2010-07-15

Understanding the Tensions That Exist Between Two Co-Teachers Education Classroom Using Positioning

Garth Gagnier
Brigham Young University - Provo

Understanding the Tensions that Exist between Two Co-teachers in the Secondary Education Classroom using Positioning Theory

Garth J. Gagnier

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Roni Jo Draper, Chair
Erin Whiting, Committee Member
Melissa Newberry, Committee Member

Department of Teacher Education

Brigham Young University

July 2010

ABSTRACT

Understanding the Tensions that Exist between

Two Co-teachers in the Secondary Education

Classroom using Positioning Theory

Garth Gagnier

Department of Teacher Education

Master of Arts

The purpose of this study was to explore the tensions that existed between my co-teaching partner and me while working together during the last four years. Additionally, I studied how my partner, the special educator, and I, the general educator, negotiated the tensions that came up during our collaboration.

Using a narrative approach to share our stories about our teaching, I investigated how we worked together and contributed to our co-teaching relationship. I analyzed the stories and storylines that we shared using a theoretical lens called positioning. Positioning theory looks at how people interact with each other and the positions that they take up and give away. Positioning helped me to understand better how we were negotiating the tensions we were experiencing while co-teaching together.

The findings suggested that the tensions that existed between us stemmed from our confusion about our roles and our lack of planning. It was also strained because of the ways in which the institution positioned us. Because we were confused about our roles and were not planning, our co-teaching was not as excellent as it could have been. Both of us negotiated our tensions by (a) remaining positive about our relationship, and (b) continuing to value teaching together even though there were tensions in our partnership. Our "friendship" persisted even after professional tensions came up and, many times, in spite of the tensions.

In conclusion, this study revealed that my co-teaching partner and I needed more training about how to be co-teachers so that we could negotiate the tensions that came up. We did not plan regularly and did not understand how our roles co-existed because we had no training about how these things would help us in our relationship. This study also reveals that co-teachers need to be more committed to co-teaching. Despite our lack of training and preparation, we remained positive about our relationship and this is the reason why our partnership endured.

Key Terms: Co-teaching, Team Teaching, Positioning Theory

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Like co-teaching, this project was a joint effort. I extend my deepest gratitude to Diane, my co-teaching partner, who has co-taught with me the last 4 years and who participated in hours of interviews I needed for my data.

Also, I want to express gratitude to all of our high school students who we have taught the last four years. It has been one of my dreams in this life to be a high school English teacher and I loved every minute of it. Thanks for being such amazing students, and, more importantly, such amazing people.

Thanks go to my fellow classmate Rebecca for conducting the interviews and my wonderful wife for transcribing them and for being a single mom to our children the last two years while I have been working on this project.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Melissa Newberry and Dr. Erin Whiting for being flexible and understanding and for their valuable insights and thoughts regarding my project. Their positive feedback and constructive criticism influenced the final product immensely.

Above all, my committee chair, Dr. Roni Jo Draper deserves much of the credit for me finishing this project. She led me through every step of the way and pushed me through every hurdle, draft, and citation, even when it meant that she had to make substantial sacrifices of her own for me. She encouraged, complimented, and was entirely dedicated to me finishing this project and I will be forever in her debt. Thank you.

Chapter 1

Introduction

> Anytime you walk into another teacher's classroom there's going to be some type of negotiation that needs to occur for both of you in terms of just territory and what's asked of you. And that's a tough thing to negotiate (Yoder, 2000, p. 150).

Teachers are interesting people. They sacrifice much of their careers giving their time and energy to something that is not very rewarding financially. Most teachers give so deeply to their students that they sometimes neglect themselves in the process. When they enter the field of teaching, teachers not only accept this charge, they embrace it. They are fully committed to their students and teaching and gain positions of authority over these unequivocally. However in co-teaching, teachers are asked to relinquish their authority in the classroom and share it with another teacher. This is difficult for many of them because teachers are territorial and do not want to give up their authority (Sims, 2008). Nevertheless they must because co-teaching demands that they do so.

Co-teaching is defined as "two certified teachers (one general and one special) who share responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction for a diverse group of students, some of whom are students with disabilities" (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008, p. 13). Also called *team teaching* (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002), co-teachers deliver "substantive instruction … in a single physical space" together to a classroom of both general education and special education students (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 1). Both teachers' purpose is to help all of the students in the classroom access the material equally. Multiple studies have likened co-teachers' relationship to a marriage because of how closely they work together and the amount of time they spend with each other (Kohler-Evans, 2006; Morocco & Aguilar, 2002; Rice & Zigmond, 2000).

Introduced in 1975 when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) passed, co-teaching became fairly popular as a service delivery model of instruction shortly thereafter (FEMA, 2007). IDEA required all public schools to offer all eligible children with disabilities the best education possible in the least restrictive environment available (FEMA, 2007). Accordingly schools moved to integrate co-teaching to help students with disabilities to succeed in the mainstream classroom. Thus co-teaching was born.

Since its inception, educators at all levels have embraced the idea of co-teaching and its benefits for students and teachers (Austin, 2001; Davis-Wiley & Cozart, 1998; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Friend & Reising, 1993; Rice & Zigmond, 2000; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2004; Walther-Thomas, 1997). In fact co-teaching seems to be revered in many educational circles. Why would it not be? Co-teaching gives all students, including students with disabilities, more instructional alternatives, an enhanced capacity to succeed (because students feel more willing to participate in class), and both the general education teacher and the special education teacher are able to use their expertise in their respective fields to enhance student learning (Rice & Zigmond, 2000). Additionally each teacher brings to the co-teaching partnership skills and talents that can help students understand the content better, if used correctly (Morocco & Aguilar, 2002). The benefits of co-teaching seem to far outweigh the obstacles. Nevertheless it does have its own set of problems and challenges.

Statement of the Problem

There are a variety of problems related to co-teaching, one of the most disconcerting being general educators and special educators coordination of their different roles and responsibilities. Co-teachers struggle working together because often they perceive that they have unequal roles, when in reality co-teachers' roles are not unequal but just different (Austin,

2001; Murphy & Beggs, 2006). This is probably due to the heavy emphasis placed on content area knowledge in secondary schools. Special educators lack content area knowledge in other fields than their own so they are often viewed as inferior to the general educator (Morocco & Aguilar, 2002; Rice & Zigmond, 2000; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Another challenge for co-teaching in secondary schools is the general lack of planning time to prepare for class together (Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). According to Keefe, Moore, and Duff (as quoted in Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007), co-teachers have been found to have negative attitudes towards co-teaching. This is not surprising considering everything they face when co-teaching. Fittingly co-teachers negative attitudes towards teaching together directly affect how they work with one another.

Frequently the general educator and special educator struggle collaborating because of their roles in the partnership. In a 2001 study, Austin found that "general education co-teachers [did] more than their special education partners" (p. 4). Austin posited that the disparity in instructional time between both teachers creates problems because it fashioned the illusion that the special educator was the subordinate and "visitor" in the classroom (2001, p. 4). This directly relates to co-teacher roles.

Even though special educators should be viewed as "the expert[s] on curriculum adaptation and remediation" and general educators should be viewed as the "expert[s] in the content area," by each other, as well as the school where they teach, this is usually not the case (Austin, 2001, p. 4). Instead the general education teacher is often perceived as the main teacher and the special education teacher as secondary (Austin, 2001). Murphy and Beggs commented about how special educators are especially influenced by co-teacher roles and the way that they are recognized in the partnership:

> I understand the concept of [co-teaching] but I'm not exactly sure how I . . . fit into this role. I feel I might be stepping on the [general education] teacher's toes if I interrupt her lesson questioning. On the other hand, I don't want to feel like a spare part . . . . I want to participate fully. (2006, p. 5)

The special educator in this situation is not the exception in co-teaching; rather, he or she is the rule. Many co-teachers struggle understanding their place within the partnership, which causes tensions. Co-teachers must work together even though both of them most likely have different opinions about teaching and how it should happen, especially in their training in their respective fields. They must also work together successfully even though they have different roles and responsibilities.

This study explored the tensions that existed in my co-teaching relationship with my special education co-teaching partner and me. Using a constructionist theoretical lens called *positioning*, I analyzed the storylines that both of us played out in our collaboration with one another. A position is a "complex cluster of generic personal attributes, structured in various ways, which [inhibits] interpersonal, intergroup and even intrapersonal action through some assignment of such rights, duties, and obligations to an individual . . . by the cluster" (Harre´ & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 1). According to Harre´ and van Langenhove, positioning deals with various parts or roles people play in relationships:

> [Positioning is an act] referring to the assignment of . . . parts or roles to speakers in the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts . . . . one can position oneself or be positioned as … powerful or powerless, confident or apologetic, dominant or submissive, definitive or tentative, authorized or unauthorized, and so on. (1999, p.17)

Bullough and Draper (2004) comment that "as individuals interact with each other, they co-construct a storyline wherein each individual plays a part . . . . speakers position themselves and are positioned by others, and with each shift in position comes a change in understanding and action" (p. 408). This is why positioning was most useful in understanding our interactions in

this study. I needed to understand how both of us were interacting with each other and what each of us was respectively bringing to the co-teaching relationship as the general educator and the special educator.

Teachers position others and are subjects of positioning. They take up a position of authority or are positioned as an authority or non-authority depending upon the situation they are in (Davies & Harre´, 1990). They take up these positions both consciously and unconsciously, but all know of the "categories which include some people and exclude others" that they use in their language and actions (Davies & Harre´, 1990, p. 47).

In co-teaching it makes sense that positioning happens. Since people use positioning to "cope with [their] situations" and co-teaching is a difficult situation, co-teachers probably use positioning to their advantage and, in some instances, to the disadvantage of their partner (Harre´ & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 17). For example, a privileged position in co-teaching might be the position of the main teacher who knows what he or she is talking about and can show the students his or her vast wealth of knowledge and understanding. An underprivileged position might be the position of aide or visitor in the classroom who does not really know what he or she is doing or his or her purpose. However in many instances the main teacher in the classroom might be in an underprivileged situation. Rarely do administrations attribute their students' test scores to teacher aides. Positioning depends completely upon the context. Because co-teaching requires so much commitment to the classroom and social interaction, positioning is an appropriate analytical scheme to examine the potential tensions that arise during co-teaching.

Tensions can ultimately become detrimental to either teacher because the tensions can cause them to grow negative, turn inward, and, sadly enough, lose enthusiasm and energy for something that is so important and requires so much more effort than regular teaching.

Exploring the tensions that existed between my co-teaching partner and I (and how we overcame the tensions we had) could provide ideas about how to face the present problem of teachers not wanting to co-teach. Co-teachers still may not know how to navigate their relationship with one another successfully and, as a result, the co-teaching partnership fails. Additionally the education system does not seem to have created a workforce of successful co-teachers thus far. This is probably due to the difficulties teachers face, such as a lack of planning time and content knowledge. Co-teaching can be an important tool in the work of educating kids, but without teachers willing or prepared to co-teach it will cease to exist.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the tensions that existed between my co-teaching partner and me during our four years working together. This study also investigated how we negotiated the problems that came up during those four years. Studying the relationship co-teachers have with one another is integral to the success of any co-teaching partnership (Sims, 2008). A close examination of two co-teachers' tensions in their relationship is long overdue, especially among secondary level teachers who seem to struggle the most with co-teaching (Keefe & Moore, 2004; Rice & Zigmond, 2000).

Research suggests that co-teachers and co-teacher researchers know little about what "co-teaching arrangements look like in action or how teachers negotiate" with each other, especially when there is tension (Morocco & Aguilar, 2002, p. 319). Identifying how co-teachers position themselves amidst difficulty could help current and future co-teachers understand the problem that exists among them. Understanding how co-teachers overcome challenges working together will be essential to helping future co-teachers navigate co-teaching successfully. Prospective co-teachers could understand better how to strategically position themselves and others positively,

rather than negatively. Understanding how to use positioning may help to preserve the relationship. Eventually the hope is that this study might give educators greater understanding about co-teaching so that they don't "fear" or "dread the thought" of co-teaching (because so many do) (Dieker, 2001, p. 1).

Research Questions

This study explored the relationship my co-teaching partner and I had with each other and the tensions that came up during our four years together. It asked two questions: What tensions exist between a general education and special education teacher during their time together as co-teachers? How do both teachers negotiate these tensions?

Limitations

The researcher of this study was also a participant in the study and created all of the interview questions for it (a third party conducted the interviews). This might have influenced the questions in the interviews because the author knew which questions would reveal the best answers. The author/participant's questions might have also influenced the answers of the other participant, who was the co-teaching partner (especially since the questions were about delicate subject matter, like tensions). Both participants reflected upon four years of teaching together so their memories might be faded of their experiences together.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Merely thirty years ago, some school districts deemed a number of students unfit to be educated and excluded them from schooling due to their learning disabilities (Wilson, 2006). Education has since changed. At the turn of the 21st century it was estimated that more than five million students (age 6–17) received special education services in the United States (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Due to the increasing number of students with disabilities in schools there was pressure to give these students better opportunities to succeed. As a result the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was passed in 1997 and stated that students with disabilities should be placed in the least restrictive learning environment in order to have the best possible chance to be successful in school (Keefe & Moore, 2004). Based on this decision most schools implemented co-teaching because it was the service-delivery model most often utilized in inclusive classes (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008).

The Benefits of Co-teaching

Co-teaching is designed to benefit both students and teachers. It supports students with learning disabilities who have been mainstreamed into the general education classroom (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002; Wilson, 2006). It allows them access to two teachers, the general education teacher and the special educator, who both have specific expertise (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). It provides students who struggle in class with academic support, especially the special education students (Rice & Zigmond, 2000; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2004; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Co-teaching allows the students to avoid feeling stigmatized or isolated because of the additional help it gives those (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). It also gives students more teacher

time and attention that results in the growth of classroom communities oftentimes (Walther-Thomas, 1997).

The benefits of co-teaching for teachers are similar. Co-teachers have reported high levels of satisfaction due to the success of their students in their classes (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2004; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Professional growth is another contributing factor to teachers liking co-teaching (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2004; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Many co-teachers have expressed approval of the personal support that they gained from having another teacher in the classroom with them (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008; Thousand, Villa & Nevin, 2004; Walther-Thomas, 1997). One study in California specifically mentioned that teachers enjoyed having an additional teacher in the classroom with them because there were "decreased [amounts] of referrals to intensive special education services, fewer disruptive problems, less paperwork . . . and decreased referrals for behavioral problems" (Thousand, Villa & Nevin, 2004).

The Implementation of Co-teaching in Secondary Schools

Studies on co-teaching in secondary schools are somewhat limited. A few studies focused on co-teaching issues and needs in secondary settings, such as more time for planning and co-teacher training (Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Rice & Zigmond, 2001). Murawski (2006) focused on student outcomes in English classes. One particular study looked at the characteristics of successful co-teaching partnerships in middle school and high school classrooms (Dieker, 2001). The findings showed that successful co-teachers had high expectations for their partners and students, focused on planning and preparing for class, and were positive about co-teaching. Weiss and Lloyd (2002) looked at the roles and teaching methodologies of co-teachers in secondary schools. They found that the roles of general

educators and special educators in their respective classrooms were very different. Keefe and Moore (2004) looked at the challenges of co-teaching at the high school level according to the teachers. They found that co-teachers needed to know more about how to help students with disabilities and how to be more prepared for co-teaching.

In secondary education co-teaching has not been a popular draw for teachers. Secondary teachers have been found to have more negative attitudes toward co-teaching (Dieker & Murawski, 2003), probably because many secondary co-teachers are territorial and struggle playing by someone else's rules (Sims, 2008). The setting of high school is much more demanding for teachers because of the number of students and the enormous amount of content that needs to be taught (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Secondary schools are divided by content area curriculum and secondary teachers are considered subject-area specialists (Rice & Zigmond, 2000). Many general education teachers perceive their roles as teaching content, whereas special education teachers perceive their roles as teaching strategies (Bulgren, et al., 2006). Due to the seemingly divergent goals and responsibilities of special education and general education teachers, they often struggle working together (Deshler & Schumaker, 2006). Often, special educators stop participating in the co-teaching partnership altogether because they lose their role or defined responsibility in the classroom (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

The Roles within Co-teaching

Co-teaching roles is a prominent topic among various studies (Bulgren, et al., 2006; Morocco & Aguilar, 2002; Rice & Zigmond, 2000; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Some studies specifically examine the supposed subordinate roles that special educators have in co-teaching because of their expertise (Keefe & Moore, 2004; Rice & Zigmond, 2000), while other studies discuss how the subordinate role they have is because of a lack of content knowledge (Morocco

& Aguilar, 2002; Rice & Zigmond, 2000; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). A few studies even compared co-teaching to a marriage because of the effort, flexibility, compatibility, and compromise it requires (Kohler-Evans, 2006; Morocco & Aguilar, 2002; Rice & Zigmond, 2000).

Several studies point to the difficulties which co-teachers have negotiating their roles. When teachers are unable to navigate their roles successfully with their co-teaching partner tensions arise (Keefe & Moore, 2004). However, none of the studies actually refer to the tensions among co-teachers as "tensions." Instead they are described as "challenges" (Friend, 2007; Keefe & Moore, 2004), "issues" (Dieker & Murawski, 2003), or "difficulties" (Jang, 2006). When I talk about tensions during this study, I will be referring to "a situation in which there is conflict or strain because of differing views, aims, or elements" (Tension, AskOxford.com, 2010). This definition of tensions is particularly applicable because co-teachers do have conflict and strain in their relationship. Although calling tensions "challenges," "issues," or "difficulties" might help the reader understand the problem between co-teachers, using "tensions" will aptly describe the situation that so often happens between them.

Besides roles previous research has also found that co-teachers experience tensions with each other when there is little communication between them, a negative perception of co-teaching, and a lack of content knowledge from the special education teacher (which is inevitable) (Keefe & Moore, 2004). Teachers also struggle teaching together when their relationships with their partner are unequal and their personalities and teaching styles disagree (Jang, 2006). Because many teachers are "territorial," they struggle when they have to give up their position of authority in the classroom (Sims, 2008, p. 61). Dieker and Murawski (2003) suggest that there is generally more autonomy among secondary co-teachers, which becomes a tension when teachers have to share "their" classroom with another.

Positioning Theory as a Framework for Explaining Co-teaching Relationships

The social theory known as *positioning theory* provides a valuable lens with which to study the relationships co-teachers have with each other. Positioning theory considers the "roles and role expectations held by [people]" (Bullough & Draper, 2004, p. 407). This theory defines all relationships as "inevitably hierarchical" and, thus, strained and difficult (p. 408). Positioning theory attempts to define how humans act and react to each other. It argues that relationships are primarily social acts and how one individual interacts with the other reflects "their sense of moral order and their place within it" (p. 408). This study used positioning theory as a theoretical lens of analysis in order to understand what my co-teaching partner and I were bringing to our co-teaching relationship.

Context is important in positioning because what people do and say can be intentional or unintentional, unrecognized or strategic (Bullough & Draper, 2004). In many situations positioning is probably strategic even though it may be unrecognized. People want to belong and they will often try to put themselves in a comfortable situation so that they will feel like they do belong. Attempted positioning may be successful or unsuccessful because positioning of self always involves positioning of others and positioning of others always involves positioning of self. Therefore positions are dynamic and constantly changing and shifting (Bullough & Draper, 2004, p. 408).

Positions are exposed through language and storylines people participate in. Language, one of the most powerful aspects of positioning, positions others and us through events called *speech acts* (Davies & Harre´, 1990, p. 45). Speech acts are sayings and doings of collaborative action that people craft, or attempt to, in order to make their actions and other's actions socially relevant (Davies & Harre´, 1990). Only when the group takes up speech acts are they considered

speech actions (Davies & Harre´, 1990). Davies and Harre´ comment, "an individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate" (1990, p. 46). Thus positioning is constantly changing for people even though they may not realize it. Positions denote a real or contrived sense of power or powerlessness because people often view power as superior and powerlessness as inferior.

Although positioning is natural, it is detrimental to people because it puts some up on a pedestal while it puts others looking up at the pedestal. Using positioning theory as a "dynamic analytic scheme" enhances this research study because it will help teachers and researchers alike to "gain insight into how individuals … [understand] their roles and responsibilities and how they [understand] how to be a good teacher" in relation to others (Bullough & Draper, 2004, p. 407). Studying the tensions and storylines playing out in our partnership using positioning could help educators to understand what is happening between us and how we are working together so that they can become more effective co-teachers.

Chapter 3

Methods and Procedures

Because I needed to explore my own co-teaching relationship, I adopted a narrative approach to data collection to get at the stories of my co-teaching partner and me. This narrative approach allowed me to gain access to experiences that we had shared together. It also helped me to access the past and make sense of the experiences Diane and I were having with one another. More specifically, this study explored the tensions that we experienced during our time teaching together and how we negotiated them. Gathering our narratives and viewing them through the lens of positioning theory helped me understand the tensions that our co-teaching partnership had experienced and the consequences of them over time.

After we shared our stories I analyzed them using positioning theory to get at the storylines each of us were playing out in our relationship with one another. Positioning theory helped me understand what Diane and I thought was good and right. It also gave me a sense of why we were acting the way we were within our co-teaching roles.

Participants and Setting

The research for this study was conducted in a high school in Northern Utah; it is the school where my co-teaching partner, Diane, and I have co-taught English classes together for the past four years. Both of us were asked by the head of our departments to be co-teachers. Diane, who has taught at the high school for seven years, is the special education teacher. Besides our two co-taught classes Diane also teaches four reading classes. All of her classes are for students with disabilities. This past year Diane was chosen as teacher of the month for the work that she did with the special education and co-taught students. Prior to our work together

Diane was the only one of us that had had any experience co-teaching, she had co-taught a biology class for one year before transferring to her current school where we teach together.

In comparison my first year of co-teaching at the high school was also my first year of teaching. Since I started there, I have taught six sections of English classes at the high school every year and each year at least one of them has been co-taught with Diane. The first year we taught one class together while the last three years we taught two classes together due to a larger student population.

The high school where we taught was typical for the area. The classes were arranged by content-area (e.g. English, math, history). Classrooms in the school were segregated into content-area as well. There was a fine arts hall and a history hall, an agriculture area and a physical education area. Most teachers at the school specialize in one or two content areas. This means that teachers were considered experts in their specific areas of focus and nothing more. Co-teaching has been ongoing at the school for the last decade or so and there has been co-taught classes available to grades 10–12 in math and English during that time period.

Procedures

In keeping with the narrative methodology I elicited stories from my co-teaching partner and me about our relationship and the tensions we had experienced while co-teaching together. I asked questions about our experiences together so that we would both answer the same questions. The questions were generalizable and could have been for any co-teacher at any school. I only asked more specific questions when my partner or I shared specific experiences that we had had together that illustrated tensions that I could explore more in depth. Since I was both a participant in the study and the researcher of the study, a third party conducted the interviews.

The interviewer who conducted the interviews for this study was a fellow colleague of mine who I got to know while studying at a local university; we were students in the teaching cohort for the past two years. Besides our involvement in the cohort together we had no other connection to each other. The interviewer did the interviews after hours at the high school where Diane and I taught. After giving her the interview questions, the interviewer conducted the interviews with both of us individually in our separate classrooms.

Since the primary focus of data collection was to gather stories about our co-teaching tensions, it was important to obtain dialogue about our experiences due to positioning being primarily a conversational phenomenon (Davies & Harre´, 1999, p. 34). In order to get at the stories and conversations surrounding our co-teaching we participated in three interviews. The first interview was a background interview of each of us whereas the second and third interviews were stimulated recalls interviews that prompted us to share more specific stories about our co-teaching and the tensions that we had experienced together. The final data source was a final paired conversation where we talked in more detail about our experiences and stories. Both of us participated in the conversation together without an interviewer.

The majority of the data was centered on our time working together. Before each interview I submitted the questions to Diane so that we both could prepare for it. After looking for tensions in the initial interview, I created the next interview that prompted both of us to share specific stories about our co-teaching more explicitly. After we shared those stories the subsequent interview asked us more in-depth questions about the stories we had shared in the previous interview using the previous stories as a springboard for the questions that I asked. Using the information from the three interviews, I created one final conversation about the stories we had shared and the tensions that they illustrated which both of us participated in. We

also talked about our final thoughts about co-teaching together. Below is a more detailed description of the data sources I used.

Personal interview. As mentioned above this study began with an introductory interview that asked questions to encourage both my partner and me to "generalize and compare our experiences" (Chase, 2003, p. 660). While constructing the interview I considered questions that would help us talk about our teaching background and our earliest experiences we had meeting and teaching together. The questions were centered on our experiences and our feelings about our time working together. There were also questions concerning tensions that we felt that we had experienced during our time together in order to use these to create the next interview that would focus on these tensions. (See appendix A)

The interviewer questioned both of us individually and used the prompts provided. The audio-recorded interview was general enough that both of us were given the same questions. The initial interview was necessary to understand the context of our co-teaching situation and get a sense of our opinions about our relationship, as well as obtain some general stories that we could talk about in the first stimulated recall interview. The purpose of this first interview was also to understand the ways in which we positioned ourselves and each other during our first years teaching together and the storylines that we were playing out.

I expected to capture a broad and detailed glimpse of our time teaching together and our opinions about our teaching relationship. I anticipated that multiple stories about our difficulties teaching together would come out of the first initial interview simply because we were talking about our time together. Even though I did ask about the tensions I did not ask about specific experiences in this interview, but still felt that I would get stories about the hard times we had

co-teaching with one another. I surmised that I could use these stories to look at the positioning that was happening between us and figure out what we were both contributing to the relationship.

Stimulated recall interviews. The interviewer also conducted two stimulated recall interviews that I created from the initial interview and audio-recorded them. Unlike the initial interview, however, both stimulated recall interviews were subject-specific so I created two different interview protocols. Each protocol was specific to our particular situations and the stories we had shared. In the first interview the interviewer solicited stories (using the prompts I gave her) from both of us separately about tensions that had come up in our personal interviews. Based on the stories from the personal interviews, as well as my own knowledge about our co-teaching experiences, I created questions that focused primarily on those storylines surrounding tensions that we had experienced. In other words the initial interview was a catalyst for the stimulated recall interview #1. I purposefully selected episodes from the personal interviews and asked for stories and explanations about them. I created questions from these episodes that centered on conflict and strain so that I could get at the focus of the study. The purpose of this interview was to get at these stories and dialogue about our tension together. (See appendix B)

The first stimulated recall interview influenced the next. I constructed the second interview by analyzing the first and determining which stories converged that both of us had talked about without being prompted to share. For example, both of us talked about the *Les Mis* story in the first stimulated recall interview so I designed more in-depth questions about the storylines that had already been shared which contained tensions in order to gain a clearer picture of the stories that we had already discussed, like the *Les Mis* story. Questions focused on soliciting more specific information about the storylines, like feelings, thoughts, names, as well as any other information that would help me understand our situation better. Finally, I asked for

more stories in stimulated recall interview #2 that might point towards other tensions Diane and I had had together that had not already been discussed. (See appendix C)

Using stimulated recall interviews was the ideal way to get at the conversations that surrounded our co-teaching experiences. Stimulated recall interviews inquire about stories and storylines that are so integral to understanding how people position themselves and others (Harre´ & van Langenhove, 1999). When my co-teaching partner and I shared storylines, we were creating positions for others and ourselves called *discursive positions* (Harre´ & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 8). These positions transformed the way we understood how we interacted with each other because we became authors of and players in our own storylines through how we talked to each other (Davies & Harre´, 1990).

My expectation for both stimulated recall interviews was to obtain a variety of stories that I could analyze in order to understand the positioning that Diane and I experienced during the tensions that we were having. I wanted to gather stories that were not only interesting and detailed, but that both of us shared and felt were impactful. Within these stories I wanted to analyze the storylines that we were playing out to comprehend what we were both bringing to the co-teaching relationship. The analysis and transcription of stimulated recall interview #1 took about a week, whereas the analysis and transcription of stimulated recall interview #2 took more time because I wanted to choose stories from the first interview that were interesting enough to talk about more in-depth in the follow-up interview.

Paired conversation. Distinct from the first three interviews, the paired conversation was a conversation between both of us without a person asking us questions. Rather we read the questions off of the prompt paper and discussed them together while our conversation was audio-recorded. Using all of the data from the first three interviews, I identified the stories that I felt

would yield the answers to the research question best and created a final conversation where we would both read prompts about the stories that we had talked about in the interviews. I went about creating the paired conversation the same way that I had the first three interviews. I created questions about shared stories, but, unlike the interviews, I tried to get us to talk about the shared stories together so that we could talk about our different perspectives. The purpose of the paired conversation was to explore how we discussed our tensions together and to supplement the interviews we had already had about our tensions with additional conversations about them. Additionally we also needed to talk more about how we felt we negotiated our tensions. (See appendix D)

In order to explore how we discussed our tensions together I asked questions about stories that we had both shared. I gathered questions from all three interviews that would help us share our feelings about the stories that we had experienced together. The questions were somewhat redundant, but I wanted to see how both of us reacted to those same questions when we were around each other. I thought that it would be harder for both of us to express our feelings about the situation if we were both present. I also wanted to hear more details about the experiences that we had already shared. I believed that if I asked the questions again I might get more in-depth details and insight into the stories. Finally we had not discussed much how we thought that we had negotiated our tensions so I asked more about how we thought we had done this as well.

Data Analysis

After a third party transcribed the paired conversation I read through all of the transcriptions numerous times looking for (a) converging stories about our tensions, (b) our positioning of each other, and ourselves and (c) both of our teacher values and beliefs. I

analyzed each of these aspects of the data on separate occasions. I made three passes over the transcriptions, as well as various others, in order to understand the interviews and conversation on different levels and in different ways. This was not the first time I had looked at the data; I had analyzed the interviews previously in order to create the stimulated recall interviews and the paired conversation. After I found various stories that we shared I copied them into a separate document and began to analyze them using positioning as my theoretical lens.

Using positioning theory meant that I would look for speech acts that indicated how we were using language to position each other, and ourselves either intentionally or unintentionally, during our tensions (Davies & Harre´, 1990). People use positioning to cope with difficult situations and, when tensions came up during our collaboration, positioning helped me better understand how we were working together and what we were contributing to the relationship.

After I analyzed each interview and the final conversation I looked at the values and beliefs that came out of our discussions because much of positioning is what sort of people we are. Positioning theory describes how people are the product of their interactions with each other (Harre´ & van Langenhove, 1999). People's actions depend upon their moral positions (Harre´ & van Langenhove, 1999). The sense of what people call *good* defines the way in which they position themselves and others during good times and bad. Below is a more detailed description of how I looked at the data:

Tensions experienced. I began my analysis of all of the interviews by looking for convergent stories that illustrated tensions in our relationship. By tensions, I mean any problem, difficulty, or challenge that made our relationship strained or awkward, or at least seemingly so. During analysis I read each interview and/or conversation and highlighted the moments when I believed that there were stories about tensions and annotated what I thought the tension was in

the margin (i.e. different teaching styles, confusing roles, etc.). After perusing the data extensively I copied and pasted the examples of tensions that I saw in our relationship into one file, separated by the type of tension, and labeled it "tensions."

Positioning experienced. After compiling the stories about tensions, I annotated the specific stories I had collected looking for ways in which we were positioning each other, as well as ourselves (i.e. the main teacher in the classroom, the teacher's aide). I highlighted what I thought were examples of positioning, based on Harre´ and van Langenhove's (1999) definition of positioning, and annotated how I thought that positioning was happening and whether it was positioning of self or positioning of others. I highlighted the passage and commented in the margin the positioning that was occurring. Finding multiple examples of intentional and unintentional positioning of both each other and ourselves in our shared episodes of tensions, I was able to determine how we were positioning ourselves in the co-teaching storyline.

Values and beliefs held. After looking at positioning it was inevitable that I needed to analyze both my own and Diane's sense of what good teaching looked like. Harre´ and van Langenhove (1999) suggest that people's morals define their actions so it is obvious that co-teachers' morals would influence how they perceive good teaching. People's perceptions of what is good and right in teaching are directly connected to their actions. I annotated excerpts from the previous compilations that I had made about tensions that I thought illustrated what we valued and believed about good teaching based on our comments in the interviews. I read the transcriptions of each of the interviews and, when I came to a passage that implied one of our values or beliefs, I highlighted it and discussed what values or beliefs it talked about. My definition of a value was something that Diane or I thought was important or what we appreciated. When I highlighted beliefs I was pointing out things that we deemed were good and

right. After marking what values or beliefs I saw, I described why I thought it was a value or belief in the margin. The comments that I made were centered on what Diane and I believed was good teaching and co-teaching, and what we valued in our teaching with one another.

I identified three stories that best illustrated the themes about tensions that we were experiencing during co-teaching after I examined all of the data. Both of us had discussed all three stories during the interviews and I felt that they were all representative of the larger issue of tensions. I realized that one particular story characterized the difficulties in our relationship better than the others and chose to focus on it to explain my findings instead of using all three. The other two storylines, although revealing, were too broad and required too much background knowledge to understand them completely. The *Les Mis* story and the positioning within it concisely represented how Diane and I worked with each other during tensions, as well as how we negotiated those tensions. Moreover the *Les Mis* story is representative of themes about tensions that both of us took up in the data and how our values and beliefs about teaching and, more specifically, co-teaching, dictated how we interacted with each other.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore tensions that existed between Diane and me as we taught together, as well as to provide a glimpse of how we negotiated the tensions that arose during our collaboration. The data revealed that while both Diane and I described our partnership as successful there were tensions in our work together that we were not addressing. It also revealed two primary stories: (a) the *Model Partnership with Tensions* story and (b) the *Les Mis* story. The first story was revealed as we talked about our partnership and co-teaching experiences that we had had together. The second story emerged while talking about the tensions that we had experienced during our co-teaching together. This second story is best exemplified in the way that we both described the events surrounding the planning and teaching of the book *Les Miserables* (Hugo, 1992). We did not understand how to negotiate our roles equally in the partnership and, when we were not planning and preparing for our classes, our co-teaching would suffer. We would position each other and ourselves in predictable and stereotypical roles that were counterproductive to our co-teaching partnership. Despite our commitment to co-teaching and our belief in its potential to help our students learn, tensions slowly but surely began to enter their way into our relationship.

In this chapter I will explore the tensions that were revealed as we talked about our experiences teaching together and how we negotiated those tensions based on our understanding of co-teaching. I will discuss our positive perceptions about our partnership and co-teaching. Then I will show how we positioned ourselves as good co-teachers while, at the same time, revealing that there were tensions that crept into our relationship due to our seemingly incompatible roles, our lack of planning, and the institutions placement of us. I will share one

particular incident, the *Les Mis* story and relate it in detail, which served as a microcosm for the tensions and demonstrates how we positioned each other and ourselves as we dealt with this particular tension. Finally I will summarize the findings section.

The *Model Partnership with Tensions* Story

Diane and I frequently talked about how much we enjoyed working together. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is somewhat rare in co-teaching. We both positioned our co-teaching partnership as extremely successful and consistently reiterated how much we enjoyed working together.

> Diane, (personal interview): I thought [Garth] was great; he was just so positive and nice and really willing to [co-teach] and I thought, "Well, you know this will be a good experience" and I . . . [our school] had done co-teaching long before I got here and so I saw what those teachers did and kind of how it worked and I thought, "You know this will be good." [Garth] was just so positive about it and it just made it easy and [he] was really willing to like you know meet and plan things.
>
> Garth, (personal interview): Obviously we could [have been] more thorough [in our improvement as a partnership] but as far as helping the students and collaborating with [each other] we always . . . promoted ourselves as the ideal co-teaching experience.

We positioned each other as willing and flexible and we openly expressed our enjoyment of teaching with one another and our excitement working together. Even though we had challenges and difficulties working with each other we tried to ignore one another's weaknesses and positioned each other and ourselves in a positive light. We valued our teaching partnership and it showed in the way that we talked about ourselves. We really focused our comments on our strengths and we initially talked as if everything was ideal. Our criteria for success were the friendship that we had developed with one another.

While we were friends, three things really impeded us from becoming excellent teachers: our confusion about our roles, our lack of planning, and the way that our school positioned us in different ways were all obstacles in our co-teaching relationship. We did not always struggle

with these tensions. During our first year together, we focused on our roles and planning and perhaps that is where our relationship became a friendship.

Our partnership works. It was apparent to us from the beginning that we were going to have a good time working together. We got along really well and we enjoyed coming to class and working together. Although our criteria probably were not the ideal, our belief in our friendship was fundamental to what we did and how we acted in our co-teaching relationship.

> Diane, (personal interview): I think it's really sad that [co-teaching] gets a bad rap because it can be such a fabulous experience for the teacher . . . and . . . you know I have a great friend in Garth and you know maybe that doesn't always happen.
>
> Garth, (personal interview): (Talking about my overall feelings about co-teaching) I wouldn't change it for the world I [have] had a great experience co-teaching. Not just because we helped a lot of students but also because Diane has become a real great friend even with all my craziness and time in front of the class and whatever else. It's been a great experience . . . . I wish I co-taught every class.

Diane and I both used the word "friend" when talking about our partnership and not only positioned our relationship as successful because of our friendship, but also positioned other co-teachers as unsuccessful and sad because they did not end up like us. We believed that we were the epitome of a successful co-teaching relationship. Despite our best efforts to maintain our positive relationship; however, tensions did arise.

Our partnership collides. During our first year of planning together we realized that co-teaching was not going to be as easy as it first seemed. Our co-teaching roles became messy for us because we were trying so hard to create an equal relationship. We wanted our students to perceive both of us as main teachers which to us meant that we would have to be up in front of the class the same amount of time, know all of the content we were teaching equally, and be able to help the students equally. What we did not understand was that this was an impossible goal to

achieve because there is no possible way to gain perfect equality in co-teaching (at least the equality necessary for the students to feel that both teachers are main teachers).

> Probably the most difficult thing [was] trying to plan units because generally as the resource teacher you're coming in and [the general education teacher] already has plans, lesson plans, books they want to teach and so you come in with all that planned so you're kind of not sure sometimes what your role is . . . . (Diane, stimulated recall interview #1)

Diane positioned herself as powerless by talking about how helpless she felt going into planning when I already had completed lesson plans for our classes. She positioned me as powerful because I already had plans and I did not need her input to create the plans for our co-taught class. She uses positioning here to explain her confusion about her role in class or lack of participation in class. She valued understanding her own role and being able to define it and know what she needed to do as the special educator.

Diane also positioned the curriculum as an obstacle for the special education teacher because, many times, content area knowledge is a barrier for the special education co-teacher. This was evident in her responses. "Garth [knew] what we [were] going to do. He [had] the unit planned. He [knew] day-to-day what we [were] going to do . . . . I'm not super comfortable teaching maybe something [I'm not prepared for] like the content" (Diane, stimulated recall interview #1). Diane uses positioning in this instance to justify why she is not teaching in front of the class. According to her, it is not her place to be in front of the class teaching content.

Ultimately our beliefs about our own roles became a tension for us. Evident in our conversations was the idea that we both felt strongly that we needed to carry out our co-teaching roles, but these roles seemingly conflicted with each other's roles. Instead of going hand-in-hand, content seemed to oppose inclusion and inclusion appeared to resist the content. Perhaps we did not understand how our roles were intertwined or maybe we simply did not want to have

to work harder than we already were in order to co-teach; regardless, we were not working synchronously and it was causing undue stress and pressure on our relationship.

Our partnership planning fails. After our first year teaching together, we stopped planning and communicating professionally with each other outside of class almost altogether, which also became another tension in our partnership. Diane explained that she thought we stopped planning regularly because we might have felt too "comfortable" with each other and also mentioned that it might have been laziness and that she had been a "slacker" (Diane, personal interview). By saying that she was a slacker Diane positioned herself as at fault for our lack of planning. She blamed herself for this problem and held herself responsible in order to preserve our co-teaching team. Perhaps she felt that it was her responsibility as the special educator to initiate the planning.

Diane also used the plural "we" occasionally when talking about why we did not plan more regularly after that first year. "I think we just [got] comfortable and just kind of [knew] what we [were] doing which [was] good but it [was] kind of bad too, I think, because that [was] when we [stopped] doing the planning" (Diane, personal interview). Diane expressed how our comfort with each other and knowledge of the curriculum were the primary reasons why we stopped planning. She specifically did not allude to her apprehension of my control of the content and her lack of knowledge of that same content. She positioned both of us making the decision instead of just one. In addition she acknowledged how poor the decision had been to not continue collaborating together. She valued our working with one another and planning together.

One of the most important aspects of our collaboration (and relationship) was our planning. Initially we planned because we both thought that good co-teaching dictated that we plan together even though we had never actually been trained as co-teachers before.

> We first started out [teaching] one class together . . . and I honestly didn't have any experience with how co-teaching went so I just thought 'Okay, so we're both teachers' (and she obviously had been teaching longer than I had) so we both should have equal amount of time in front of the classroom teaching and talking . . . so [we decided that] every day after school we . . . would sit down and plan the next day . . . . [to] plan on how each of us could be up in front of the class equal amount of time, even though I was the content teacher and her role [was] to help the special [education] students. (Garth, personal interview)

Our beliefs about good teaching informed what Diane and I did by telling us that we should plan before teaching together. We positioned ourselves even in the earliest stages as equals in our classrooms even though we expressed that our roles were different. I proposed that good teaching prescribed that both of us needed to have an equal amount of face time in front of the class. Both of us agreed that this was what needed to happen and planned accordingly.

We faltered in our planning and preparation together shortly thereafter and it slowly wedged its way into our relationship.

> . . . [To] be honest with you [co-teaching without planning] was okay for a little while because again [Diane] is very understanding, but there were some awkward moments where I would honestly feel like [when I talked to her], "Sorry I taught the whole period, you didn't really get to teach or talk in front of the students" and I felt like really bad about it but I didn't know what to do about it in those instances and so then she would say things like, "Sorry *I* didn't do anything." I would feel like "Well, it's not your fault, we didn't plan together." (Garth, personal interview)

Positioning Diane as the understanding partner here, I expressed that I was unwilling to change for our relationship and seek out planning. I positioned myself as apologetic; yet, I still continued to do what I wanted to do in co-teaching (which was do it all by myself). Diane positioned herself as apologetic as well, but I turned her comment around saying that she could not be at fault when I was the one to blame for our lack of planning and cohesion.

Our partnership succumbs to institutional constraints. Our lack of planning was not entirely our fault. In fact much of the blame could have been placed on the institution where we taught. Diane and I had never been trained about co-teaching. When I was first hired at the school where we taught together the department chair told me that I would be teaching a section of co-taught classes.

> She asked me if I had ever taught classes with another teacher before. I told her that I had never heard of it before. She told me that it would be a good experience and that I would like the teacher they put me with her. I told her that I would do it because what else could I have done. She knew that I had just been hired. From that day on, I realized why I had been given co-teaching. Nobody wanted to teach the class and teachers in my department always asked when they could get out of [co-teaching] (Garth, personal interview).

The head of the English department positioned me as willing and ready to co-teach even though I had never received any training. She positioned herself as knowledgeable about co-teaching even though it was obvious that she did not know much about the arrangement.

Most of the school did not know about co-teaching and how difficult it was, especially the administrators. If anything the administrators added to the tension that we had experienced during our time together by the way that they treated us. They treated me like the main teacher and my partner like an aide. "I would have liked to have had my name on the plaque outside or been called for a student to come down to the office at least once. They never asked me to, though. They always called our room and asked for Garth" (Diane, personal interview). Diane's opinion of her own worth and value in our class was tied in many ways to the manner in which she was treated by the administration and the other teachers at the school where we taught. When they did not treat her properly, she positioned herself as unnecessary.

In order to capture how Diane and I worked with each other during tensions and negotiated the tensions that came up, it is important to see a more specific example of our

collaboration. In our earlier interviews there were hints of tensions within our relationship, but these tensions did not really overshadow our partnership. Not until later interviews did I get a more detailed understanding of our storylines and how we were positioning each other and ourselves during tensions. This next story is called the *Les Mis* story because, fittingly, it was about an experience Diane and I had together when we read the book *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo in our 11th grade English classes. It reveals how we were positioning each other positively even though there were tensions.

The *Les Mis* Story

Although there were other stories that came to light during our time together, the *Les Miserables* story best captured how we positioned each other during tensions. It demonstrated what positions Diane and I gained and gave away to each other, what we valued and believed about co-teaching, what problems we had reconciling our roles with each other and our lack of planning, and what we did to negotiate those tensions. In order to document the experience that we had together fully, I proffer direct quotations from the incident to adequately document the unfolding of the episode. Many of the quotes are juxtaposed to illustrate how Diane and I used positioning in our relationship to interact with one another, especially when there were tensions.

Our partnership collides. Our second year of teaching, we started reading the book *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo. As soon as I proposed the book to Diane tensions flared.

> [I] told Garth . . . [I] mentioned that it would be nice if we could slow [class] down or not read as much or not have to do as much . . . Like we [were] reading Les Miserables and that's a hard book for anyone and it's a tough book for the resource kids and he knows that I've mentioned that it's not a book I really like to read and I wish there was something else we could read. [I told him that] it's going to kill the kids, it's going to kill their grades, [and] the kids are not going to read it …. so you talk and you hope that there's something you can work out but I think in the end maybe this isn't good but I feel like, 'well it's his class so. . . .' (Diane, stimulated recall interview #1)

Due to her role as the special educator, Diane saw herself as an advocate for the students in our class, especially the resource kids. She valued the students and their success and believed that her role would be best served by helping them be successful in class. She positioned herself as the mediator between the students and me, the content teacher. Diane used the students' potential failure to argue why we should not read the book. She felt that it would not be fair to have students read *Les Miserables*. Diane positioned my decision as a threat to the students and positioned the students opposite of me. She communicated openly with me about how she felt about using the book in class and believed that communication with me was important. However, the way that Diane reacted to my decision to read this book suggested that she did not want to overstep the boundaries of her role as the special education teacher. Even when she was willing to talk to me about her feelings in class, and in front of the students, she did not push the issue or continue to ask me about it. Instead she let me continue to make my own decision, although she was not very pleased with what the potential outcome of my decision would be. Her beliefs about her role in our co-teaching partnership and her values dictated her actions.

In contrast to Diane, my perception of our discussion was different. Even though she saw her discussion with me as communication, I saw it as an attack on my role as the content teacher.

> (Referring to Diane asking me about why we were reading Les Miserables) Openly, she commented in class [last year] when we were about to read *Les Miserables* . . . (in front of all the students) she . . . commented [and] questioned me . . . why we were doing that because it was really boring . . . . [we had a] discussion on why we were doing *Les Mis* again because she said it [was] a boring book, the special ed. kids [would not] get it, and we [were] not going to have enough time to read it all and she gave a lot of, I mean for me I thought they were valid reasons (but still I felt like the kids could do it). I almost just felt like she was angry about my decision to continue to read the book. (Garth, stimulated recall interview #1)

I talked about how I focused on the way that Diane had presented the issue to me, rather than on how the book would affect the students. I valued the students' perceptions of us co-teachers and

positioned myself defensively to combat the idea that we were teaching the students something that was too difficult. The idea that I would do something to make the students fail was appalling to me and I believed that she had made a mistake by insinuating that I wanted them to fail. I protected myself according to my beliefs of what my role was as the content teacher and about how two teachers should collaborate with each other by continuing to read the book even though she had expressed concerns about reading it.

> [Discussing with me her concern about reading *Les Miserables* in our co-taught class] made me kind of mad when she did that because it felt like she was implying that I was trying to set the students up for failure and that was the last thing on my mind when I planned to use the book. (Garth, stimulated recall #1)

Despite our commitment to co-teaching and our classes, our perceptions about our roles forced us to believe that we could not co-exist together. I believed in challenging and inspirational curriculum for the students and thought that they would succeed more if they read *Les Miserables*. In contrast to me, Diane maintained her position as a supporter of the students' best interests by communicating to me her desire to read something less difficult.

Our perception of our experience was very different. Even the things that Diane and I remembered about what happened were different. Our memories were biased by our roles and our own values and beliefs about how a co-teacher should collaborate. Diane remembered the experience as playful and joking, whereas I remembered it as confrontational and negative.

> Diane, (stimulated recall #1): Maybe I hurt Garth's feelings because I said I didn't want to read the book or I didn't like the book (or maybe he was feeling like I wasn't understanding his reasoning or not supporting him.) I just kind of approached it jokingly like, "Oh my gosh, why are reading this book? It is so long. I loved the play, but this book is so long the kids are going to hate it . . . ." you know . . . . I was being serious but probably not . . . like maybe I was maybe being more jokey and sarcastic about it so I don't know if that bothered him more or less . . . you know we just kind of joked . . . I don't know if it was like strained . . . I never felt like it made our relationship weird or hard or anything.

> Garth, (stimulated recall #1): [Talking about whether or not Diane was serious) Oh, she was serious . . . so I guess that I resented that. I felt like she was definitely serious about what she had said because of her tone of voice and the way that she presented it to me. She was in front of the students and it felt like she was trying to use them to her advantage and show them how she was in their corner, whereas [she implied that] I was just mean and unwilling to change what I did in class and how I did it and that hurt . . . .

I believed that the way that Diane had presented her idea about *Les Miserables* to me had been inappropriate. I protected myself by ignoring her suggestion and defying her wishes to not read *Les Miserables.* As a result, I expressed how I knowingly chose to continue to read the story *Les Miserables* almost in spite of what had happened. I used my role as the content teacher as a way to exercise my feelings about what had happened even though this contrasted my values and beliefs about how teachers should collaborate. I positioned myself as the content teacher so that I could do what I wanted to do. Our lack of planning with one another only reinforced the idea that I was in charge of how class went in our relationship.

Our partnership planning fails. Diane commented on how she understood what had happened between us possibly because there was no further communication about what we would be doing in class other than telling her that we were still going to read the book. Because we were not planning, Diane positioned herself as powerless against my decisions. "We kind of talked about it and never came to a conclusion . . . . Well, we did because we [read] *Les Mis* so I guess Garth came to the conclusion" (Diane stimulated recall #1). I dismissed Diane's voice in our classroom and ended up reinforcing my own voice by choosing to continue to read the story. I positioned Diane in her role as the special education teacher strategically while forcing her into the role of aide rather than co-teacher. Nevertheless she continued to work collegially with me and took up the position the way I had presented it to her. She was the special educator and could make recommendations, but she was not able to enforce real curricular change. She was

only able to make suggestions to me about the books we read and adhered to her role even though it was probably hard for her and her beliefs about what was going on in class.

Our partnership succumbs to institutional constraints. After talking about what happened, Diane mentioned something interesting about how the institution had possibly positioned us to have this experience with each other. Diane commented that she felt that I had been forced to read *Les Mis* by our school and its lack of resources:

> I mean I don't have as many kids as him so I don't have as many books to be able to offer to 260 kids and it's not fair for him to ask him to teach a certain book in the co-taught classes and do something else in the regular classes, you know what I mean? (Diane, stimulated recall #1)

Diane expressed that if I had not been forced to read the books by the administration then I probably would not have read them. She positioned me as the victim and made the school and its class sizes the reason for the tension. She perhaps believed that it would not be right for her to ask me to teach another book when it would make me have to prepare for another class that I normally would not have to prepare for.

Our partnership succeeds. Despite our differences, Diane and I reveled in our experience teaching together, returning back to the good rapport we had with one another in our final discussion together.

> Diane, (paired conversation): I never felt like that 'these are my kids and these are your kids' you know they are just OUR kids, this is our class and I always had somewhere to sit and somewhere to put my stuff. It never felt like I couldn't be comfortable in that room and you were always good to [me].

> Garth, (paired conversation): Even though our relationship wasn't perfect, I always thought that we were perfect together. I loved how much fun we had teaching together and really enjoyed coming to co-taught classes and working with you. You were always so positive and willing to do whatever and I always really appreciated that.

We returned back to positioning each other as friends even when we had talked about the tensions that we had endured and negotiated in-depth. We believed that we had been successful

as a co-teaching partnership and held on to that belief, despite participating in interviews that could have been detrimental to our work together because we were talking about a subject as delicate as co-teaching. The tensions that were present in our relationship took a backseat to the positive relationship we had together.

Findings Summary

Ultimately Diane and I did experience some tensions during our co-teaching experience together. We struggled with defining and understanding our roles, which caused the majority of the tension we had. In addition, we neglected planning together, which also created tension. When tensions arose between us we positioned each other and ourselves in very predictable and stereotypical sorts of ways. I was the main teacher and she was the aide often. Our values and beliefs influenced how we positioned each other because we wanted to do things that were best for each other, our students, and ourselves. Nevertheless our positions were counterproductive to our teaching goals.

I cited the *Les Mis* story as a more specific example of our situation and the tensions that existed. When I proposed reading *Les Miserables* to Diane she disagreed with my belief about the book's value and communicated her disapproval of our student's ability to access it. I countered by still reading the book in class. Our disagreement over the book (and our roles) caused tension in our relationship because I saw myself as the content teacher and Diane saw herself as the inclusive teacher and we acted as if we could not make the two coexist. Diane and I positioned our roles as contradictory and opposing each other because, in many ways, that is how we perceived them.

Even though the tensions Diane and I had in our relationship became distracting at times, we negotiated the tensions and positioned our partnership as positive and rewarding. Our

determination to view our co-teaching partnership as successful and our cultivation of that partnership, in spite of our lack of communication, are perhaps the most compelling pieces of information that emerged from the results. The fact that Diane and I would be willing to continue to nurture our own relationship at the expense of our students' learning in class is telling and suggests that co-teaching collaboration is more complicated than what I first thought.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Many co-teachers seem to want to paint co-teaching and the collaboration that goes on during co-teaching as either very positive or very negative (Austin, 2001; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Walther-Thomas, 1997). This way of thinking is too simplistic and belies our understanding of the research on co-teaching. Instead co-teaching is complicated and, if done correctly, satisfying; this study supports this idea.

In this chapter I will discuss how the findings from my study fit with the current literature on co-teaching. Then I will talk about the insights I gained from exploring our relationship and how we worked together. Finally, I will make recommendations for co-teachers, schools who implement co-teaching, and future researchers about how they can improve co-teacher relationships.

Comparison of Study Findings to Existing Literature

The findings in this study are consistent with the existing literature on co-teaching relationship. It supports the ideas that co-teaching relationships are beneficial, that co-teaching partnerships struggle when they are not prepared to co-teach correctly, and that co-teaching roles are important in the co-teaching dynamic. However this study also indicates that co-teachers who position themselves and each other as successful can develop a working co-teaching relationship regardless of the tensions that they face.

The benefits of co-teaching. Studies have mentioned how much teachers enjoyed co-teaching together because of how much it helped students (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2004; Walther-Thomas, 1997). We were no different; Diane and I were very satisfied with our co-teaching arrangement. We enjoyed working with our students and seeing how much success

they were having, especially the students with disabilities. Both of us also appreciated the lighter workload, such as the Thousand, Villa, and Nevin study suggested (2004).

In addition, we enjoyed the personal support that we gained from having a teaching partner. Various studies mentioned how teachers approved of co-teaching because they had support from another teacher (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008; Thousand, Villa & Nevin, 2004; Walther-Thomas, 1997). This is where the research ends on co-teaching relationships.

This study redefines how teachers can think about their teaching relationship with their partner. Diane and I not only approved of our partnership, we loved it. Both of us shared multiple experiences that expressed our satisfaction with our relationship, despite our shortcomings. We communicated our happiness with our arrangement and, when we talked about our relationship, we referred to each other as friends. This is particularly compelling considering how few teachers last in co-teaching.

The implementation of co-teaching. Two of the reasons why so few co-teachers last in co-teaching are that they have little time to plan together and they have not been trained (Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Rice & Zigmond, 2001). Diane and I were no exception. Like so many co-teachers before us, we struggled with planning and setting aside time for planning. However, we did not always struggle planning together. We planned regularly during our first year and, only after we got too comfortable with each other, did we stop planning. Additionally, we had received no previous co-teacher training before we were asked to co-teach together.

Even though neither of us had received any training, both of us had very positive perceptions of co-teaching. Having a positive perception of co-teaching is a requisite of any successful co-teaching relationship, according to Dieker (2001). However, Dieker (2001) also found that successful co-teaching partnerships also had high expectations and focused on

planning. In our co-teaching partnership, it is debatable whether we had high expectations or not, but it is clear that neither of us focused on planning (at least after the first year together). Even though we neglected planning, we still openly defined ourselves as successful.

Weiss and Lloyd (2002) found that the roles of general educators and special educators in their respective classrooms were very different. Our situation was similar. Diane and I knew that our roles were different. In fact our roles were one of our bigger stumbling blocks in our relationship. We had not received sufficient training regarding our responsibilities as co-teachers. We needed more preparation for co-teaching and we needed more time for planning. Keefe and Moore's study (2004) support my findings on teacher needs.

Contrary to the Dieker & Murawski study (2003), Diane and I had very positive attitudes towards co-teaching. Both of us entered our relationship with a commitment to the partnership. This is another striking aspect of our work together. Neither of us was territorial, unlike Sims (2008) and we worked together rather easily. Nevertheless co-teaching was still strained and difficult for us.

The roles within co-teaching. Co-teaching was hard because we were confused about our roles. We did not understand how our roles worked together and this caused tension. Deshler and Schumaker (2006) mention how teachers struggle because of their perception of their roles. Likewise Diane and I struggled to make sense of our roles and how we were supposed to work together. Nevertheless we consistently articulated our relationship and our teaching as positive, which was different from other studies. This is probably why Diane and I lasted so long teaching together, especially Diane. Despite our tensions, Diane continued to co-teach with me even though she felt that her role was undefined. Weiss and Lloyd (2002) found that oftentimes special educators leave co-teaching because of their issues with their roles.

Diane was different than many other co-teachers and was committed to our relationship even though we had tensions.

Diane and I communicated fairly well with each other. Even though our roles and our teaching styles were different, we talked about co-teaching even though we did not plan together. The one exception might be in the *Les Mis* story. We struggled teaching together because we did not communicate about the book and discuss why or why we should not teach it. Previous research supports the idea that co-teachers will struggle if they do not communicate (Keefe & Moore, 2004). However it also says that teachers will struggle teaching together when their personalities and teaching styles disagree (Jang, 2006). We did not suffer from this in our teaching arrangement. Instead Diane and I flourished in our partnership even though we were very different. We were very willing to learn and committed to each other. In some cases, however, we were autonomous like Dieker and Murawski (2003) suggested in their study. We became more independent when tensions came up, but still worked together well.

Where this study fits in existing literature. This study highlights the fact that relationships that begin positively can endure. Our friendship carried us through the good times and bad. If co-teachers can develop a good relationship or a friendship with their teaching partner, they will be more likely to last longer.

In contrast to other studies, we had a positive perception of our co-teaching even though we were not doing things that others would recognize as essential to a good co-teaching partnership, such as planning and understanding our roles. Whether we were actually successful or not it did not matter. What mattered to us was the idea that we thought we were good co-teachers.

During the rest of this chapter I will talk about the insights I gained by doing the study. I will discuss what it says about co-teacher tensions and teacher positioning. I will also explain what good co-teaching could look like based off of this study's findings. I will also give suggestions about what co-teachers, schools, and future researchers should do to continue to improve co-teaching.

Discussion of Co-teaching Insights Gained

Listening to each of us talk about our experiences that we had co-teaching together was helpful to me so that I could begin to explore how our relationship worked during the four years we co-taught together. Analyzing the stories we were sharing to look for tensions and positioning was even more insightful. I learned about the tensions we were having within our relationship and how we were dealing with those tensions. I gained understanding about what we were both contributing to our relationship within the storylines we were creating. Seeing our contributions, I discovered what good co-teaching might look like. Most importantly I found some solutions to the problems we were facing.

Co-teacher tensions. This study suggests that Diane and I experienced tension as a natural part of our collaboration with one another. The tensions that we faced in our partnership, like in any relationship, varied according to our situation and the different values and beliefs that we had about teaching. They also depended upon a variety of other factors, including: (a) our commitment to our relationship, (b) our level of harmony within our relationship, and (c) our attitudes about our relationship. We negotiated these tensions in numerous ways. Sometimes we would talk to each other about the problems we were having. Other times we would avoid the argument and ignore the issue altogether.

Considering the lack of preparation Diane and I received prior to co-teaching, it is not surprising that we struggled resolving the tensions that arose in our relationship. This study suggests that if Diane and I had gained more training about how to collaborate as co-teachers together and how to negotiate the roles that we had, the more likely it would have been that the tensions that we had would not have come up during our time teaching together (or would have been less pronounced). If we had better understood the roles that we had as the content teacher and the special education teacher, we might not have neglected planning and our teaching might not have suffered. Because we neglected our planning and preparing for class we positioned ourselves in counterproductive places in our classroom. When we were not planning, I would position myself as the main teacher and she would position herself as the aide. This kind of co-teaching is both stereotypical and detrimental to co-teaching.

Co-teacher positioning. Although teachers might not ever be able use positioning as a way to improve co-teaching, simply being aware of the positioning that happens in co-teaching might be enough. Reading through the stories that Diane and I shared about the tensions we had with each other, I realized how much I needed positioning to understand how we were interacting with each other as co-teachers. I listened to both of us talk about how we worked together and realized that both of us were trying really hard to include each other and position each other positively. Both of us believed in co-teaching and positioned ourselves as committed to the relationship.

Positioning helped me understand that Diane was a very willing participant in our relationship and cared immensely about our friendship and the students and their success. She advocated for everybody and really worked hard to position herself as a partner ready to do what she needed to do, but also willing to support me. She valued the relationships that she had in

class and positioned herself so that she could cultivate the relationships that she had with the students and me. During tensions, Diane would often position herself as an aide even though she did not have to. By taking up the position of aide she demonstrated how much she valued her relationships because an aide is often viewed as an underprivileged position in co-teaching.

I also learned a lot about myself. I believed in our relationship and wanted us to be successful. I valued the students' success and cared about the relationships that we had together. I positioned myself as a willing partner in our relationship and wanted to support Diane. However, when tensions came up, I would position myself as the main teacher because I believed that this would be the easiest way to navigate the problems we were having.

Elements of good co-teaching. Successful co-teaching dictates that both teachers must be committed to each other and their students if the partnership is going to work. Good co-teachers are dedicated and committed teachers who can successfully work with each other even when it is difficult and tensions come up. They also understand their role, but are not afraid to step outside of their role to communicate with their co-teaching partner about a specific concern or need. Co-teachers who are successful maintain a positive attitude despite tensions and build and nurture their co-teaching relationship and student learning at the same time.

Keeping a healthy balance of focus on the co-teaching relationship and student achievement is another essential element of good co-teaching. In our relationship we nurtured our students and their learning consistently during that first year while we were getting to know each other. After we became friends we neglected the students' learning in order to protect our relationship. When Diane and I ignored the problems that emerged from our disagreement about the choice of *Les Miserables*, we were protecting our relationship at the cost of serving our students the best education possible. This is what is so hard about co-teaching and why it

requires so much from teachers. Good co-teachers must be able to consistently maintain their relationship with their partner, as well as the students, and teach the students so that all of them can access the content—this can be a difficult balancing act.

Recommendations for Future Practice and Study

Co-teaching is difficult. It is a complex and dynamic interaction between two people with different personalities, teaching styles, and values and beliefs about teaching and life. In addition, most co-teachers enter the co-teaching classroom with little training or choice.

What current and future co-teachers need to know. Co-teachers must learn how to work with another teacher and teach students who are on various ability levels knowing that they might not have a choice in the matter. Co-teaching can and will be rewarding if co-teachers know what they are up against and realize that it can be a very positive experience. Both current and future co-teachers need to have a positive attitude about co-teaching and its influence on them and the students. They need to set aside a block of time every day, or every other day depending upon their school schedule, to plan with their co-teaching partner and prepare for their next class. Preparing for co-teaching is integral to enacting good and great co-teaching.

Current and future co-teachers also need to seek out understanding from other co-teaching partnerships within their school or district about how to successfully co-teach. Collaborating with other successful co-teachers and observing how they work together within their roles can benefit co-teaching partnerships immensely. Additionally co-teachers can read the literature about co-teaching in order to begin conversations with their partners about how their co-teaching is going and how to improve their own teaching.

Knowing how to co-teach and what to co-teach is important, but understanding why schools utilize co-teaching is probably the most important aspect of successful co-teachers. Co-

teaching benefits students if it is done correctly. Teachers should overcome their need to teach their favorite unit plans and lessons in order to focus on collaborating with their co-teaching partner and learning how they do things and why they do things the way that they do. Students will only benefit if co-teachers are ready and willing to work together. Co-teachers must also learn how to work together well while still being able to focus on the students that are so important.

What co-teaching schools need to know. Schools need to promote co-teaching as a very rewarding experience and push for the very best teachers in the school to be co-teachers. Co-teaching must have the best teachers teaching because it is such a difficult endeavor. New teachers and willing teachers are not always the best teachers; yet, anecdotal evidence suggests that these are usually the teachers who end up co-teaching. Co-teaching demands teachers who know the content and strategies that will best help their students be successful, but also demands teachers who are flexible, understanding, and ready and willing to work with other teachers to enhance their own teaching. In addition, administrations need to choose teachers who are just as humble as they are excellent in co-teaching positions so that all students receive the education that they deserve.

Then, schools must provide the training and support to co-teachers that they need so they have a thorough understanding of co-teaching and how it is supposed to be enacted. Administrators must first understand how difficult co-teaching is and then, with that understanding, provide avenues for current co-teachers to improve their co-teaching through in-service and training. Professional development in schools and districts needs to focus on co-teaching and co-teachers must have spaces to talk about their situations and hear positive experiences of co-teachers and how they are working together and the successes they are having

in their classes together. Administrators also need to provide constructive and helpful feedback to co-teachers about their co-teaching and give co-teachers all of the support that they need.

What future research needs to explore. Future researchers need to study co-teaching relationships and the tensions that arise during co-teaching. Researchers need to explore these tensions more in-depth so that they can determine how to approach them when they come up in co-teaching. Studies also need to explore how co-teachers navigate the tensions that exist in their relationship and negotiate them

Co-teaching is the future of successful schools because, ideally, it allows all students to access the content. Until co-teachers are fully committed to co-teaching; however, students will continue to suffer from average, poor, and even bad teaching.

Above all, co-teachers need to be committed to their relationship with their partner so that co-teaching can work the way it was meant to work. If this happens, then co-teachers can be more committed to their students and that is when co-teaching will become the most successful and will do the most good. Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007) comment that " . . . [The] ideal of true [co-teaching] collaboration . . . has largely not been met" and this study is hopefully a link to find that true co-teaching ideal (p. 412).

References

Austin, V. L. (2001). Teachers' beliefs about co-teaching. *Remedial and Special Education, 22*(4), 245–258

Bulgren, J. A., Marquis, J. G., Deshler, D. D., Schumaker, J. B., Lenz, B. K., Davis, B, & Grossen, B. (2006). The instructional context of inclusive secondary general education classes: Teachers instructional roles and practices, curricular demands, and research-based practices and standards. *Learning Disabilities: A Contemporary Journal, 4*(1), 39–65.

Bullough, R. V., & Draper, R. (2004). Making sense of a failed triad: Mentors, university supervisors, and positioning theory. *Journal of Teacher Education, 55*, 407–420.

Chase, S. E. (2003). *Learning to listen: Narrative principles in a qualitative research methods course.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Cook, L., & Friend, M. (1995). Co-teaching: Guidelines for creating effective practices. *Focus on Exceptional Children 28*(3), 1–11.

Davies, B., & Harre′, R. (1990). Positioning and personhood. In R. Harre & L. van Langenhove (Eds.), *Positioning theory* (pp. 32–52). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Davis-Wiley, P., & Cozart, A. C. (1998, November). *Are two instructors better than one? Planning, teaching, and evaluating a deux.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the mid-south educational research association, New Orleans, LA.

Deshler, D. D., & Schumaker, J. B. (2006). *Teaching adolescents with disabilities: Accessing the general education curriculum.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Dieker, L. (2001). What are the characteristics of 'effective' middle and high school co-taught teams for students with disabilities? *Preventing School Failure, 46*, 1–14.

Dieker, L., & Murawski, W. (2003). Co-teaching at the secondary level: Unique issues, current trends, and suggestions for success. *High School Journal, 86*(4), 1–13.

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2007). *Individuals with disabilities education act amended.* Retrieved July 29, 2008, from http://www.fema.gov/oer/reference/idea.shtm

Friend, M., & Reising, M. (1993). Co-teaching: An overview of the past, a glimpse at the present, and consideration for the future. *Preventing School Failure, 37*, 1–4.

Harre′, R., & van Langenhove, L. (Eds.). (1999). *Positioning Theory.* Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Hugo, Victor. *Les Miserables*. The Modern Library: New York, 1992.

Jang, S. (2006). Research on the effects of team teaching upon two secondary school teachers. *Educational Research, 48*(2), 177–194.

Keefe, E. B., & Moore, V. (2004). The challenge of co-teaching in inclusive classrooms at the high school level: What the teacher told us. *American Secondary Education, 32*(3), 77–88.

Kloo, A., & Zigmond, N. (2008). Co-teaching revisited: Redrawing the blueprint. *Preventing School Failure, 52*, 12–20.

Kohler-Evans, P. A. (2006). Co-teaching: How to make this marriage work in front of the kids. *Education, 127*(2), 260–264.

Morocco, C. C. & Aguilar, C. M. (2002). Coteaching for content understanding: A schoolwide model. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation 13*, 315–347.

Murphy, C., & Beggs, J. (2006). *Addressing Ethical Dilemmas in Implementing Coteaching, 7* (4). Retrieved July 29, 2008, from http://www.qualitativeresearch.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/185/412

Rice, D., & Zigmond, N. (2000). Co-teaching in secondary schools: Teacher reports of developments in Australian and American schools. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 15,* 190–197.

Scruggs, T. E., Mastropieri, M. A., & McDuffie, K.A. (2007). Co-teaching in inclusive classrooms: A metasynthesis of qualitative research. *Exceptional Children, 73*, 392–416.

Sims, E. (2008). Sharing command of the co-teaching ship: How to play nicely with others. *English Journal 97*(5), 58–63.

Tension. (2010). *AskOxford.com.* Oxford University Press. Retrieved June 10, 2010 from http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/tension?view=uk

Thousand, J. S., Villa, R.A., & Nevin, A. I. (2004). The many faces of collaborative planning and teaching. *Theory into Practice, 45*(3). 239–248.

Walther-Thomas, C.S. (1997). Co-teaching experiences: The benefits and problems that teachers and principals report over time. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 30*, 395–407.

Weiss, M. P., & Lloyd, J. W. (2002). Congruence between roles and actions of secondary special educators in co-taught and special education settings. *The Journal of Special Education, 36*(2), 58–68.

Yoder, D. I. (2000). Teachers' perceptions of elements and competencies/characteristics that affect collaborative teaching at the secondary level. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 61*(12), 4735A. (UMI No. AA19996182)

Wilson, G. (2006). Introduction: Coteaching and literacy. *Reading and Writing Quarterly 22*, 199–204.

Appendix A

Interview One

Describe your background as an educator.

Describe in detail the first time you met your co-teaching partner.

Explain to me the feelings you had when you first started teaching together.

Tell me about a time when you had a positive experience teaching with your partner.

Tell me about a time when you had a negative experience teaching with your partner.

Talk about your most favorite experiences that you had with _____ while you were teaching together.

Talk about a time when you just could not bear to co-teach with your partner again.

Comment on experiences that you have had together that have changed your co-teaching.

What are some of the experiences you have had together that you would not give up.

Describe a time when you both had success together teaching a student.

Appendix B

Stimulated Recall Interview #1

Co-teaching Stimulated Recall Interview #1 Protocol

(NOTE TO DIANE: This research study will help future co-teachers understand how general education and special education teachers cope with the tensions that face their co-teaching partnerships. All co-teachers have personality and teaching style differences that sometimes make it difficult to teach together and create a lasting relationship.

Although we have a great relationship and it has lasted a long time, it is obvious that we are not perfect and have also had our tough moments together. We have had our share of hard and awkward moments learning how to teach together and learning how to cope with each other. In order to help other teachers, the next few interviews must talk about our difficult experiences working together. Obviously we have succeeded in overcoming our differences and learned how to work together and get along almost always. However, it's okay to talk about the tough times, too.)

1. What is difficult about co-teaching with another teacher? Explain why it was difficult.

    FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS: What do you do when things get difficult in your teaching relationship with your partner? Explain.
    How do you cope with your differences? Explain.
    Do you feel that you have resolved most of the problems that have come up during co-teaching? Explain.

2. Share a few experiences about you having more or less face time in front of the class. Explain.

    FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS: How much time do you spend in front of the class, teaching? Why?
    Do the students perceive that you are more or less of a teacher because of the time you do or do not spend in front of the class? Explain.
    Do you feel like a visitor or an aide when you don't get as much face time in front of the class? Explain.
    How important is it to you that you are in front of the class, teaching? Explain.

3. Share a story about a time where the students in your co-taught classes respected you more (or less) than the other teacher. Explain it in detail.

    FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS: How did this make you feel? Explain.
    How did this affect your relationship with your co-teaching partner? Why or why does it not affect your relationship? Explain.

4. Tell me about a time where you spent more or less time preparing for your co-taught class than your partner. Explain it in detail.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS: Do you feel angry, bitter, or inferior that you spend more or less time preparing for class? Explain.
How could you change this situation so that it would be more "equal"? Explain.

5. Talk about a time when your personalities clashed with your co-teaching partner openly or in private. What do you do when you don't have the same opinion as the other person on classroom things? Explain in detail.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS: How are your personalities different? Explain.
How have you coped with your differences with each other? Explain.

Appendix C

Co-teaching Stimulated Recall Interview #2 Protocol

Questions for Garth:

1. When Diane approached you about teaching another book than Les Miserables, what were your thoughts and feelings about that experience and how she approached you?

Follow-up Questions: How did she approach you? Where and when did she approach you?
What were Diane's concerns about the book and how did she raise those concerns?
Why do you insist on reading Les Miserables in your co-taught classes?
What is in there that you think that kids need?
Do you feel like the kids will understand it? Why or why not?
Do you think that your lack of planning together might be correlated with you not really using Diane's ideas? Why or why not?

2. Diane talked about how you never really respond to her pleas when she asks you to reconsider the book that you are reading for class, like Les Miserables, because of how difficult it was. Why do you not respond?

Follow-up Questions: How could your reaction affect your relationship?

3. Tell me about a time where Diane did have input in what you were doing in class.

Follow-up Questions: What happened? Was it positive or negative?
How did this moment help or hinder your relationship?
How did she react to your willingness to hear and implement her own ideas?

4. You talked about how Diane doesn't come to class on time often or at all due to commitments elsewhere last time. Share more stories about times where she did not participate in class and how that relates to her and/or the school's perception of her.

Follow-up Questions:

5. Diane talked about how 1st period reacts differently to her versus 3rd period; she said that because she has time to understand what you are doing by 3rd period that they see her in a better light. Do you agree or disagree with her? Why?

Follow-up Questions: How do you think 3rd period reacts to her differently?
How could planning better this issue? Explain.

Co-teaching Stimulated Recall Interview #2 Protocol

Questions for Diane:

1. Last time, we talked about how Garth didn't really listen to you when you asked him to reconsider teaching Les Mis to your students. Why do you think that he did not respond to your plea?

Follow-up Questions: Do moments like this put strain on your relationship?
Was it boring, too difficult for the students, or something else? Explain.
How did you approach Garth when you asked him about reading this book?
Why do you think he insists on reading it with the students?
If you had approached him differently, do you think that the response would have been different?

2. In his interview, Garth talked about how you both used to plan very regularly together and how that stopped. Why do you think that your planning stopped?

Follow-up Questions: Were there specific moments that marked the end of your planning?
What effects did your stopping planning have on your teaching?

3. Talk about a time when you did have input in what was going on in class.

Follow-up Questions: How did this help your perception of your co-teaching?

4. Garth talked about how difficult it is to have to have you gone so much due to various other commitments and how that might be another reason why students might perceive you differently. Do you believe that this is true?

Follow-up Questions: How often are you gone? What are you doing?
Do your other commitments distance you from the students?
Do you feel that this is true this year, especially with how 3rd period perceives you?

5. Garth mentioned that he thinks that you have to give up a lot more in the co-teaching relationship than him because of your roles. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Follow-up Questions: What types of things do you have to give up in co-teaching?

Appendix D

Paired Conversation

Below is a list of topics that will end my co-teaching partner and I's discussion of our co-teaching relationship and tensions. We will read the statements in chronological order from PowerPoint slides and discuss each together before we move onto the next statement.

Directions: Discuss the following statement(s) based on your specific experience co-teaching with your partner:

Question 1: How did the co-teaching interviews frame your relationship with each other? How did the interviews impact your relationship, if any?

Question 2: What has been the greatest tension between you during your time together?

Question 3: What have been some other tensions?

Question 4: You discussed previously how you feel that you have overcome the tensions of co-teaching. How do you feel you have overcome those tensions?

Question 5: Share a story or two about overcoming the tensions that you have faced.

Question 6: Reflect back upon your four years teaching together. What would you have done differently?

Question 7: What specific advice do you have for current and future co-teachers that might help them understand better how to approach their partner and create a successful relationship. Follow-up Question: Why do you think that this advice will work for others like it has for you?

Question 8: What does a perfect co-teaching relationship look like?