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Collaborative Teaching: A Delivery Model to Increase Responsiveness to the Needs of all Learners Through Academic and Social Inclusion

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Collaborative Teaching:
A Delivery Model to Increase Responsiveness to the Needs of all Learners Through
Academic and Social Inclusion

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

School of Education and Counseling Psychology
Dominican University of California
San Rafael, CA
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Signature Sheet

This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the Chair of the Master's program, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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Abstract

Students with special needs often miss out on classroom curricula for specialized instruction. While these services are valued for educational benefits, this instruction method often has negative impacts on social-emotional development and targets students for their differing needs.

Integrated collaborative teaching models include collaborative teaching among general and special educators in an inclusive environment. In this descriptive study, the author examined integrated collaborative teaching as a delivery model to increase responsiveness to the needs of all learners through academic and social inclusion.

This study involved students with a wide range of disabilities from two different grade leveled collaborative classrooms, who were considered academically “at risk” and a sample of general education students who were considered on grade level or above. Each student was supported by an educational team, which included both the general and special educator.

The effectiveness of this process was evaluated through behavioral observations, student reflections, and team interviews. Outcomes suggested that generally, each of the students with disabilities demonstrated increases in academic skills, engagement in classroom activities, social interactions with peers, student-initiated interactions and emotional growth. Outcomes suggested that each of the general education students demonstrated growth in sensitivity, empathy, acceptance of differences, increased cooperative learning, and social benefits. Outcomes suggested a reduction in stigma to students with disabilities. Outcomes suggested the co-teachers benefited from support, expertise of colleagues in specialized areas, and extended differentiated strategies.

Chapter 1 Introduction

As a first year education specialist, I was seeking best practices in special education. Through an internship, I gained experience as the “learning center” teacher and ran a resource type model, using both push-in and pull-out services for students in an inclusion model. Although this is best practice for some students other delivery models provide more enriched services. After years of implementing an inclusion model, the district piloted integrated collaborative teaching, which is collaborative teaching among special and general educators with an average class size and small cluster, or group, of students with disabilities.

Implementation of this model has begun to develop across schools as a means for best practice of supporting and including students with disabilities. My background knowledge on this subject matter was not fine-tuned but learning about a model where special education students could remain in their classroom for the full day was something I needed to learn more about. I had the opportunity to teach in the classroom as a student teacher in the fall and needless to say I fell in love with this model.

I began to see the progress of these students with individual education plans (IEPs) in the general education classroom. One particular student caught my attention even more, a fourth grade student who began the school year at a very low reading level, equivalent to 1st grade, 3 months into the school year he had progressed an entire grade level.

Students with special needs were ‘weighted’ on many factors in order to determine appropriate placement and leveled behaviors among differing classrooms. The school year began with clusters of students with IEPs among grade levels, dependent on numbers of students eligible for special education services within the current year. The questions that remained, were whether this could be best practice for all students, including those without disabilities; what

impact this model might have on academic inclusion as well as social inclusion for all students in this delivery model; and the impact on social emotional development of students remaining in the classroom for services, specifically whether self-esteem and confidence levels increase due to a decrease in stigma.

Statement of the Problem

Students with special needs often miss out on classroom curricula for specialized instruction. Historically, this specialized instruction has taken place through pull-out services typically in a separate setting. These services are valued for academic progress however this instruction method often has effects on social emotional development (Karin, Von, Evelen, Mieke, & Katja, 2012). As Hitchcock, et al., reported, efforts to successfully support children with disabilities in general education classroom settings have been under way for more than 30 years, the barriers to meeting their needs continue (Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012).

“Educators opposed to inclusion view special education as a specialized service provided to students with disabilities outside of the general education setting” (Salend as cited in Ball & Green, 2014, p.58). Supporters of this view argue that students with disabilities are uniquely different from their non-disabled peers. Therefore, “they require services that are specific to their disabilities, which cannot be met in the general education setting” (Halvorsen & Neary as cited in Ball & Green, 2014, p.58). In contrast, educators in support of inclusion view special education as a mainstream service provided in the general education setting with various in class supports (Praisner as cited in Ball & Green, 2014).

Students with special needs suffer from social-emotional development issues including having increased behavior issues, as well as self-image and self-esteem issues due to being

“labeled” as having differences (Karin, et al., 2012). How can we provide an environment where students with special needs are not labeled for being different, that will support them for their individual needs, in both academia and development, just as students without disabilities, or typical students, are supported for their individual needs? How can we model best practices for all students and provide a model where educators support one another in meeting each individual students’ differing needs? How can we meet the needs of differing students without pulling them out of the classroom?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine collaborative teaching as a delivery model to increase responsiveness to the needs of all learners through academic and social inclusion and the impact that this model has. The examiner will examine academic progress, as well as, social emotional development of two samples of students within this delivery model of grades kindergarten and fourth. This study will include collaborative teaching models within this delivery model, student outcomes, benefits to students with disabilities and without, and teacher outcomes.

Research Questions

How can collaborative teaching be a delivery model, which increases responsiveness to the needs of all learners through academic and social inclusion? How can this model reduce the stigma that exists and impacts students with disabilities today? How can we model best practices for all students and provide a model where educators support one another in meeting each individual students’ differing needs?

Theoretical Rationale

After multiple reauthorizations, the initial special education law is known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. The law is designed to improve access to public education for students with disabilities, IDEA required public schools to serve students with a broad range of disabilities and mandates the implementation of related services and additional supports to assist these students in reaching their full potential in the general education setting (Ball & Green, 2014).

Statute: Title I.B.612.A.5 states: In general.--To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

“Once associated with the term mainstreaming, a service delivery model which places a student with disabilities in general education settings without appropriate supports and services to assist them in achieving important learning goals, Inclusion was first described in the initial reauthorization of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, EAHCA” (Kasser & Lyrtle as cited in Ball & Green, 2014, p. 58). Now, IDEA mandates that students with disabilities be provided appropriate educational supports and services to assist with their limitations in the general education setting to the maximum extent possible. The legal requirement known as the least restrictive environment (LRE) explains the premise of inclusion, which was not clearly defined by the law (Halvorsen & Neary as cited in Ball & Green, 2014). LRE means that a

student who has a disability should have the opportunity to be educated with non-disabled peers, to the greatest extent appropriate.

Academically, a resource room may be available within the school for specialized instruction, with typically no more than two hours per day of services for a student with learning disabilities. Should the nature or severity of his or her disability prevent the student from achieving these goals in a regular education setting, then the student would be placed in a more restrictive environment, such as a special school, classroom within the current school, or a hospital program. Generally, the less opportunity a student has to interact and learn with non-disabled peers, the more the placement is considered to be restricted (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Assumptions

Collaborative teaching can be a successful delivery model designed to meet all students needs and can result in increased responsiveness to the needs of more learners. Students with disabilities benefit both academically and socially when provided opportunities to interact, learn, and share with non-disabled peers. In comparison, typical students will show increased development in sensitivity and empathy for human differences (Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012). “As the number of students who are struggling in schools grows, the need for general and special education to come together to create a vision and capacity to educate all learners becomes more and more pronounced” (Winn & Blanton as cited in Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012, p.484).

Background and Need

Collaboration is defined as, “an interactive process that enables people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems” (Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012, p. 483). Collaborative teaching is defined as “partnering of a general education teacher and a special education teacher or another specialist for the purpose of jointly delivering instruction to a diverse group of students, including those with disabilities or other special needs, in a general education setting and in a way that flexibly and deliberately meets their learning needs” (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010, p. 3). There are several reasons increased collaboration between special and general educators has been recommended; first, the importance of the collaboration between general educators and special educators is clearly grounded in their unique knowledge bases. Secondly, the number of students with disabilities being served in the general education settings continues to increase. Majority of students with disabilities spend most of their day in general education settings. Third, in addition to meeting the needs of students with disabilities, it is clear that there is increased pressure for all teachers to meet the needs of all students (Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012).

Summary

Students with disabilities are targeted for their differences through pull-out services for specialized instruction. Historically, this model was and has been the norm. Students with disabilities are showing increases in self-esteem and self confidence. Students with disabilities miss out on classroom curricula for this specialized instruction and therefore continue to be behind their peers academically. There are many benefits on social emotional development for students to remain in the classroom. Greater research on the benefits of collaborative teaching on

all learners is limited but teachers are provided with supports in specialized fields. Numbers of students with disabilities continue to increase and the demands on teachers to meet the needs of all learners is increasing as well. Teachers need supports in order to respond to the needs of all learners which can be provided by through the expertise of special education teachers. Developing collaborative skills is essential for our students to acquire 21st century skills and the same expectation should be realized with teachers as well.

In this descriptive study, the author will examine collaborative teaching as a delivery model to increase responsiveness to the needs of all learners through academic and social inclusion. The effectiveness of this process was evaluated through behavioral observations, student reflections, and team interviews.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Introduction

Academic achievement and education centered on the whole child are the focus of today's education system. Progressions to transform the traditional classroom model that has separated students with disabilities from their same age peers are underway through the development of inclusion classes and standards based curriculums (Almon & Feng, 2012). Inclusion can be seen as two main focuses; (1) academic inclusion, equal participation and interaction with typical peers in academic activities and curriculum within a regular classroom and (2) social inclusion, the opportunity to interact with peers in a regular classroom, having a sense of belonging and acceptance within the learning community (Koster, Nakken, Pijl, & Van Houten as cited in Katz, 2013).

“Many schools have adopted the inclusion model of pairing both a highly qualified regular education and special education teacher together to plan, deliver content, and evaluate progress for a diverse group of students in a single classroom” (Friend et. al., 2010, p. 7). The idea of educating students with disabilities in the regular education environment reflects a decision making process in which multiple factors need to be taken into consideration (Moore, 2009). “The intent of co-teaching is to make it possible for students with disabilities to access the general curriculum while at the same time benefiting from specialized instructional strategies necessary to nurture their learning” (Friend et. al., 2010, p. 3). Research shows that collaboration between the students, educators and family members are essential in the implementation of a successful inclusion program (Gallagher as cited in Almon & Feng, 2012). Collaborative teaching is a relatively new model being implemented today and lacks sufficient research on its

validity.

Collaborative teaching is two or more educators or other certified staff, contracted to share instructional responsibility for a single group of students primarily in a single classroom or workspace for specific content with mutual ownership, pooled resources, and joint accountability, although each individual's level of participation may vary (Friend et. al., 2010, p. 3).

This model is implemented with a normal class size and involves a small cluster of students with IEPs. An effective collaborative teaching model is said “to likely increase the outcome for all students in the general education setting, while ensuring that students with disabilities....are provided instruction by a content expert” (Murawski & Dieker as cited in Almon & Feng, 2012, p. 5).

Historical Context

“With increased focus on providing high quality education for students with disabilities the role of school leaders has changed immensely” (Ball & Green, 2014, p. 2). In addition to maintaining safe schools, personal management, and high stakes testing, school leaders are now accountable for designing, implementing, leading, and evaluating programs to meet the needs of all students (Katsiyannis as cited in Ball & Green, 2014). After multiple reauthorizations, the initial special education law is known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004 (IDEA). Designed to improve access to public education for students with disabilities. IDEA required public schools to serve students with a broad range of disabilities and mandates the implementation of related services and additional supports to assist these students in reaching their full potential in the general education setting (Ball & Green, 2014). Although efforts to

successfully support children with disabilities in general education classroom settings have been under way for more than 30 years, the barriers to meeting their needs continue (Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose & Jackson as cited in Ball & Green, 2014). According to U.S. Department of Education (2006), the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB) was established to close the achievement gap that exists among students.

Although school leaders and teachers are aware of the collective mandates, implications, and accountabilities associated with IDEA and the NCLB there is still much debate regarding how and where students with disabilities should be educated (Turnbull & Wehmeyer as cited in Ball & Green, 2014). Over the past four decades the importance of school leadership in creating learning environments conducive to learning for all students has been well documented (Edmonds, Gates, Ross & Brewer as cited in Ball & Green 2014). Some duties associated with special education vary among districts, there are specific duties governed by federal law that must be followed (Ball & Green, 2014). NCLB supports standards-based education reform based on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The Welsh inclusion model is a popular inclusion model that was introduced in 2006 (Pickard as cited in Almon & Feng, 2012). This was a time when only 1 in 5 students with disabilities passed the reading and math portions of the statewide tests. Even though 2013 federal mandates for all students are needed to increase, a gain of 12.5% is shown with students with disabilities (Almon & Feng, 2012). The move from pull-out to inclusive services creates the need for greater collaboration among general education and special education teachers. The skills necessary for collaboration are essential for today's teachers and showcase a need for change within teacher preparation programs (Arthaud, Aram, Breck, Doelling, & Bushrow, 2007). One of the biggest struggles for

students with disabilities meeting state proficiency levels has been with blending the services of general and special education to guarantee that students with disabilities successfully progress in the general education setting at the same rate as their peers. “If students with disabilities are to be included in the general education setting and held accountable for mastering states standards, then the bottom line for practice is that general educators and special educators must work in partnership in all aspects of instruction to serve all students” (Davis, Dieker, Pearl, & Kirkpatrick as cited in Copeland & Cosbey, 2009, p. 221). Researchers provide strong research demonstrating positive outcomes of including students with extensive support needs in general education settings. Research indicates that students with extensive support needs in general education settings have more access to the general curriculum content than similar students in segregated settings, and they are more academically engaged (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008).

One strategy, which appears to be in legislation in support of the movement towards inclusion, is co teaching (Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013). Collaborative teaching has been suggested as a promising service delivery model for the development of inclusive classrooms (Thousand, Nevin, & Villa as cited in Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013).

Integrated Collaborative Teaching Defined

A “pragmatic merger between general and special educators in which direct educational programming to all students would be provided by having a special educator within a general education setting” (Bauwens, Hourcadem and Friend as cited in Murawski & Swanson, 2001 p. 1). They decided the term cooperative teaching would represent this relationship. They presented ways to implement cooperative teaching at that time and included complimentary instruction, team teaching, and supportive learning activities (Murawski & Swanson, 2001). Friend et al.,

2010 shortened the term cooperative teaching to co teaching and further clarified the characteristics inherent in a true collaborative teaching relationship. They defined collaborative teaching as “two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single physical space” (p. 3).

Collaboration has been described as a “process not a product” (Friend & Bursuck as cited in Friend et. al., 2010). In most schools, collaborative teaching cannot exist alone as the means through which inclusive practices are implemented. Instead, collaborative teaching should be one out of a wide variety of service delivery systems that provide supports to students with special needs (Friend et. al., 2010). Current research points to three models of inclusive teaching: (a) the consultant model, in which the special educator serves as a consultant to the general educator in areas pertaining to curriculum adaptation, skills deficit remediation, and assessment modification; (b) the coaching model, in which the special and general educators take turns coaching each other in areas of the curriculum and pedagogy in which they are the acknowledged “experts” and (c) the teaming or collaborative model, in which the special and general educator share equitably the tasks of lesson planning, implementation and assessment (Austin, 2001).

Although collaborative teaching is integral to the inclusive practices in many schools, it is not a requirement for inclusion to occur. Inclusion refers to a broad belief system or philosophy embracing the notion that all students should be welcomed members of a learning community, that all students are a part of their classrooms even if their abilities differ (Friend et. al., 2010). “Social inclusion is vital to student development, because social and emotional well-being is directly related to resiliency, citizenship, and mental health and increases academic motivation and aspirations, and achievement” (Wotherspoon as cited in Katz, 2013, p. 3). Inclusion is not

just about social and emotional well-being however, students come to school to learn, including students with disabilities. Inclusive education must set high standards for all students, and support students to achieve them (Katz, 2013).

Data from the U.S. Department of Education (2006) reveals that, over the last two decades, the number of students with learning disabilities who are educated in general education classrooms has increased substantially. For example, in 1989-1990, about 22 percent of students were educated in a general education setting. By 2007-2008, this proportion had increased to 62 percent. This has led people to conclude that the preferred service delivery option is full inclusion with collaborative teaching for learning disabled students (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).

Collaboration between General and Special Educators

“Collaborative teaming provides a vehicle for unifying the historically dual systems of general and special education” (Nevin et al., as cited in Hunt et al, 2001, p. 2). The collaborative teaming process offers ongoing opportunities for general and special educators and parents to share the knowledge and skills to generate new methods for individualizing learning, without the need for dual systems of general and special education. According to experts in collaborative teaming, an effective collaborative teaming process involves regular, positive face to face interactions, a structure for addressing the issues, performance and monitoring and clear individual accountability for agreed upon responsibilities (Hunt et al., 2001). Effective collaboration between special and general educators can facilitate the successful inclusion of students with disabilities who are in general education classrooms. Collaboration in education is generally defined as “co-equal professionals’ voluntarily co-planning to achieve common goals”

(Friend et. al., 2010, p. 4). Teachers who collaborate effectively share resources and decision-making responsibility. They also assume joint responsibility for outcomes. Regardless of the collaborative structure being used (e.g. one-on-one interactions, collaborative teaching, collaborative consultation). Successful collaboration requires planning time, effort and administrative support (Carter, Prater, Jackson & Marchant as cited in Friend et. al., 2010).

Collaborative teaching refers to “an educational approach in which general and special educators work in a coactive and coordinated fashion to jointly teach academically and behaviorally heterogeneous groups of students in educationally integrated settings (i.e. general classrooms)” (Boudah, Schumacher and Deshler as cited in Friend, et. al., 2010, p.4).

Specifically, in cooperative teaching both general and special educators are simultaneously present in the classroom, maintaining joint responsibility for specified instruction that is to occur within that setting. Because a collaborative model is both recommended and used in inclusive classrooms, one might infer that interaction of co-teachers has been examined extensively and that the criteria for an ideal model have been defined. However, this assumption is unsupported and only a few studies have evaluated current practice (Austin, 2001).

Many people have identified the need, in private and public schools for collaboration skills to bring about effective inclusion of children with special needs in schools (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck as cited in Long, Brown, & Nagy-Rado, 2007). Inclusion is reflective of a decreasing number of self-contained special education placements and there is an expected increase in need for consultative special education personnel (Long et al., 2007). Much research has been conducted regarding the controversy of full inclusion in comparison to resource or pullout programs. Reviews of this research have been consistent, indicating that some students obtain better achievement outcomes in inclusive general education settings, while others do

better with part-time resource support (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Manset and Semmel (as cited in McLeskey & Waldron, 2011) reviewed the effectiveness of several model full inclusion programs and concluded that, while some of these programs produced improved academic outcomes for students with mild academic disabilities when compared to students in resource programs, other inclusive programs produced unimpressive results. Similarly, researchers reviewed the effectiveness of resource programs and reported that the effectiveness of these programs has not been demonstrated, although some investigations revealed that resource programs were superior to full-time placement in general education classrooms (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).

Student outcomes in inclusive and resource classes are variable because of the unevenness in the quality of instruction that is provided in these settings. The researchers note “It is not the setting itself, then, but instructional variables within these settings that largely influence student achievement” (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011, p. 3). These findings suggest that both inclusive and resource programs can be used to improve academic outcomes for elementary students with learning disabilities, if high-quality instruction, designed to meet individual student needs is delivered in these settings (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Evidence found that in most instances, even if a special education teacher is available as a co-teacher in the general education classroom, high quality, intensive instruction is most often not delivered in the general education classroom (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Instructional roles and actions of co-teachers vary depending on the learning goals and needs of students. Many descriptive studies, however, have shown a need for defined roles and responsibilities, which will benefit both students and co-teachers. Another component of collaborative teaching as shown in many research studies is shared planning time. This component is referred to in almost every study done regarding

collaborative teaching. In addition, researchers emphasize the importance of teacher training in collaborative teaching (Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013).

Models of Integrated Collaborative Teaching

There is a wealth of information on the different models of collaborative teaching. These differing models include:

(a) *one teach, one assist (or drift)*: one teacher (typically the general education teacher) assumes teaching responsibilities, and the special education teacher provides individual support as needed (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007).

One of the advantages is that teachers are not only able to provide students with their distinct skills in order to meet their needs but they are also better able to make true observations of student engagement during the learning process. This approach requires teachers to plan in advance what type of data needs to be collected, how to gather the data and how the both of them will analyze it (Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012).

(b) *station teaching*, where various learning stations are created, and the co teachers provide individual support at the different stations, this model allows teachers to divide the content into three or more groups throughout the room and rotate from one to the other. The cautions with stations are pacing, noise, reduction of group size, can take a number of days for completion, and greater differentiation.

(c) *parallel teaching*, where teachers teach the same or similar content in different classroom groupings. The class is divided into 2 equal groups with the teachers

both teaching the same information but in different ways, this lowers the student teacher ratio. Students are divided in groups by skill levels, behaviors, learning styles, assessment results, and multiple intelligences.

(d) *alternative teaching*, where one teacher may take a smaller group of students to a different location for a limited period of time for specialized instruction (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007).

This method can be highly effective for students with disabilities because it includes remediation, review, skills assessments, extra practice, pre and re teaching, reduction of group size, and extended activities. This approach takes away the humiliation or rejection that special education students may face by meeting their needs inside of the general education classroom, however, it does still risk stigmatizing students, but this can be reduced by varying the group (Almon & Feng, 2012).

(e) *team teaching (interactive teaching)*, where both co teachers share teaching responsibilities equally and are equally involved in leading instructional activities (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007).

Often times this model is referred to as having “one brain two bodies” while other call it ‘tag team teaching’ (Friend et. al., 2010). This approach requires mutual commitment, trust, and collaboration.

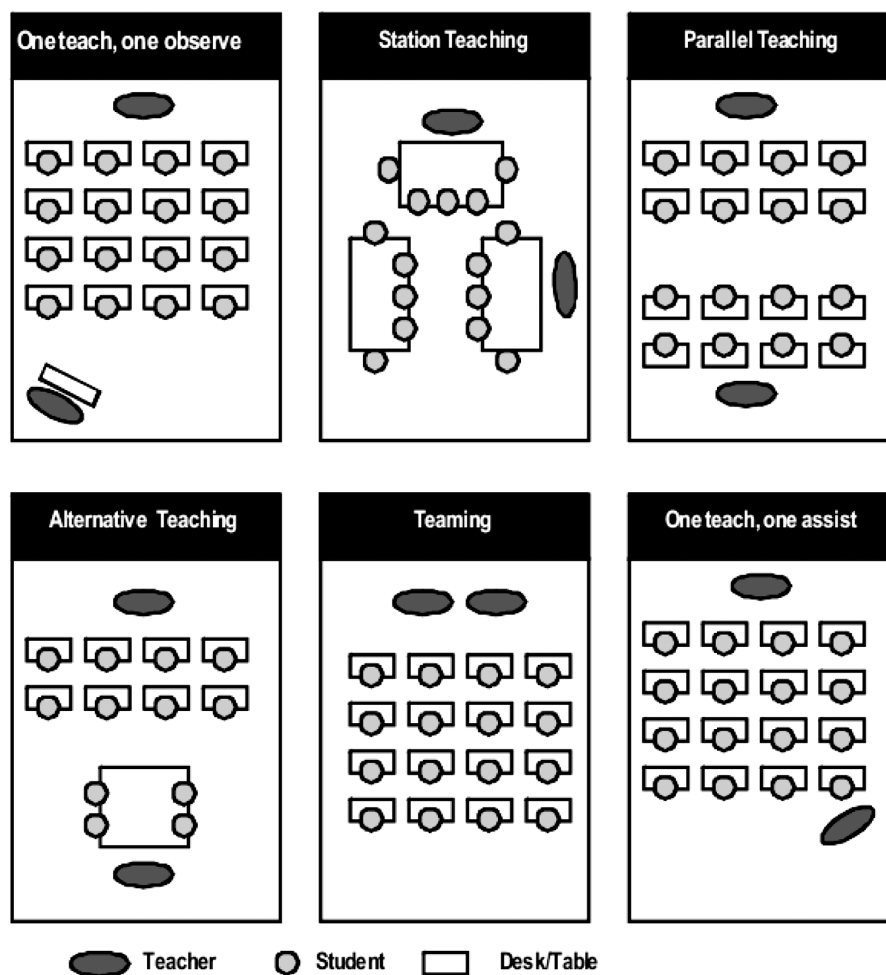


Figure 1: Co-Teaching Approaches From M. Friend & W.D. Bursuck, 2009, *Including Students with Special Needs: A Practical Guide for Classroom Teachers* (5th ed., p.92)/ Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Collaborative teaching is different from team teaching in two important ways; first, in collaborative teaching the teacher-student ratio is drastically improved. Team teaching offers a 2:50 teacher to student ratio while collaborative teaching offers a 2:25 teacher to student ratio. Second, in collaborative teaching two significantly different orientations toward teaching are blended (Friend et. al., 2010). Collaboration has been “defined as an interactive process that enables people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems” (Van Garderen Stormont, & Goel, 2012, p.1).

Collaboration and Outcomes

Historically, there are several reasons increased collaboration between special and general educators being recommended. First, the importance of the collaboration between general educators and special educators stems from their focused knowledge bases (Volonino & Zigmond as cited in Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012) Although there are a variety of collaborative teaching models (e.g., one teaching, one assisting; station teaching; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; team teaching (Friend et. al., 2010), the impact of such procedures on student outcomes is unclear.

Special educators typically have skills related to individualizing curriculum and instruction based on student’s needs. General educators tend to have knowledge of the curriculum, standards, and desired outcomes for the group. Accordingly, when general educators plan lessons, they tend to plan for the group; special educators plan for

individuals (Dettmer et al. as cited in Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012). Second, the number of students with disabilities being served in the general education setting continues to increase (Winn & Blanton as cited in Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012). In fact, the majority of students with disabilities spend most of their day in general education settings (Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012). Third, in addition to the importance of meeting the needs of students with disabilities, it is clear that there is increased pressure for all teachers to meet the needs of all students (Sharpe & Hawes as cited in Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012). Given that research has found that general educators struggle when trying to differentiate instruction for students with disabilities, general educators will likely need assistance differentiating instruction for students (Hodgson et al. as cited in Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012).

Collaboration between general and special educators could potentially result in increased responsiveness to the needs of more learners (Dettmer et al., as cited in Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012). Researchers summarize the need for increased collaboration, stating, “As the number of students who are struggling in schools grows, the need for general and special education to come together to create a vision and capacity to educate all learners becomes more and more pronounced.” (Winn and Blanton as cited in Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012). “Co-teaching should include at least three components: co-planning, co-instruction and co-assessment (Nichols & Sheffield, 2014, p. 2). Co-planning allows the special education teacher to proactively participate in the planning of instruction.

Student Outcomes

In the field of education, students are clearly the focus and making decisions in regards to their well-being should be the basis of student learning practices (Moore, 2009). Collaborative teaching is one way to deliver services to students with disabilities or other special needs as part of a philosophy of inclusive practices. It shares many benefits with other inclusion strategies, including a reduction in stigma for students with special needs on the part of other students and the development of a sense of “heterogeneously-based classroom community” (Friend et. al., 2010, p. 3).

In collaborative taught classrooms, all students can receive improved instruction. This includes students who are academically gifted or talented, students who have average ability, students who are at risk for school failure as well as students with identified special needs. In collaborative teaching, the instructional fragmentation that often occurs in other service delivery options is minimized. Students’ benefit by not having to leave the classroom to receive services. At the same time, the special service provider or other co-teacher has a better understanding of the curriculum being addressed in the classroom and the expectation for both academics and behavior. Inclusive models have been implemented in schools based on the ideas that children with and without special needs can benefit from increased opportunities for interaction with each other (Hess, Molina, & Kozleski as cited in Moore, 2009). Collaboration between general and special educators has been advertised for many years as a way to potentially

improve student performance. Less is known about the impact however, both academically and socially, of collaboration on students, particularly students with disabilities (Van Garderen, Stormont & Goel, 2012). Academic gains or social-behavioral improvements as a result of collaborative teaching have often been reported by teachers (Scruggs et al., 2007) however these gains are often based on perceptions and rarely, if ever, have data been reported to substantiate these claims. Benefits to students with disabilities, specifically related to gains in achievement or behavior, are presumed as a result of positive teacher perceptions. In an attempt to begin to address this concern, Murawski & Swanson, 2001, conducted a meta-analysis of the collaborative teaching research. Overall, they found that collaborative teaching had a moderate effect for influencing outcomes specifically for students with disabilities. The authors, however, cautioned readers that this finding should be considered tentative at best, primarily given the low number of articles that met their criteria for review in this analysis.

In other findings, the idea of including children with disabilities in our general education classroom through the inclusion model is still not an ideal concept even though it has gained popularity in our school systems across the nation. This is largely due to inconclusive research evidence on the validity of collaborative teaching regarding students outcomes whether with or without an identified disability (Weiss & Brigham as cited in Murawski & Swanson, 2001). In another study, student engagement was investigated when co-teachers used multiple strategies for collaborative teaching, more

specifically one teach/one assist, station teaching, alternative teaching, and team teaching. The focus was to see which particular strategies affect the engagement of students with or without disabilities. The results of this study found that regardless of collaborative teaching strategies used, they showed upward trends in levels of engagement (Almon & Feng, 2012). In interviews conducted by a number of sources, positive benefits of extra attention were found and results of interviews found that both academic and social needs were being met better than they had been in classes instructed by one teacher. Nicols and Sheffield (2014) identified many benefits to collaborative teaching as an inclusive practice. For students who are co-taught, potential benefits included increased individual attention, reduced negative behaviors, improved social skills and self-esteem, and increased academic achievement.

Social Emotional Development

In a research study by Wiener and Tardif, (2004) students with disabilities in four types of special education placements were compared in terms of social acceptance, number of friends, quality of relationship with best friends, self- concept, loneliness, depression, social skills and problem behaviors. The four types of placements involved include; inclusion, resource room, in-class support or push-in services, and self-contained classroom. In this study, students in both inclusion and push-in models had more positive social and emotional functioning. The effectiveness of this study is controversial because students in inclusive models have more opportunity to make

friends with typical students. Other research articles find the same results, due to the lack of appropriate comparisons across several different special education placement settings.

Benefits to Students With Disabilities

Students with disabilities were reported to have increased attention in co-taught classrooms according to participating co-teachers in a study by Scruggs et. al., (2007). Having positive peer models in an inclusive classroom also benefited students with disabilities. The inclusion model has created a road for students with disabilities to travel, but we still have a lot of reconstruction to do. The students are benefitting from being in the general education classrooms with their same age peers, and the primary reason for success is through their IEPs which includes the needed modifications and accommodations (Almon & Feng, 2012). Several studies have reported that when collaboration is structured (i.e. specific procedures and models are used to guide collaborative interactions) and supported by school administrations, educational outcomes improve for students with disabilities (Hunt, Soto, & Maier, 2003).

Participation of students with disabilities in inclusive settings has been associated with increased social interaction, friendships, and social competence (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008). Unlike Kalamvouka et al. (as cited in Copeland & Cosbey, 2009) findings on impact of inclusion on students without disabilities, the impact that inclusion has on the academic performance of students with disabilities has a lack of research. However In 2000, Farrell had suggested that students with disabilities might experience

social, but not academic benefit as a result to the quality (or lack of) instruction available in the inclusive settings (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008).

To contradict, other researchers examined the impact of inclusion on the learning of students with support needs. All three studies reported positive effects on academic skills for students with disabilities and found that these effects were consistent across grade levels and type and level of students' support needs (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008). More specifically, researchers found students with cognitive disabilities demonstrated better academic achievement when placed in general education settings rather than segregated settings. In general, however, McDonnell et al. (as cited in Copeland & Cosbey, 2008). reports that a number of studies have not gathered data on the academic performance of the students with disabilities or gathered data on non academic skills such as adaptive behavior. The emerging research supports including students with extensive support needs in general education settings and providing them access to the general curriculum (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008). Cooperative learning groups that include students with disabilities had focused on social skill outcomes.

These studies found increased interaction between students with disabilities and their typically developing peers and Piercy, Wilton, & Townsend (as cited in Copeland & Cosbey, 2008) found increased social acceptance of students with disabilities by their peers. Cooperative learning seems suitable to the learning needs of students with disabilities because it provides opportunities for observational learning to occur, for peers to support each other in acquiring new skills, and for heightening students'

motivation to engage in academic tasks (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008). Researchers found that globally students with disabilities demonstrate improved academic outcomes including literacy, numeracy, general knowledge, and higher order thinking when placed in inclusive settings as compared to peers matched for level of disability in segregated classrooms (Katz, 2013).

Some conclusions can be drawn from these studies. Administrators, teachers, and students perceive the model of collaborative teaching to be generally beneficial, to students with disabilities in both social, emotional, and academic domains.

Benefits to Students Without Disabilities

Although contrary to parents general beliefs, collaborative teaching has shown benefits to students without disabilities as well. One perceived benefit was the positive role-model collaborative teaching provides when co-teachers demonstrate successful collaboration. Participating teachers observed greater cooperation between students in co-taught inclusive classrooms. Some students also report that, when co-teachers drift around the class assisting whoever needs help, the attention paid to all students increase not just to students with special or differing needs (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). Many other investigations provided evidence for academic benefits, particularly through extra teacher attention. Co-teachers in a number of investigations reported on the positive effects of co-teacher collaboration as a social model for students. Across all

investigations, social benefits to students without disabilities were discussed more frequently than academic benefits.

Positive social and behavioral outcomes for students without disabilities in inclusive classrooms, such as improved self-esteem, development of personal principles like morals and ethics, decreased fear of differences and disabilities and decreased prejudices toward people with disabilities (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008).

To respond to concerns by parents that students without disabilities in inclusive classrooms may experience negative consequences related to academic achievement, Sharpe & York (as cited in Copeland & Cosbey, 2008) stated there has been a large body of research related to the academic achievement of children without disabilities in inclusive classrooms across academic areas, including reading, mathematics, language arts, science, and physical education. In a meta-analysis reported by Kalamvouka et al. (as cited in Copeland & Cosbey, 2008) 81% of the studies included neutral or positive academic benefits for the students without disabilities.

It may also be effective to use special education practices or strategies within general education settings for students without disabilities as well. Evidence-based practices can assist students in acquisition of general curriculum knowledge and skills. Dymond et al. (as cited in Copeland & Cosbey, 2008) for example, found that all of the students in a class benefited when changes were made to course instruction that took into account the needs of students with extensive support needs. Through instructional

practices such as these, students with disabilities are not stigmatized for their differences and instead all students have the opportunity to benefit. Some of these strategies include; verbal, gestural, modeling, or full physical response prompting, embedded skills within instruction, peer support strategies, and self-determination strategies.

As researchers have found, it is clear that the presence of students with disabilities does not negatively impact the learning of other students. Research shows, in fact, that typical students in classrooms that include students with disabilities develop stronger communication and leadership skills, have more positive attitudes toward diversity, and may also demonstrate superior reading and math skills to those in classrooms that do not include students with disabilities (Katz, 2013). In a study done by Litvack, Ritchie, and Shore, 2011, students without disabilities described four types of relationships among their peers with disabilities in an inclusive classroom setting. They described themselves as being an academic helper, being a casual playmate or acquaintance, and being friends who regularly spent recess together and talked on a personal level.

Attitudes towards disabilities among students without disabilities, who were average achieving, and high-achieving and who were educated together in inclusive classrooms did not differ very much. Average-achieving students were more likely than high-achieving students to report that the presence of classmates with disabilities did not affect their learning (Litvack, Ritchie, & Shore, 2011).

Some conclusions can be drawn from these studies. Administrators, teachers, and students perceive the model of collaborative teaching to be generally beneficial, to students without disabilities in both social, emotional, and academic domains.

Teacher Outcomes

Co-teachers often report that one of the most noticeable advantages of sharing a classroom is the sense of support it fosters. Co-teachers report that when they have a spectacular lesson, someone is there to share it, and when they have particularly challenging days someone really knows just how difficult it was (Friend et. al., 2010).

Many studies reported positive outcomes of collaboration for teachers, such as instructional improvement through use of a greater variety of teaching techniques, improved knowledge and skills for teaching, professional growth, more positive attitudes toward teaching, and so on (Van Garderen, Stormont & Goel, 2012). A significant percentage of both general and special educators indicated that they believed the general education co-teacher did the most in the inclusive classroom. There was consensus among special education and general education co teachers that, “generally, they work well together, solicited each other’s feedback, and benefited from working together” (Austin, 2001, p. 254). Generally both groups of teachers agreed that collaborative teaching was a positive experience that contributed to the “improvement of their teaching” (Austin, 2001).

Many teachers mentioned increased competence in their colleague's areas of expertise. Special education often reported expanded content area knowledge after experiencing collaborative teaching and general education remark on learning new behavior management techniques and ideas for curriculum adaptation (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). "The best thing about co-teaching is having another person in the classroom...knowing that there are targeted students in the classroom who need extra help and having either the co-teacher or myself address those while the other teacher is doing something else" (Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, p. 495).

Teachers expressed similar needs to be successful in this delivery model. Teachers reported that it was difficult to find time to collaborate. They stated that faculty meetings were often scheduled during their collaboration time and it was challenging to schedule time to meet. This is consistent with what other researchers have reported, Teachers do not have enough time to collaborate, and they need administrative support to help them resolve time issues (Austin, 2001). Significant findings for collaborative practices included the fact that a majority of special and general educators agreed that they should meet daily.

Scheduling time to collaborate can be especially challenging for special education teachers because many of their students are in different classes and the special education teachers have to coordinate schedules with several different teachers. In addition to needing time to collaborate, teachers need specific skills to collaborate effectively.

Friend, et. al., 2010 identified communication and problem-solving skills as necessary for collaboration. To solve problems, teachers need to clearly describe the problem that needs to be solved (Friend et. al., 2010). They shared value in classroom management and instructional duties; they did not in practice share these responsibilities. Furthermore, a higher percentage of special and general educators agreed that co-teachers should establish and maintain specific areas of responsibility.

Friend et. al., (2010) found that teachers had a list of topics to discuss regarding the implementation of collaborative teaching. These topics included; instructional content and expectations for students, planning time, instructional format, parity or how it will be clear that both educators have the same status in the classroom, space, related to both students and teachers, noise and each educator's tolerance for it, instructional routines, organizational routines, definition of "help", discipline procedures for the classroom, safety matters, feedback including when and how to discuss issues with each other, student evaluation and grading, teaching chores such as grading and prep, responsibilities and procedures for substitutes, confidentiality, and pet peeves. One outcome from Austin's (2001) study found that both the special and general educators agreed that the general education co teachers do more than their special education partners in the inclusive classroom. This may be due to the fact that the special education co-teacher is typically the visitor in the classroom and is often viewed as the expert on curriculum adaptation and remediation, whereas the general education co-teacher is often regarded as being more expert in the content area.

In conclusion, Nicols and Sheffield (2014) found that both general and special educators report professional growth as a result of collaborative teaching arrangements. Teachers also reported shared accountability and responsibility for students; improved morale and reduced burnout and the use of increased instructional strategies. Teachers showed expanded content area knowledge, increased variety of instructional strategies, shared experience and support on good days and bad days, more positive attitudes, and increased competence in colleagues area of expertise. Teachers concerns included a need for common planning time; assignments to collaborative teaching classes; the need for additional professional development, and administrative support.

Summary

Inclusion is seen as two main focuses; academic inclusion and social inclusion. Research has found that a collaborative teaching model supports both of these focuses. Collaborative teaching has been suggested as a promising service delivery model for the development of inclusive classrooms (Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013). Collaborative teaching should be one out of a wide variety of service delivery systems that provides supports to students with special needs (Friend et. al., 2010). “Co-teaching should include at least three components: co-planning, co-instruction and co-assessment (Nichols & Sheffield, 2014, p. 2). “Social inclusion is vital to student development, because social

and emotional well-being is directly related to resiliency, citizenship, and mental health and increases academic motivation and aspirations and achievement” (Katz, 2013, p. 155).

Benefits of collaborative teaching model are found to include; drastic increase in student to teacher ratio, focused knowledge bases of co-teachers, increased pressure for all teachers to meet all student’s needs and therefore an increased responsiveness to the needs of more learners. For students who are co-taught, potential benefits included increased individual attention, reduced negative behaviors, improved social skills and self-esteem, and increased academic achievement. Participation of students with disabilities in inclusive settings has been associated with increased social interaction, friendships, and social competence (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008).

Benefits to students without disabilities include; co-teacher collaboration as social model, academic benefits due to extra teacher attention, more social benefits than academic such as; improved self-esteem, development of personal principles like morals and ethics, decreased fear of differences and disabilities and decreased prejudices toward people with disabilities (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008). As Cole and Waldron have found, it is clear that the presence of students with disabilities does not negatively impact the learning of other students. Research shows, in fact, that typical students in classrooms that include students with disabilities develop stronger communication and leadership skills, have more positive attitudes toward diversity, and may also demonstrate superior reading and math skills to those in classrooms that do not include students with disabilities (Katz, 2013).

Teachers also reported shared accountability and responsibility for students; improved morale and reduced burnout and the use of increased instructional strategies. Teachers showed expanded content area knowledge, increased variety of instructional strategies, shared experience and support on good days and bad days, more positive attitudes, and increased competence in colleagues area of expertise. Teachers concerns included a need for common planning time; assignments to collaborative teaching classes; the need for additional professional development, and administrative support (Nichols & Sheffield, 2014).

Chapter 3 Method

Research Approach

The effectiveness of this process was evaluated through behavioral observations, student reflections, team interviews, and collection and analysis of student work samples.

Ethical Standards

This paper adheres to the ethical standards for protection of human subjects of the American Psychological Association (2010). Additionally a research proposal was submitted and reviewed by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), approved and assigned number 10260.

Sample and Site

This study involved one team of collaborative teachers and one special educator from a collaborative teaching model from one suburban public elementary schools in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, CA. Teachers were selected if they had the following qualifications: (1) licensed or credentialed in appropriate fields; (2) had taught in a school that practiced pull-out resource instruction and/or full inclusion; (3) had taught a student with disabilities who was assigned to a general education classroom, and (4) had

previously or were currently participating in a collaborative teaching environment involving special and general educators. The students of this study were a fourth grade class and a kindergarten class. The classes were selected due to the teachers' participation in an integrated collaborative teaching model. The fourth grade class had a total of 28 students, which involved six students with mild moderate disabilities who were considered academically "at risk." The remainder of the general education students were considered on grade level. The kindergarten class had a total of 22 students, which involved 3 students with mild moderate disabilities who were also considered academically "at risk." The remainder of the kindergarten students were considered on grade level. Each student was supported by an educational team, which included both the general educator and special educator.

Access and Permissions

I have permission of the principal and participating teachers at the involved school sites. This is in accordance with research standards involving human subjects.

Data Gathering Procedures

The effectiveness of this process was evaluated through behavioral observations, student reflections and team interviews, which involved ten questions, which were given ahead of time, regarding their experiences with collaborative teaching, outcomes for

students as well as teachers, their knowledge base, and information regarding academic growth.

Data Analysis Approach

Teachers were individually interviewed on their collaborative teaching process and their perceived perceptions of this process. Teachers were asked about the impacts on student's academic achievement and social-emotional development as well as whether their views on collaborative teaching had changed at all towards the end of the school year. Some examples of questions include: What are the potential benefits from *your* viewpoint for students who are taught in this environment? What problems have you encountered with collaborative teaching? What factors are needed to ensure success of collaborative teaching?

Chapter 4 Findings

Sample, Site

This study involved one fourth grade team of collaborative teachers, a general education teacher (GET) and an education specialist (ES); as well as, an ES who collaboratively taught on a kindergarten teaching team. The teachers were from the same suburban public elementary school site in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, CA. Teachers were selected if they had the following qualifications: (1) licensed or credentialed in appropriate fields; (2) had taught in a school that practiced pullout resource instruction and/or full inclusion; (3) had taught a student with disabilities who was assigned to a general education classroom, and (4) had previously or were currently participating in a collaborative teaching environment involving special and general educators.

The students involved in this study were a fourth grade class and a kindergarten class. The fourth grade class had a total of 28 students, which involved six students with mild moderate disabilities who were considered academically “at risk” or significantly below grade level. The rest of the class was considered to be on grade level or above grade level. The kindergarten class had a total of 22 students, which involved 3 students with mild moderate to moderate severe disabilities who were also considered both academically “at risk” and above grade level. The rest of the class was considered to be on grade level. Each student was supported by an educational team, which included both

the special and general educator. The GET in the kindergarten placement was not available for interview for the purposes of this study.

Interest in Collaborative Teaching

The fourth grade team involved, the GET who is female and in her 30s. She has taught for a total of 10 years, 2 of which are at her current placement. Her highest degree earned is a master's degree. The ES was also female, in her late 20s, and was in her fifth year of teaching with this current placement. The teachers had many similar concerns, which led to their interest in collaborative teaching. The GET reports, "when students are pulled out from the core instructional time in the general education classroom, they are missing out on both academic and social-emotional building activities." She expressed concerns that students with disabilities do not feel like they are fully part of the classroom community and she has found that there is always a disconnect between what they were doing in the learning center or resource room and what was happening in the general education classroom. Similarly, these concerns were what drove the ES to interest in the collaborative teaching model as well. The ES reports, "since working as an ES for about five years, I have worked in each of the differing models, collaborative teaching is the one with the most impact." Students with disabilities are given the opportunity to not be targeted as different from their peers, they are given the same opportunities as their "typical" peers, which refers to students without disabilities.

These concerns drove these teachers to team up and begin researching this collaborative practice in depth. Not only did they both have interest in this model, but they were also good friends and already had a strong foundational relationship to begin building a collaborative teaching relationship on. Throughout their research, they presented to administration, the superintendent, and the board. They attended professional developments, and trainings and utilized a lot of planning time to determine how this model would be implemented. The research process was approximately a year, where they determined clusters of students and placed them in appropriate classrooms and planned out all the components of this model. The passion towards this teaching model was evident during the interviews with both of them. With this information the GE teacher reported becoming “invested in helping all students (not just those with IEPs) reach their highest growth potential and this seemed like the best way to do it.”

Experience working in this type of collaborative teaching model in previous years in other states led the kindergarten ES to have continued interest in this model. She expressed how she loved the way the general education and special education teachers worked as a true team to meet the needs of all students. “It was so seamless that kids didn’t know which teacher was for which kids at all.” As a new teacher to this school site, opportunity for collaborative teaching was an important component during the interview process for her.

Implementation of Collaborative Teaching

The fourth grade ES taught in the classroom for about an hour and a half Monday through Friday and also collaboratively taught within another fourth grade classroom for the same time allotment. The fourth grade class among this collaborative teaching team had a wide range of academic abilities; this includes; six students with mild moderate disabilities, two Proficient English language learners (including one who has an IEP), one student who qualified for Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), and five students categorized as high achievers, who were referred but did not qualify for GATE.

During the first year of implementation of this model, the ES was collaborative teaching in two kindergarten classrooms. She would split her mornings to collaborative teach for approximately an hour and a half in each classroom while supporting clusters of three to four students in each class. The students with disabilities' differing levels included; autism, cerebral palsy, specific learning disabilities, and emotionally disturbed. Students with disabilities' academic achievement ranged from above grade level to two grades below grade level. The ES described collaborative teaching "right now being very similar to push-in model." She explained that a factor of this was due to the age of the students. Because students were kindergarten, centers involved differing games and activities, so the ES would run the center during the time of collaborative teaching.

Collaborative Teaching Models

The fourth grade team works collaboratively to plan daily lessons and plans which model they will use to accompany the lesson. The most common model used is parallel teaching, the GET reports. Typically in the fourth grade classroom, this looks like one teacher re-teaching a concept or previewing a concept prior to the introductory lesson while the other teacher extends the lesson or moves ahead in the curriculum. Student feedback includes; “I like the way my teachers teach, they work together and collaborate in a fun way, they are very nice to each other and make sure the kids have fun.” As reported by the GET, other times the common model used is team teaching. This model is effective because there are two teachers for the kids to reference at the same time and one teacher can complement the other with helping to explain a concept in another way. As a student in this model expressed, “the first thing I like about two teachers is that there are more people to help you. I like this because sometimes I need a lot of help when I’m working.” The GET states, “When the kids with disabilities can stay with their classmates, they also have their peers to use as resources, which is probably the most powerful outcome.” The ES reports, “throughout our teaming process, we began flip flopping roles tremendously, the GET would begin using strategies taught and implemented with those students with disabilities and not only that but the GET would feel comfortable taking on that role, while I began feeling comfortable leading the whole class in instruction.”

The Kindergarten ES describes the collaborative teaching model as an approach to allow students with IEPs to stay with their peers and work on level content with the support of an ES in the classroom. She describes the collaborative model comparatively to the push-in model, the only difference is the allotted time that the ES spends in the classrooms. Typically a push-in model is meeting the exact service time minutes of students with IEPs, whereas collaborative teaching is typically for a larger part of the day, whichever seems appropriate to that particular class of students. The model the kindergarten ES would use was typically the stations teaching model, which was a model often not used with the fourth grade team.

Student Feedback

In the 4th grade GET's opinion, students have given positive feedback regarding the collaborative teaching environment. She states, "all the kids in the class feel a strong sense of community and they like that they have more than one teacher." Students have given feedback that they like that there is someone who they can receive guidance from if the other teacher is working with a student or group. Being that the ES had worked with this particular group of students with disabilities for years prior, she felt they had made tremendous growth in their self-esteem and confidence within this year of collaborative teacher. She explained, "in prior years some of these students would express how they didn't like to come to the learning center, and how they wished they could stay with their class. Some would ask, why they needed to come to the learning center." As these

students got older, the ES would be honest with them and explain to them the purpose of coming to the learning center and share the goals with these students and why they needed to work on these goals. Students with disabilities expressed, “having two teachers helps me more; we get more help, small groups, and explaining more; two teachers make me more focused and I understand more; I really, really don’t like having one teacher, it’s too hard for them.”

The Kindergarten ES explains that students in a collaborative teaching environment might feel “supported and like a regular member of the class.” Students with disabilities are not singled out or pulled to a separate location. There are learning what the class is learning and they do the same assignments, just with more support. That additional support is offered to all students within the class but targeted specifically to those with disabilities.

Student Outcomes

The fourth grade GET reports that students develop a strong sense of empathy for each other and they truly learn to appreciate and celebrate each other’s differences. She states, “It is so amazing to see how ten year olds have learned to scaffold information for one another and how they learn to depend upon one another to learn and grow.” In the fourth grade GET’s opinion, the collaborative teaching environment benefits students with disabilities, but it also benefits the rest of the general education population, including those who are English Learners and high achievers. One student expressed, “I

feel having two teachers helps me learn more, I can be pulled into differentiated groups to help me learn what I need to. In previous years, we don't do much differentiation because we only had one teacher who has to help everyone." The ES reports similar findings, she was "blown away by the growth of the 'typical' students" in relation to the students with disabilities in the class. She didn't expect to see the power of peer relationships and the fact that the teachers could take a step back and allow for that peer leadership or relationships to take place. Typical students began implementing the strategies that the teachers were using with some of the students with disabilities and the students with disabilities really allowed for that leadership to take place. Student reflections included similar feedback including, more attention, easier to work with two teachers, more work and learning done, content explained in different ways, and different teaching styles.

Students in a collaborative teaching environment appear to have better self esteem because they don't feel different from their peers, reports the Kindergarten ES. They are doing the same things but they are more able to access the curriculum and activities because the ES is there to support and to accommodate the curriculum to their unique needs and goals. "I have learned the most this year with two teachers," one student expressed.

Social-Emotional Development

Strategies used to support social emotional development in the regular classroom includes *The Morning Meeting Book*, K-8, written by Roxann Kriete and Carol Davis and

Zones of Regulation: A Curriculum Designed To Foster Self-Regulation And Emotional Control, 2011, Social Thinking Publishing, By Leah Kuypers, M.A. Ed., OTR/L as reported by the fourth grade teacher. Similarly, the Kindergarten ES reports using *Zones of Regulation* as well. Additional to this, she uses *Superflex: A Superhero Social Thinking Curriculum*, By Stephanie Madrigal and Michelle Garcia Winner. This is a cognitive behavioral curriculum which helps students to develop further awareness of their own thinking and social behaviors and learn strategies to help them develop better self regulation across a range of these behaviors. The fourth grade team reports using many differing strategies which support social-emotional development, these include; daily morning meetings, zones check-ins, brain and body breaks, building positive energy road maps, collaborative work, and self reflection. These differing types of strategies and accommodations were being utilized among all students within both classes. Teachers reported this being necessary in order to not target student with disabilities and provide all students with the same opportunities. Student feedback includes; “I like how my teachers use breaks during the day because I think it helps everyone focus.”

Issues

From the fourth grade GET’s perspective, it was difficult when there was a substitute for the ES because its not typically someone who has a background in special education, and therefore the teacher feels she is supporting the substitute rather than the substitute supporting the students. Another challenge that the fourth grade team faced

was finding common time for planning, this arose to be a challenge for the team and was often interrupted by other school wide agendas or trainings. The ES reported that she had difficulty with the collaborative team's time not being valued by administration. She felt that their collaborative teaching and planning time was not being valued by the principal and it would often be interrupted by other issues which would come up. Typically, during the collaborative teaching time, if another behavior arose with a student the ES would be pulled from her instructional time.

An additional issue that the fourth grade team encountered, which came to a surprise to them, was that they found one student with a disability did not thrive in the collaborative teaching settings as they had originally thought. The fourth grade team had to make additional accommodations in order to support this student more appropriately, some of which were difficult to implement when the special education teacher was not in the room.

Outcomes for the Kindergarten ES are reported difficulties with teachers not understanding her role as a collaborative teacher. She often felt placed into a role more aligned with paraprofessionals or assistants as opposed to a partner in teaching. This was very difficult for her and could be the result of being paired up with a veteran teacher who was new to this type of teaching model.

Factors

The fourth grade teacher reports that essential factors or attributes that lead to success in collaborative teaching include; strong professionalism, collaboration, trust between the co-teachers, willingness to open the door of the GET's "classroom to another teacher, and having a responsive classroom. Additionally, the ES felt it helped tremendously that they already had a foundational relationship prior to teaching together. They had already built that trust in their abilities and therefore could begin right away in the process. The ES reports, that in a way this is similar to "looping students" which is when the teacher follows the same class for at least two years. This allows for the relationships to be strong and already there. Therefore teaching can begin right away.

The kindergarten ES reports that essential factors for collaborative teaching include setting up clear expectations with teachers and their roles in this environment, as well as effective co-planning time. Both of these factors require support from administration to make them effective.

Teacher Outcomes

The fourth grade teacher's perspectives of collaborative teaching have changed from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. She no longer wants to teach without collaborative teaching. She reports, "being floored" by the amount of growth her

and the ES had tracked with every single student in the class. She reports having “never seen a group of students grow so much, both academically and on a social-emotional level.” The fourth grade teacher reports “having a much stronger background in working with a population of students with IEPs.” She states, “I have basically been mentored by an ES for a year.” This development has created a sense of empathy between the co-teachers and has allowed for a ton of growth professionally. The fourth grade teacher reports having had hoped that these types of developments would happen, but didn’t understand the positive implication until she experienced them firsthand. The ES reported being much stronger in the fourth grade curriculum, she learned so much regarding the fourth grade expectations and therefore this helped her to grow even more as a teacher. The ES also grew to love this model even more and feels motivated by the growth that they have seen from the past year.

Perspectives from last year to now, the kindergarten ES feels that she knows now that there are multiple models of collaborative teaching and not everything works in every situation. Depending on personalities of teachers and teaching styles, collaborative teachers might have to work out a model that works best for them and their students.

Themes

There were definitely many themes presented within these interview findings. The teachers expressed similar reasons for their initial interest in the collaborative teaching model. This initial interest was sparked from students with disabilities missing out on

classroom curriculum by being pulled for specialized instruction. The problem not only being that students miss out on instruction and important lessons but also the impact that targeting this students has on self esteem and their relationships with their peers.

A second theme evident in the interview findings was the way that students might feel in a collaborative teaching environment. The teachers felt that all students would feel included, and part of their learning community. Students would feel additional support and belonging in this type of environment which would develop their self-esteem and confidence. All students developed growth in their empathy towards one another and their ability to understand other's differences whether at a fourth grade level or kindergarten level which can look very differently.

Teachers reported using similar strategies to support social emotional development of all students in the classroom. These strategies were appropriate for the differing age levels and taught students social thinking skills and emotional regulation through appropriate practices in the school setting. Accommodations for students with disabilities were used among all students which created a sense of community and provided these same types of sensory breaks and needs for all students rather than targeting those students with disabilities. This strategy of allowing for all students in the class to utilize accommodations is an important factor that contributes to not isolating students with disabilities. These practices no longer target a students for having disabilities and instead provide the same opportunity for all students.

Another theme found within the findings of the interviews was the need for finding common planning time. This time was reported very difficult to keep uninterrupted and more support of administration was needed in order to schedule this time, and keep it as a 'valued planning time'.

The teachers all reported differing perspectives of collaborative teaching from the beginning of the year. These perspectives differed from one another but all teachers grew in their understanding, ability, and expertise within this model. Teachers reported a stronger knowledge base within this teaching model and have a better understanding of what works and what doesn't work.

Chapter 5 Discussion /Analysis

Summary of Major Findings

I retrieved information from three interviews, student work samples, and from twenty-three research studies regarding the effects of collaborative teaching among academic achievement and social emotional development among students in elementary school settings. Twenty-three research articles matched the criteria for information on collaborative teaching practices.

The first major finding is that teachers and students perceive the model of collaborative teaching to be generally beneficial, to students without disabilities and to students with disabilities in both social and academic domains, and to the professional development of teachers. Other major findings include; collaborative teaching as a service delivery that provides support to students with disabilities, a service delivery model that some students thrive in while others are more successful in other models, and evident benefits to social emotional development of all students in this model.

Comparison of Findings to the Literature

Outcomes suggested that generally, each of the students with disabilities demonstrated increases in academic skills, engagement in classroom activities, social interactions with peers, student-initiated interactions and emotional growth. Outcomes suggested that each of the general education students demonstrated growth in sensitivity,

empathy, acceptance of differences, increased cooperative learning, and social benefits. Outcomes suggest the co-teachers benefited from support, expertise of colleagues in specialized areas, and extended differentiated strategies.

Many common findings were found within the literature and the interview findings. Some of these common findings include; collaborative teaching as a successful delivery model, increased responsiveness to all student's needs, concerns regarding students missing out on classroom curricula with other models, collaborative teaching as a reduction in stigma to students with disabilities, increased social emotional development, and teacher outcomes.

One major finding from the outcome of interviews and literature suggest teachers and students perceive the model of collaborative teaching to be beneficial, to students with disabilities and to students without disabilities in both social and academic domains, and to the professional development of teachers. Benefits of collaborative teaching include; drastic increase in student to teacher ratio, focused knowledge bases of co-teachers, increased pressure for all teachers to meet student needs and therefore an increased responsiveness to the needs of more learners. Students have given feedback that they like that there is someone who they can receive guidance from if the other teacher is working with a student or group. Students and teachers expressed, increased individual attention, reduced negative behaviors, improved social skills and self-esteem, and increased academic achievement. Social inclusion is vital to the development of all students, there is a direct connection between social and emotional well-being because

social and emotional well-being is directly related to achievement. Students without disabilities develop stronger communication and leadership skills, have more positive attitudes toward diversity, and may also demonstrate superior reading and math skills to those in classrooms that do not include students with disabilities.

With much research being conducted regarding the controversy of collaborative teaching in comparison to resource or pull-out programs. Reviews of the research and interviews have been consistent, indicating that some students obtain better achievement outcomes in inclusive general education settings, while others do better with part-time resource support. Collaborative teaching should be one out of a wide variety of service delivery systems that provides supports to students with special needs. Interview findings suggest some students obtain better achievement outcomes in inclusive general education settings, while other do better with part-time resource support.

As the interview findings revealed, an additional issue that the fourth grade team encountered, which came to a surprise to them, was that they found one student with a disability did not thrive in the collaborative teaching settings as they had originally thought. The fourth grade team had to make additional accommodations in order to support this student more appropriately, some of which were difficult to implement when the special education teacher was not in the room. Literature findings found student outcomes in inclusive and resource classes differ because of the unevenness in the quality of instruction that is provided in these settings.

In collaborative taught classrooms, all students can receive improved instruction. This includes students who are academically gifted or talented, students who have average ability, students who are at risk for school failure as well as students with identified special needs. In collaborative teaching, the instructional fragmentation that often occurs in other service delivery options is minimized. Most students benefit by remaining in the classroom to receive services as noted in both literature and interview findings.

Consistent findings between interviews and literature found similar concerns regarding students with disabilities missing out on classroom curriculum by being pulled for specialized instruction. The problem not only being that students miss out on instruction and important lessons but also the impact that targeting students with disabilities has on self-esteem and their relationships with their peers. When students are pulled out from the core instructional time in the general education classroom, they are missing out on both academic and social-emotional building activities.

Literature and interview findings suggested there was a reduction in stigma for students with special needs with a development of a heterogeneously-based classroom community. Inclusion of students with disabilities has been associated with increased social interaction, friendships, and social competence students in a collaborative teaching environment might feel “supported and like a regular member of the class.” Students with disabilities are not singled out or pulled to a separate location. There are learning what the class is learning and they do the same assignments, just with more support.

Students with disabilities are given the opportunity to not be targeted as different from their peers, they are given the same opportunities as their typical peers. Students in a collaborative teaching environment appear to have better self-esteem because they don't feel different from their peers, they have more support, differentiation, and utilizing accommodations among all students which contributes to a reduce in stigma, as interview findings suggest. The interview findings also suggested that students expressed preference in receiving instruction in their classroom as they got older.

Another evident finding in literature and interviews was the way that students might feel in a collaborative teaching environment. The findings suggest, that all students would feel included, and part of their learning community. Students were reported having additional support and a sense of belonging in this type of environment, which would develop their self-esteem and confidence. Teachers reported, students having developed growth in their empathy towards one another and their ability to understand other's differences whether at a fourth grade level or kindergarten level which can look very differently.

Interview and literature findings also suggest that co teachers expressed similar needs in a collaborative teaching environment. Teachers concerns included a need for common planning time; assignments to collaborative teaching classes; the need for additional professional development, and administrative support setting up clear expectations with teachers and their roles in this environment, as well as effective co-planning time. Teachers needed support from administration in order to keep planning

time uninterrupted and as a “valued planning time.” Teachers reported growing in their understanding, ability, and expertise within this type of teaching model. Teachers reported a stronger knowledge base and have a better understanding of what works and what doesn’t work. Findings suggest that essential factors or attributes that lead to success in collaborative teaching include; strong professionalism, collaboration, trust between the co-teachers, willingness to open the door of the general education teacher’s classroom to another teacher, and having a responsive classroom.

Interview and literature findings suggest academic benefits due to extra teacher attention and more social benefits such as a development of personal morals and principles, decreased fear of differences and disabilities and decreased prejudices toward people with disabilities. Students develop a strong sense of empathy for each other and they truly learn to appreciate and celebrate each other’s differences. The collaborative teaching environment benefits students with disabilities, but it also benefits the rest of the general education population, including those who are English Learners and high achievers.

Limitations/Gaps in the Research

Limitations in the research include adequate statistical information regarding academic gains of students in a collaborative teaching environment. In present findings, it is said that teachers have seen increases in academic growth but there are not sufficient comparisons of academic achievement of students in a collaborative teaching model as

comparative to students in a resource type model. Additional to academic gains, there is limited statistical information in regards to social and emotional developments among students in a collaborative teaching model comparatively to students in a resource type model or other special education model. These limited findings make it hard for the author to suggest that a collaborative teaching model provides increases in both academic and social-emotional development among students.

Implications for Future Research

In order to have such research findings, future research needs to include comparative research among two types of special education service models, one being a collaborative teaching model and the other being resource, special day class or other. These comparative findings will provide adequate information in regards to the results of these differing teaching models. Validity of these results may still be unclear because of differing factors, which include; teaching styles across models, student's disabilities, and level of needed support to those students with disabilities in these models.

Overall Significance of the Study

The findings from this research are important. The results of this study were found to be valuable and informational although some results need to be interpreted with caution due to unknown factors of teaching styles, differing disabilities, and differing needs among students. The importance and knowledge in regards to student's social-

emotional development is of key importance. Although these results need to be interpreted with caution, the importance of students developing self-esteem and confidence is valid and important to note from this study. Students with disabilities often struggle due to the stigma attached to them being labeled for having differences so the motivation to prevent this among all teachers should be significant.

About the Author

The author is a teacher who is gaining experience by working as an education specialist. This author has been exposed to resource type models and understands that differing students excel in differing teaching models. Just as differing teaching models impact student education, so do differing teaching styles. Practices in education continue to evolve and working to be at a place where students with disabilities do not feel isolated or targeted for their differences and instead praised and celebrated will continue to be the author's motivation as an educator.

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