more than one adult was present. The study did not specify the adult's prescribed role (teacher, administration, paraeducator, etc.) because they simply wanted to know if the presence of adults in a classroom made a difference. Their study showed statistical differences pertaining to each variable that supported the claim that more adults in a

room showed a higher occurrence of positive teacher practices such as opportunities to respond (OTRs) and praises, but there was also a decrease in student engagement and more occurrences of negative feedback as a result of more adults in the room. Throughout all K-12 classrooms, there was more student engagement in the classroom of only one adult. However, the researchers do acknowledge that the presence of certain adults in the room and the nature of the class may have contributed to that outcome.

As previously mentioned, although there were differences between the classrooms of one adult versus classrooms with more than one adult, the actual point difference is very little. The discussion goes further to state that since "many effective teacher practices already occur at very low rates in the classroom, such small differences may not have a meaningful effect on students" (Sweigart & Landrum, 2015, p.28). The authors go further to explain that "without special attention to roles and specifics practices, it is difficult to conclude that merely increasing the number of adults in the classroom will have a significant effect on students" (p. 28). Naturally though it is important to note that Sweigart and Landrum are making a connection between positive teacher practices and academic achievement (as assumed in theory). As a result, co-teaching may just be adding adults into a room and no change will occur unless teachers are trained and taught how to best use teacher practices. The next study completed by Austin focuses on teachers who were participants in collaborative teaching and their perspectives as a result of those experiences.

Austin (2011) surveyed and interviewed teachers who were active participants in collaborative teaching in school districts located in the same county of both suburban and urban settings, with a socioeconomical designation of middle class, and that all participants had

been collaborating for at least one semester. The models employed in each classroom were as follows: *consultant model* – where the general education teacher consulted with the special education teacher about adaption, remediation and modification; *coaching model* – where both teachers took turns coaching one another in the curriculum and pedagogy from their backgrounds of expertise; and the third model for which this thesis is written, the *traditional team teaching model* – both teachers shared responsibility in teaching, assessing, management and lesson planning (Austin, 2001). The actual models used in each pairing were not identified.

The study showed that a majority of co-teachers had not volunteered for the co-teaching experience, but still indicated that they "considered co-teaching worthwhile" and even contributed to professional development (Austin, 2001). Co-teachers from both sides (general education and special education) agreed that even in a co-taught classroom, general education teachers' responsibilities still outweighed those of special education teachers. Although in theory, both teachers should spend an equal amount of time and effort, the study showed that this was not the case. The study did not identify or specify what "doing more" actually entails and if that opinion was from a negative, positive, or neutral perspective. The findings from Austin (2001) did show that the majority of co-teachers "believed co-teaching contributed positively" to the academic and social development of all students as a result of:

> reduced student-teacher ratio, the benefit of another teacher's expertise and viewpoint, the value of remedial strategies and review for all students, and the opportunity for the students without disabilities to gain some understanding of the learning difficulties experienced by many students with disabilities (p. 253).

The positive findings of the Austin (2001) study did not come without a few reservations. Co-teachers expressed that on occasion the inclusion of students with disabilities caused students with no disabilities to adapt and manifest the same learning disabilities (p.253). Another hesitation held by co-teachers was that the inclusion of special education students into a mainstream classroom was solely for the purpose of social integration; students with special needs did not meet their academic target and may have further perpetrated the academic gap between the two groups. Furthermore, only 27% of the co-teaching pairs had volunteered for the co-teaching model, yet an even greater amount (an average of 92%) of co-teaching pairs rated the experience as worthwhile. As a result, there may be a bias for or against the efficacy of collaboration as the teachers were simply commenting on the experience and the effectiveness of team teaching. A *worthwhile* experience does not mean that teachers would continue or advocate for this teaching model as a means for an effective inclusionary model. In the next study, the shift will move from teacher opinions to those of parents.

A study conducted by Tichenor, Heins, and Piechura-Couture (2000) surveyed parents of an inclusive classroom that had a co-teaching pair. All students in the classroom were previously in the same inclusive classroom taught by the same co-teaching pair. The class consisted of 42 students total, of which 12 were identified as exceptional (it is assumed that the 12 identified included special education students). In addition to the co-teaching model, the classroom followed a constructivist approach where all subjects were taught in an interdisciplinary manner to simulate real world situations. This approach provided opportunities for students to learn via cooperative learning, curricular modifications, active hands-on learning, whole language instruction, and peer tutoring (Tichenor, Heins, & Couture

2000). Instruction and lesson-planning were collaborative between the general education and special education teachers. The materials and instructions were identical for students and no separate or differentiated material was provided, other than the quantity of activities.

Tichenor et al (2000) showed that generally all parents felt positive about the inclusive classroom and the presence of two teachers. Parents cited that having two teachers allowed for more students to be engaged during the lesson, often times from one-on-one discussions and a lower teacher-student ratio. Parents of both general education and special education students expressed that the inclusive classroom allowed for opportunities to interact with people different from themselves that would help "prepare [their students] to enter more normal situations in life" (Techinor et al., 2000, p. 571). In regard to academic achievement, parents believed that having two teachers in the classroom allowed their student to learn from different perspectives and also be exposed to a variety of teaching styles. The findings overwhelmingly showed a favoritism towards a lower teacher-student ratio as a result of two teachers in a classroom; however it is cautionary to also assume that any classroom with a low teacher-student ratio without inclusion would also merit the same response. Following the perspectives of teachers and parents, the next review is a study conducted by an ELA teacher turned school media specialist (librarian) and his experience with co-teaching.

Cohen (2015) uses his experiences with collaboration and co-teaching to advocate for co-teaching as a means to support student academic achievement. Cohens states that the success of students in achieving learner outcomes is a direct result of teachers aligning and asserting their goals. Once all stakeholders (teachers) are on the same page, the students will

be prepared to demonstrate their comprehensionas a result of all teachers having the same goal.

The first study Cohen (2015) conducted was for a social studies project. Students were expected to complete a project on the fall of specific civilizations using research that stemmed from scholarly articles. As the content teacher focused on the social studies portion, the media specialists provided instruction and support for the content via lessons on identifying credible sources, citing sources, and using databases to locate these sources. As the humanities librarian, Cohen understood "[h]aving two or three teachers in the room to guide students in their research, production, process and product was key to the success of the project. Students had adults who had expertise in all of the areas" (2015, n.p). Moving from a general education perspective to the effectiveness of co-teaching, the next studies will focus solely on co-teaching from an ELL perspective. The first ELL review is an article about the "transferability of co-teaching models and techniques from the field of Special Education to that of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages; Honigsfeld & Dove 2007, p. 8).

Though still very limited in research, the world of co-teaching as a means of inclusion for special education students is still far more readily available than that of ELL inclusion. There is however a general unspoken notion that special education and ELL education complement one another as their accommodations, differentiation, and struggles fall under the same umbrella (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2007). As a result, the co-teaching model seems appropriate as a model of inclusive classroom strategy for ELLs. When ELLs stay in the classroom with their English-speaking peers, language acquisition can be in the form of diffusion; they are able to hear and experience how the language is used, as opposed to when they are pulled out or put into a

classroom where the language abilities are the same (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2007). Language learners need the opportunities for exposure, but still have the support from an ELL teacher to provide needed explanation or accommodations. In a co-taught environment, strategies used by the ELL teacher can also be used again by the general education teacher if an ELL teacher is not present.

Though the inclusion model is beneficial and mandated for ELLs and SPED, language and SPED disabilities are not the same. ELLs are expected to acquire the language, *level-up*, and move into the mainstream classroom with little to no additional support. As a result, the method of inclusion with an ELL lens has another set of standards outside of content standards that vary from state to state (Honigfeld & Dove, 2007). Not that the standards are a different governing set, but ELL standards are crafted to meet each content standard. ELL specialists are well versed in the standards, whereas the general education teacher may not be. Therefore, collaboration between ELL specialists and general education teachers is necessary so that both standards are met. The next review of ELL specific co-teaching literature transitions to a study completed in a Colorado classroom where the changes in demographics have naturally required a change in teaching methods.

As written in chapter one, the increasing numbers of ELLs in the United States has caused a shift in how the regular classroom not only looks like physically, but also how instruction and curriculum is given. Instead of being discouraged by the demands of a changing classroom, Beninghof and Leensvaart (2016) describe how teachers at a Colorado school invested their strengths and commitment into changing what they could control – how they would deliver instruction to the new demographic, with co-teaching at the forefront.

Being mindful of all the co-teaching woes and horror stories, the teachers and administration at this Colorado school developed a framework: *I do, we do, you do,* or *gradual release* (Beninghof & Leensvaart, 2016). In the *I* do phase, administration first brought in co-teaching experts to provide research based, high quality workshops on the basics of co-teaching. Co-teaching pairs attended these workshops and were able to identify, analyze and evaluate best practices that highlighted expectations and expertise from both content areas. During this time, teachers also configured the logistics of planning, instruction, and classroom management. The next phase of *We do* involved a two-year practicum where district ELD specialists/coaches continued to provide support and new strategies catered to the needs of each teacher and classroom. The following phase *You Do* involved teacher reflections and critique of themselves and others in order to develop and provide opportunities for growth and improvement. Teachers were encouraged to visit other co-teaching classrooms and be participant observers in order to provide feedback for other teachers. The framework can be cyclic and until roles are defined and understood; at this point, the practice can become natural and effective. This is the last part of the framework - a gradual release. As a result, a year after implementation, students at the Colorado elementary school moved from "approaching" to "exceeding" in student growth percentile and the school has received awards from the Colorado state Education agency citing it as one of the top 10 ELD programs in Colorado (Beninghof & Leensvaart, 2016, p. 73). The next review moves into a different classroom where the co-teaching model is presented with a smaller percentage of ELLs in the classroom.

Trust seems to be an overarching theme in this article (Honingsfeld & Dove, 2015) and riding a tandem bicycle seems to be the best illustration of this relationship and process. A co-

teaching model and pairing can be effective as long as both teachers are able to trust and have a common goal as to where they are going and how they are going to get there. The first step in implementation would be the planning process; before planning however, individual pre-planning, or planning to plan comes first. During this time, both teachers prepare content and language objectives separately and review literacy pieces such as specific articles and Power Point presentations for class. Next, the two teachers collaboratively plan the lesson. This step can be completed via phone call, email, and/or in person – both teachers need to be actively engaged in this section so that any uncertainties can be addressed or any assumptions and/or unknowns are identified (Honingsfeld & Dove, 2015). Following this, the teachers will then create their own lesson plans with the agreed upon modifications and adjustments. This process continues throughout the school year. Though Honingsfield & Dove (2015) initially stated the successfulness of this framework, the article did not cite specific success stories or cite data to support their claim. The next article by Maxwell (2014) is a continuation co-teaching within an ELL context and how ELL teachers and general education teachers work together to meet the needs of language learners.

With the growing diversity within the American classroom, traditional methods are no longer meeting the needs of student; the collaboration among all teachers, content and specialists are needed to meet the needs of the diversifying classroom (Maxwell, 2014). Naturally, the expectation of Common Core and maintaining high-expectations will require that students are able to read, write, speak and listen to English fluently. The language of the classroom demands more than basic conversational English, or survival English. Students are required to be able to process and articulate the material in English and as such, ESL teachers

are pushing and advocating that an equitable education would require that content teachers

will need guidance on how to best support ELLs (Maxwell, 2014).

The role of an ELL specialist has always taken a back seat to the content teacher, as their

skills and understanding of language acquisition were never truly understood or appreciated

(Maxwell, 2014). In many districts, ELL teachers often serve multiple grade levels, content

areas, and are never found in the classroom because of the pull-out approach. However, the

American school paradigm continues to shift and so the role of the ELL teacher is more center-

stage.   Schools that serve a high population of ELLs have incorporated the ELL specialist into

model that allows students to learn in cohorts with non-ELLs in an effort to provide exposure to

the language and culture while building trust and rapport with the same teachers. This

provides stability, one less factor that contributes to the academic failures of ELLS (Maxwell,

2014). In addition, curriculum has been adapted to be heavy language-focused – lesson plans

that include heavy discourse regardless of mastery. Content teachers must also take an active

role in relaying the content objectives to ELL teachers and be willing to modify the content

material to ensure that language is not only included but that it is also explicitly taught. If

students are expected to meet the requirements of content, then the language behind the

content also needs to be understood first. Continuing the understanding of collaboration

between teachers within an ELL context, the next article addresses how the co-teaching model

can be used in conjunction with other bilingual models to best meet the needs of ELLs.

According to a study by Bahamonde and Friend (1999), bilingual education has been

available within the American education system since the late 19th century, but a falling use of

bilingual education and the mandated push for an inclusionary model have pushed for ELLs into

the mainstream classroom. Like their SPED peers, ELLs also should also be able to access the content-rich classrooms, taught by a content expert. In addition, being pulled out or isolated increases the social stigma of being different or inferior to their peers. The time spent in transition between classrooms is also a loss of time spent with the curriculum, and time spent in remediation also results in time lost in content material (Bahamonde, 1999). By implementing an inclusive model where an ELL co-teacher is available allows the students to develop stronger relationships with other students, eliminates teacher bias towards students and builds rapport among other teachers and students, and allows for teachers to build stronger relationships and trust with one another (Bahamonde, 1999). Inclusion eliminates the lone island of traditional teaching – it builds school climate and culture so that everyone benefits, a real-life model.

The inclusion model would demand however additional resources and time that seems to already be in short supply. The demand for additional planning time between teachers is difficult since teachers already feel that their current planning time is not sufficient. The truth that co-teaching would require more teachers also poses a threat in implementing this model. School districts are constantly perplexed with meeting the demands of minimizing classroom sizes and budgets that adding additional staff to implement co-teaching seems farfetched. Co-teaching is a promising model that in theory should be effective in meeting the social and academic needs of ELLs; however, little research and case studies have been conducted to evaluate the model. The pressure from stakeholders limits districts and administrators from trying something new. However, as the classroom demographics continue to change, it would be detrimental to both the education system and students if schools resist transforming. The

final article in this literature review comes from a survey of ESL opinions on ESL teaching

models that include push-in models such as co-teaching.

Collaboration can be interpreted differently and applied to different ELL teaching

models. For the sake of the research, it is considered that collaboration has taken place if there

are interactions between two teachers about student progress, achievement, data, or any

combinations (Bell & Baecher, 2012). The collaborations could be informal (email, telephone,

stops in the hallway, or check ins) or formal (scheduled and structured, with administration

support), and ongoing or infrequent (Bell & Baecher, 2012). Bell and Baecher (2012) focused on

ELL teachers, their experiences and opinions of three teaching models: pull-out, push-in, and

co-teaching. According to the findings, contrary to the shift and push for an inclusionary model,

of the 72 teachers, most were still practicing the pull-out method, followed by small percentage

of push-in, and an even smaller amount co-teaching. Teachers opinions ranged from "feeling

like an aide" to wanting control over the lesson were reasons why teachers support the pull-out

method. In addition, an overwhelming number of teachers felt that pull-outs were the best

options when they are teaching multiple grade levels and/or servicing multiple sites. Teachers

felt that it was impossible to co-teaching or push-in because there was no time to collaborate

with the general education teacher.

No responses were given to the success rate of the models even though the identified

ESL teachers had strong opinions about the pull-out model (Baecher & Bell, 2012). However,

ESL teachers did express that they were solely responsible for ELLs and that most

content/general education teachers did not want to or initiate a shared approach in ELL

education and progress. Even with the push for inclusion to meet the demands of the NCLB,

most teachers, autonomously still preferred to pull out students into isolated work spaces to provide specific language instruction. This sparks a question about whether or not school districts and administrators are involved or want to be involved in ELL education.

In chapter two, a review of literature was performed on different journal articles that presented examples and models of both general co-teaching ideas and specific co-teaching best practices. The articles were inclusive of special education and ELL education. Chapter III will provide a walkthrough of the application of the literature review. The application of the research is a constructed as a professional development class for all school staff including teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators. There is a highlight of responsibilities, purposes, and best practices that are applicable across the different professions and responsibilities within a school. The application is an introductory training that will not only provide information but also be given in a co-teaching method illustrating how co-teaching looks, feels, and sounds. The application was created with a specific school district as its target audience.

CHAPTER III: APPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH

Throughout the background and literature review of chapters one and two, one may

find reoccurring themes of teacher preparation, collaboration, and administration support all

necessary for effective and promising co-teaching implementation. Majority of the literature

pieces was an emphasis on how co-teaching is most effective when teachers are able to set

aside time to collaborate on goals, objectives, assessments, and student data (Austin, 2001;

Bahamonda, 1999; Bell & Baecher, 2012; Beninghof & Leensvaart, 2016; Bronson & Dentith,

2014; Deiker & Murawski, 2003; Friend & Anderson, 1993; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2007).

Collaboration between co-teachers that is informal and unscheduled are suggested as

ineffective as they only deal with the short-term goals and/or issues but do not focus on also on

the bigger goal (Bell & Baecher, 2012). Teachers need the opportunity to dedicate a specialized

time to focus attention on the matter at hand. After all, collaboration involves not only ensure

smooth, authentic, and appropriate instruction, but collaboration also builds camaraderie

between the teachers.

Another piece to the puzzle is the professional development and training before and

during co-teaching implementation. Most districts choose inclusive classrooms to meet

mandates of NCLB and force co-teachers into these assignments without properly training both

teachers on what that entails. This approach is similar to children learning how to ride a bike.

Some are put on a bike and forced to learn the harsh realities of learning how to balance,

peddle, and steer on their own. There are plenty of bumps and bruises along the way, but with

the right support and persistence, success can be found. Some, with the correct amount of

support and scaffolding, eventually figure it out and come out with less bumps and bruises. The

defeated are those who were forced to figure out how to ride a bike and never received any support. Those riders, along with those who never attempted to learn how to ride a bike, will hold reservations against riding bikes. They are very unlikely to ever want to try it again or try it at all. It is impossible to expect teachers to learn how to co-teach in this manner. Teacher preparation programs, along with district and administration support training ought to occur before any co-teaching actually takes place.

Finally, the third piece in effective co-teaching implementation is administrative support. Those who are in a position to determine class and staff scheduling need to also be aware of the co-teaching practice and support it requires. It's already been established that most teachers in a co-teaching model are inexperienced and need guidance and coaching from experts and administration. The administration needs to create a school culture where co-teaching is accessible, promoted, accepted, and developed. The administration needs to be well versed in the purpose of an inclusive classroom, co-teaching best practices, and how to provide and access support. Advocacy for co-teaching inclusive classrooms are meant to benefit the entire school and the administration should be at the forefront, leading the way.

As a result of teacher collaboration time, teacher preparation, and administrative support, the application emphasis of this thesis will be focused on creating an introductory training on the purpose of co-teaching, the different models of co-teaching, co-teaching best practices, and suggestions for how to provide co-teaching implementation and support. An interactive presentation will be given via Schoology (www.schoology.com) where the audience will follow along and complete assigned tasks to check for understanding. A key component of the presentation is that it will reflect and model co-teaching. Along with my current co-teacher,

the training will be presented using co-teaching models and techniques. The presentation will

begin with the collaboration between two volunteer teachers from different content areas.

They will need to model co-teaching by giving a 2-minute mini-lesson on a general topic such as

shapes, colors, or addition. Following the lesson, there will be an open discussion to answer

the following questions. The total introduction time should take no more than 5 minutes.

- What worked well and what was a struggle?
- What limitations contributed to the lesson?
- Would you consider this lesson a co-teaching lesson and identify characteristics that either contributed to co-teaching or not?

One co-presenter will begin the introduction with the definition of co-teaching is and why the

district is making a push for co-teaching. The other co-teacher will model the first method of

one teacher instructs, the other observes to collect data. The data will be shared at the end of

the presentation. During the introduction, the objectives and purpose of the training will also

be identified. This should also take no more than 3 minutes. At the end of the presentation,

teachers will be able to:

- Identify and understand what co-teaching is by identifying different models of co-teaching and identifying teaching scenarios for each model
- understand and promote a healthy and effective co-teaching culture by identifying best practices
- formulate an opinion about co-teaching by evaluating the strengths and limitations of co-teaching in regard to student achievement/engagement, and school culture/climate (teacher to teacher relationships, teacher to other licensed staff, and teacher to administration).

Next, the other co-presenter will present the six co-teaching models along with the diagrams of

each model. They will be given a paper copy of the models. The presenter then provides

instructions on how to access Padlet (www.padlet.com) and make notes under each co-

teaching model identifying characteristics as well as pros and cons of each model. While this

occurs, the other co-presenter will circulate around the room to provide assistance on how to access and make notes modeling the *one teach, one assists* model. Once the Padlet is completed, the co-presenters will then separate the room into two groups and discuss the scenarios in regard to which model(s) could be implemented. This will model the third method, *parallel teaching*. The fourth model of *station teaching* will transition the presentation into co-teaching best practices. There will be three stations around the room and the group will be separated into three different groups. Two stations will have one of the presenters while the third station will allow for independent practice. The stations will involve the three different themes previously mentioned: collaboration time, training, administrative support. Groups will spend no more than three minutes per station and rotate in a clockwise manner. At each station, there will be information on a poster that will require the audience to read and respond to by writing down key best practices and new information learned as well as any questions, comments, or concerns.

As we begin to conclude the presentation, all groups will come back together to form a whole group again. As the majority of the group focus on current ELL demographic that requires the inclusive classroom and co-teaching, the pair who demonstrated co-teaching at the beginning of the training will be pulled aside by one of the co-presenter and allowed to collaborate (identify the objectives, plan the lesson and how they will assess our comprehension) and plan their lesson to be re-taught at the end of the training. This demonstrates the fifth model of *alternative teaching*.   The co-teaching pair will then be able to present their lesson once again at the end of the hour. The conclusion of the presentation will involve the final method of team teaching. Both presenters will summarize the information

including the objectives and direct the audience to take the survey. Questions will be answered

at the end of the segment when everyone is completing their survey. The data collected will be

analyzed and evaluated by both presenters and the findings will be presented to the

administration. Refer to the appendices for visuals of the materials that would be used during

the presentation.

The presentation will be catered to an urban high school located in Saint Paul,

Minnesota where there are approximately 1,000 students. A little over half of the student

demographic is of Asian descent, followed by 23% Black or African American, 11% Latino, and

11% White. ELLs compromise one third of the student population in addition to 16% identified

as SPED. Eighty-four percent of the student population receives free or reduced lunch and

currently all identified ELL and SPED students receive at least one co-taught class in a core

classroom (ELA, math, science or social studies). The school has at least 79 full time license

educators of all content and specialties. The training will be offered to other staff such as

educational assistants, school social workers, guidance counselors, school nurses and the

administration. Teachers who are currently in co-teaching or have co-taught previously will be

asked to share their experiences and opinions, including the models and methods they utilized.

The presentation will be on a designated professional development day, spanning one class

period (maximum of 57 minutes) during the professional learning communities (PLCs) time.

Attendees will be required to bring in either their school issued laptop or iPad and are expected

to partake in all activities which will include live discussions, collaboration, and post session

comprehension checks and surveys. Included in the survey will be a question about whether or

not they would be willing to embark on the co-teaching journey. A follow-up session will be

given to those who answer that they are at least willing to try the methods. The presentation will need approval from the administration and the only identifiable cost will be teacher coverage for presenters on presentation day.

The district in which this particular urban high school is modeled after, is known for their advocacy for co-taught classrooms, and are semi-pioneers in their state for co-teaching implementation district wide. The hope is that the presentation/training will extend beyond the initial school and be presented district wide. Currently the district offers a co-training professional development day for current co-teaching pairs; however, this training is catered towards those who have not yet engaged in co-teaching, are still new and inexperienced, or have been co-teaching but would like more information. As more co-teaching pairs and classes increase, the hope is that data will be collected on student achievement and engagement, teacher relationships, as well as teacher and administration relationships.

Chapter III represents the hypothetical application of the literature review. It offers a professional development introductory course into the general and specific details of co-teaching, including its models and best practices. The course is catered and constructed with a specific urban high school, its demographics, current teachers, and district as the main muse of the application.   The final chapter in this thesis will be a discussion and conclusion that includes the summary and limitations of the literature and application, answers to the guiding questions, and implications for future research. Chapter IV will also include the informal opinions and observations of current teachers who have co-taught or are currently co-teaching.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION AND CONLUSION

Summary

English language learners have been a part of the American education system even

before the formation of the United States in 1776. From the atrocities of acculturating African

slaves to the present-day search for the American dream by immigrants from around the world,

English language acquisition represents more than just vocabulary. The ability to read, write,

speak, and understand English truly segregates people into groups of "haves" and "have nots".

Do our virtues and morals permit or even encourage us to use language as a means to separate

or as means to judge what is right, who is wrong, and where people belong? As the numbers

and trends of ELLs continue to rise steadily in the United States, the demographics and

diversifying needs of the American student will change. Districts across the nation will need to

evaluate and be in compliance with the federal and state laws that govern the equitable access

of appropriate education for ELLs. As seen in this thesis, co-teaching is a means to compliancy

and equity.

Co-teaching is a means to provide equitable academic opportunities for students with

special conditions such as English language learners and special education needs. Content and

ELL teachers are now required not only to be an expert in their content areas, but also be

proficient in other disciplines in order to meet the diverse and complex needs of students. The

argument can be made that the diverse learner is not new, but that now, in our understanding

of how we learn and how to teach, we are only beginning to unpack the complexities of

learning, acquiring, mastering, and making something out of ourselves. This isn't meant to discourage and intimidate new and future educators, and it definitely is not meant to belittle or undermine the expertise of the veteran teacher. Students, especially ELLs, will require educators to revolutionize the system and challenge the way things have been.

The first guiding question of this thesis was to define co-teaching and to identify research-based best practices. According to the literature, co-teaching is an instructional model in which two fully licensed teachers, each with their respective expertise, are collaboratively providing instruction and support for all students with content development.   Within an ELL co-taught classroom, both teachers are responsible for the development, acquisition, and advancement of content and language objectives. According to the literature, best practices for effective co-teaching requires that both teachers take on the responsibility of the content - which includes lesson planning and instruction, share responsibilities of classroom management, and the expectation of student success for all students (Austin, 2001; Bronson & Dentith, 2014; Honigsfield & Dove, 2016; Beninghof & Leensvaart, 2016). Though the opposite does happen, where either one or both teachers feel burdened by the co-teaching model, the need for training and administrativesupport can help alleviate the questions and uncertainties of two professionals trying to add yet another practice into the ever-growing repertoire of educational best practices (Austin, 2001; Bell & Baecher, 2012; Nichols et al., 2010; Maxwell, 2014; Cohen, 2015; Bahamonde & Friend, 1999).

It can be agreed that co-teaching helps with compliancy and providing equity in the classroom, but when practiced accordingly, do the numbers show that co-teaching is an effective model in acquiring language and promoting academic success? In regard to the

effectiveness of the co-teaching model in increasing language acquisition and academic achievement of ELLs very little research is given, especially with respect to quantitative data to support this idea. Until recently, most research on co-teaching has been performed on special education co-teaching; even so, the research in this literature review does not provide conclusive evidence of student success stories. Sporadic and limited teacher opinions are seen throughout (Beninghof & Leensvaart, 2016; Bronson & Dentith, 2014). No specific data is given in the literature other than commentaries such as "after just one year of implementing this model, Field Elementary Schools' median student growth percentile moved from a rating of "Approaching" to "Exceeds.." (Beninghof & Leensvaart, 2016, p. 73). This is by no means an implication that the co-teaching model is effective or ineffective – the paucity of research leaves the answer inconclusive.

Professional Application

The co-teaching trend and inclusive classroom are currently buzzwords within the education world. With the demand of equitable education and the mandate of least restrictive classrooms, teachers and administrators will need to find creative solutions so that students are not burdened with yet another component that may affect their learning. As highlighted in chapter one, many ELLs bring other factors to the classroom that are out of the control of the teacher, administrator, and district. As a means to limit and/or eliminate such factors, providing an education using approaches and methods that will meet the unique needs of the student is key. ELLs come in a variety of forms, with varying levels of language and content proficiency. Of the many factors that are out of the control of the teacher and institution, teachers and the education system as a whole are able control the factors of methodology and

pedagogy; under that umbrella, the findings in this literature review do point to the potential

benefits and optimistic view behind such a collaborative approach.

Implications for Teachers

Teachers who are limited in ability or familiarity of teaching ELLs have the opportunity

to seek further education and training on teaching ELLs. In addition, opportunities for ELL

educators to be credentialed to teach content areas is also a possible alternative for an

inclusive classroom. However, to be conscience of time and finances, this option may not be

preferable, or in some cases, even viable. As a result, co-teaching bridges the limitations of

both educators. Best practices states that co-teachers enter into the partnership as fully equal

teachers. Expectations and responsibilities for students and classrooms should be explicit in

order minimize any unknown or assumptions that may damage the co-teaching relationship

relationship (Austin 2001, Beninghof & Leensvaart 2016, Honingsfeld & Dove 2016).

Collaborating teams should plan, instruct, support students and each other, and assess students

together. Their expectations should be aligned and should share a common goal.

The literature shows that many teachers felt that co-teaching or the collaborative model

added yet another complication to their workload (Keefe & Moore 2014, Austin 2001) – such

complications include the allocation of preparation time to co-plan or to simply touch base

concerning content objectives. In addition, both content and language educators expressed the

efficiency of the model as the language teacher often took on a support or consultant role

instead of an active instructor role within the classroom (Austin, 2001; Bell & Baecher, 2012).

Educators have every right to challenge the legitimacy of collaborative teaching as they are

ultimately held accountable for the academic performances of their students. However, the

literature reveals that these concerns can be addressed and resolved with the proper training, administrative support, and in my personal opinion, an attitude change. The administrative support will be further explained in the following paragraph.

Implications for Administration/District

Administrators and districts need to take a proactive approach to co-teaching by first familiarizing with co-teaching best practices and then either offering the training themselves or bringing in outside experts to lead the training (Nichols et al., 2010; Austin, 2001; Bronson & Dentith, 2014). The training should occur prior to the implementation of co-teaching and throughout the experience. The reference research also suggest that the administration should create a school culture and climate where the co-teaching model is just as normal as what the "traditional classroom" (consisting of only one teacher). Teacher schedules and preparation time need to coincide with one another so that co-teachers are able to set aside time specifically for planning and assessing with one another (Bronson & Dentith, 2014, Bahamonde & Friend, 1999). Finally, the administration cannot force a co-teaching partnership. Teachers who have ill opinions about co-teaching will most likely not be the best partner to begin this endeavor (Nichols et al., 2010).

Implications for Additional Stakeholders

In reference to education and students, stakeholders are often considered to be either teachers or administrators. The often silenced and forgotten students, parents and community members, are left out of the conversation because they don't necessarily interact with the day-to-day portion of the education system. However, the collaborative co-teaching model has varying effects on different stakeholders and as a result would require the opinions of these

stakeholders to be expressed. They would need to be included in this process and given

trainings and education to best build that co-teaching culture and climate mentioned above.

First, the students (both ELLs and non-ELLs) may be in culture shock when presented with two

teachers. The abnormality can be harmful (or beneficial), but regardless, students need to

know the resources they have and the classroom culture in which there are now two teachers.

Like students, parents of students who are in co-taught classrooms also need to be informed

about the purpose of team-teaching – from the potential of having a much smaller teacher to

student ratio to the fact that an inclusion of a second content area expert may present the

content in a different light. For example, a co-taught ELL biology classroom may focus and

integrate many more language skills such as comprehensive lab write-ups and explicit

vocabulary instruction whereas a non-co-taught classroom may have fewer language

objectives. Finally, community members are directly affected by the co-teaching model as

having two fully licensed full-time professionals will affect the allocation of tax dollars and

district budgets. Members should be informed of how resources are being spent and the

purpose behind moving away from the traditional methods that will cost tax payers more

money. The preemptive measures of informing and having open discussions with community

members will greatly impact the culture of team-teaching to meet the needs of all members of

the community.

Limitations of Research

The limitations of the research on co-teaching focus solely on ELLs co-teaching

classrooms. Any literature that was used, even if it referenced or was written with a SPED lens,

was interpreted with an ELL lens. Co-teaching began as a SPED model and is transitioning into

ELL co-taught classrooms. The research is also limited to best practices and the effectiveness of the co-teaching model in respect to ELLs. The research showed very little documentation or longitudinal collection of quantitative data that would be useful in supporting to the effectiveness of co-teaching. Another limitation to the research is the generalization of the co-teaching models. Though six models were identified, all with their pros and cons, it would be risky to speak of all six models in a general sense because they are not all the same. Finally, the number of literature articles is quite limited in relation of the vast amount that still remains; caution would suggest that more literature reviews be completed for a more comprehensive conclusion.

Implications of Future Research

Due to the paucity of research available on the quantitative data of language acquisition and academic achievement, the research would suggest that future data be collected on co-teaching effectiveness. A longitudinal study following language learners should be completed to measure their language acquisition (both conversational and academic language) as well as their academic achievement. As referenced in chapter one, the statistical analysis of the NAEP reading scores could even be used as a means to compare students of co-teachers and students who are not in inclusive settings.

The effectiveness of co-teaching is one that is personal as I currently co-teach ELLs in content classes with four different content teachers in three different content areas. This was my first year co-teaching and I did not receive any co-training development or training before or during my first year. The co-teachers with whom I was paired with did not know I was coming and had never co-taught before thought some did receive co-teaching training

previously. Co-planning time was not allocated; rather, it was suggested that the co-planning be done during PLC (Professional Learning Committees) designated times. My very position was also a means for compliancy as the ruling education department of the state found that the district was not compliant and did not meet the needs of ELLs. Based on the best practices and research within this review, my current co-teaching practice can be evaluated as failing to meet proficiency. This review has spurred interest into the short and long-term effects of co-teaching without implementing any of the best practices. I would like to initiate qualitative and quantitative research project where I monitor student achievement (content grades), language development and acquisition (reading, speaking, writing, and listening). I would collect student data from this academic year and each of the following years to compare student achievement and language scores and to see if there are any correlations between best practice compliancy and non-compliancy. This data would contribute to the effectiveness of the co-teaching model and help revise not only co-teaching best practices, but also ELL education.

Conclusion

In writing this thesis, the hope was to better understand the history and current trends in co-teaching, to build background and introduce the necessity of an ELL program as a result of the growing numbers of ELLs in the United States, and to answer the following questions:
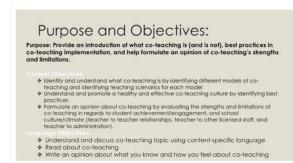
1. What is co-teaching and what research based best practices are needed in order for effective co-teaching to occur?

2. Within an inclusive classroom, which co-teaching models are most effective in increasing student language acquisition and academic achievement for English Language Learners?

The limitations of available research data and literature concerning the effectiveness of co-teaching for ELLs implies the need for further studies. Before districts, schools, and teachers begin implementing this model, it is important to study whether or not co-teaching is truly effective and not just a means to be compliant with regulations. While reviewing literature and writing this thesis, I have observed co-teachers and informally surveyed teachers and administrators at my current school about their experiences and opinions about co-teaching as a means of providing equitable education for ELLs. The comments do mimic the ideas found in the research (Austin, 2001); teachers often cite the lack of planning time and expert training as crucial components of a failing co-teaching partnership. Though there are many pessimistic opinions of co-teaching and an overwhelming preference to teach alone, most current co-teachers and administrators that I surveyed did express that they're not "completely closed to it" leaving opportunities for co-teaching to take place. With many methodological and pedagogical fads in the world of teaching, the hope is that more research and studies will follow to determine whether or not ELLs will benefit from effective and well-delivered co-teaching.

APPENDIX A

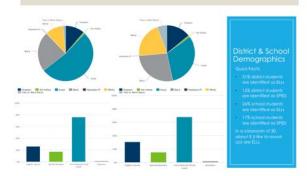Power Point presentation slides used for application emphasis.

Station 2: Training & Professional Development

To our surprise, we learned that they had worked collaboratively and operated as a team with little to no direction from their building administrator and no formal training or development in skills that fostered partner-teaching relationships for nearly a decade. The only training these teachers received occurred when they were initially "assigned" to partner teach during the first year of implementation. This training consisted of visiting two other partner teacher classrooms in the district.
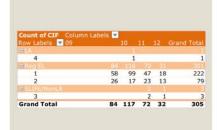
Horwich (1999) explains that a lack of training can lead to friction between partner teachers as well as unsuccessful lessons and teaching. While this was not the case here, we did discover that nearly all of the other teachers observed as part of larger study had tried and failed in their attempts to partner teach, or had never attempted to implement partner teacher model due to a lack of knowledge about partnering or the availability of adequate support to do so.

Bronson, C.E. & Dentith, A.M. (2014). Partner teaching: a promising model. Education 134(4), 506-520.

Station 3: Administrative & District Support

This interpretation has particular relevance for the improvement of collaborative practice, and in response, this research suggests the following. First, school administrators should develop and promote a model of collaborative teaching that is supported by quality research and practice, such as the cooperative model (Friend & Cook, 1994) or the teaming model (Fishbaugh, 1997). Second, schools and school districts might seek out effective inservice training programs or work at developing them in collaboration with state education agencies and local colleges and universities. Third, state departments should carefully review the curricula of the teacher preparation programs within their purview to ensure that they are effective. Finally, schools should strive to be responsive to the express needs of their co-teachers with respect to logistical and administrative support.

Austin, V.L. (2001). Teachers' beliefs about co-teaching. Remedial & Special Education, 22(4), 245-255.

District & School Demographics

Quick Facts:

- 31% district students are identified as ELLs
- 16% district students are identified as SPED
- 26% school students are identified as ELLs
- 17% school students are identified as SPED

In a classroom of 30, about 8 (I like to round up) are ELLs.

District & State Mandates for Inclusive Classroom

School Compliancy

2017 Enrollment

- 1 LA Student - 2 co-taught, 1 ELD, 1 Bilingual Serviced Class
- ELL & SPED services - SPED services first, then ELL
- ELLs can opt out of any service classes – needs documentation of refusal

Application

Inclusive classrooms are a federal and state mandate – districts must be compliant.
- Co-taught classrooms will increase for core content areas.
- Electives will not receive the support.
- Mandates for inclusive classrooms differ between ELL and SPED.
- Core content credits will only be given to students if they are taught by:
  - Licensed content area teachers
  - Dual – licensed content/ELL/SPED teachers
  - 2017 – Highly Qualified Teachers (future unclear)
- Students can refuse any service (needs to be documented).
- Though research supports

PRACTICE

Reteach Lesson

SURVEY

Click to add text

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeNLdPSgpuW-4PDBWEaHcJraTJd6W1DdXXMSIsfewcagRN5Q/viewform?usp=pp_url&entry.939268224

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