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Dispositions Related to Successful Co-Teaching Teams at the Secondary Level: A Case-Based Study of Three Secondary Co-Teaching Teams

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DISPOSITIONS RELATED TO SUCCESSFUL CO-TEACHING TEAMS AT THE
SECONDARY LEVEL: A CASE-BASED STUDY OF THREE SECONDARY
CO-TEACHING TEAMS

by

ZABRINA U. CANNADY

(Under the Direction of Stephanie Kenney)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the dispositions of successful co-teachers in the Houston County school district in order to gain insight into the establishment of successful collaborative relationships. Data for this study was collected through multiple observations and follow up/exit interviews with six teachers participating in the co-teaching model in the Houston county school district. Findings indicated the presence of dispositions identified in the literature as essential for successful co-teachers, to include positive attitude, empathy, insight, and the use of pedagogical strategies. In addition to the four observed categories, the participants also identified administrative support, creativity in planning, encouragement of students, and a belief that co-teaching is beneficial for students with disabilities as necessary for successful co-teaching relationships.

INDEX WORDS: Collaboration, Co-Teaching, Dispositions, Collaborative relationships, Teacher dispositions

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DEDICATION

This body of work is dedicated to the wonderful men in my life; my father, my husband, and my sons. Without their support, none of this would have been possible.

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The completion of this lifetime goal would not have been possible without the support of many people. I would first like to thank the teachers and administrators who welcomed me into their buildings, as well as my work family, who offered encouragement and support throughout this whole process. My committee chair, Dr. Stephanie Kenney, who so willingly took me under her wing and made sure I was prepared to fly from the nest! I am forever grateful to Dr. Brenda Marina and Dr. Anne Marshall for picking me up as a hitchhiker and making sure I arrived at my destination. Lucy, Shirley, and Paula, my very honest friends who never let me consider quitting. My dear friend Liz who was relentless in checking to make sure I continued to make strides. My siblings, Dora, Marsha, Eva, and Mark... we truly do put the "fun" in dysfunctional! My Dad, who has taken care of me for so long.. I'm so glad I had this opportunity to make him proud. My wonderful sons, Garrett, Quaid, Riley, and Hughes... you guys can eat at the kitchen table again! And last but so far from least, my husband, Chris, who just so happens to be the most wonderful man in the world.. honey, we did it!!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The American education system is currently striving to reach the goals put before it as a result of the current legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). To meet the challenge of successfully educating all students, including those with disabilities, collaboration between general and special education teachers is necessary (Blankstein, 2004; Keefe, Moore, & Duff, 2004). Such collaboration is not something that naturally occurs in a workplace. Collaboration requires effort and cooperation from those who are working together to achieve a common goal. For many years, corporations have been trying to train workers to be cooperative rather than competitive through such efforts as "Quality Circles" and Total Quality Management (TQM)" (Price, Mayfield, McFadden, & Marsh, 2001). Changes in the field of education are advancing educators toward that same goal of cooperation rather than competition and isolation (Cole, 1992; Ritter, Michael, & Irby, 1999; Scala, 2001).

Collaborative relationships are most successfully developed and maintained when they are entered into willingly (Cook & Friend, 1991). It is recommended that school administrators encourage collaboration rather than force it upon staff members, as it is something which needs to be valued and nurtured (Cole, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1992). When it is effective, educational

collaboration between general and special educators promotes shared ownership of all students among faculty and supports the meaningful participation and a sense of belonging among students with disabilities (Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001). This research will explore teacher dispositions that are present in successful collaborative teaching relationships. The focus will be on partnerships in which general education and special education teachers share the instructional and managerial duties for a class made up of general and special education students.

Background of the Study

Eaker, Dufour, and Dufour (2002) emphasized the importance of creating a collaborative culture within a school community. This type of culture is characterized by the ability of the teachers to work in heterogeneous teams focused on reaching common goals. School leaders must be willing to empower teachers, allowing them to develop their own leadership capacity as the teacher leaders of such heterogeneous teams. In *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner (1995) point out that leadership requires the efforts of all team members. Typically it is not the creation of the teams or the empowerment of the teachers that presents as the primary problem for school leaders. The challenge lies in ensuring that teachers have the focus, time, support, and boundaries that are critical to the forging of effective teams (Eaker, Dufour, & Dufour, 2002). The

schedule of a school day does not always lend itself to team building and collaborative planning. Administrators who choose to cultivate a collaborative culture focused on learning, must creatively problem solve to come up with ways that the school day can provide opportunities for empowerment and teamwork (Alper, 1995; Kennedy & Fisher, 2001).

Communication is a vital element in collaborative school organizations (Lunenberg & Ornstein, 2004). Kennedy and Fisher (2001) stressed the importance of communication within a school to ensure that roles and responsibilities of each team member are defined. Such role definition prevents gaps in school and district procedures and services and allows for the development of collaboration among faculty members. Although shared knowledge has not historically been the norm in American schools, it is beneficial for the successful education of all students (Blankstein, 2004; Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004). The staff members of collaborative schools willingly communicate and share information that is integral to the daily business of education.

In any school organization, trust is an integral factor in determining collaborative goal achievement (De Pree, 1997; Lencioni, 2002). School leaders, as well as school faculty members have a strong need for trust in the work environment (De Pree). Northouse (2004), expanded on the importance of trust in

modern educational organizations by pointing out that the desire for integrity can be seen in the development of new public school curricula that teaches character values and ethical leadership. Schools are putting forth efforts in order to provide an educational foundation that is built upon the idea of trust, therefore nurturing a climate and culture that is steeped in trustworthiness. The study of character words of the week as well as formal recognition of students embodying desirable character traits are only two of the ways that adults are attempting to educate students about the importance of trustworthiness.

The culture of a school is the framework upon which teaching and learning is based and "is founded upon the assumptions, beliefs, values, and habits that constitute the norms for that organization-norms that shape how people think, feel, and act" (Dufour & Eaker, 1998, p. 131). It is vital to student achievement that the culture of a school is collaborative, yet it is not easy to build and maintain such a culture (Blankstein, 2004; Eaker, Dufour, & Dufour, 2002). Successful collaboration is most likely to occur when supported by administrators who are willing to creatively solve for barriers such as planning and scheduling (Kennedy & Fisher, 2001; Scala, 2001).

In a collaborative educational setting, all faculty and staff acknowledge the role that they play and accept that they are accountable for all students. The word accountability is commonly used in contemporary education. However, society has embraced a narrow definition of accountability (Cobb, 2005; Kennedy & Fisher, 2001; Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 2005). Cobb opined that schools need to focus not just on accountability, but also on commitment, sharing, and leadership. Accountability is all school personnel together being responsible for the education of all students. Collaboration can encourage greater accountability as it embeds communication, trust, commitment, and sharing into the culture.

Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2005) pointed out that schools that are successful are not that way by accident. There must be supervision present to shape the organization into a productive unit. Scala (2001) expanded on this by stating that successful collaboration requires the support of administration. Educators in supervisory positions can aid in collaboration through encouragement of collegial conversations, scheduling that makes collaboration possible, and the arrangement of common planning for teachers involved in collaborative efforts. Administrative support is a key influence on initiation and implementation of any collaborative methods that include students with disabilities in the general education setting

(Lieber, Hanson, Beckman, Odom, Sandall, Schwartz, & Woolery, 2000).

One such strategy used to include students is the co-teaching model (Klingner & Vaughn, 2002). This model pairs a general education teacher with a special education teacher in order to provide education to students with and without disabilities in a single classroom. Idol, Nevin, and Paolucci-Whitcomb (2000) stated that the key to co-teaching is collaboration, which is an interactive process that enables teachers with varying expertise to ensure that students with a range of academic and social needs receive quality services in the general education classroom.

The move toward greater inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom has cast special educators, as well as general educators and administrators in unfamiliar roles (Gable & Manning, 1997). Historically, general education teachers have been content-area specialists, while special education teachers possessed knowledge of how to appropriately accommodate for students with special learning needs within the classroom setting. A major provision of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) was that disabled students would be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). This provision mandates that students will receive their education in the general environment

to the greatest extent possible. Later mandates through NCLB require general educators to make necessary accommodations for all learners within the classroom, while special educators are expected to teach the standards set at the state level for all students. As a result of this expectation, much attention has been paid to educating all students in the general education setting; however, relatively little attention has been paid to assisting general and special educators with figuring out how to work together in a single classroom (Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001).

Cook and Friend (1991) identified the following concepts that are considered to be the characteristics of collaboration: should be voluntary; requires parity; shared responsibility; shared accountability; and shared resources. They go on to acknowledge that even when the necessary ingredients are all present successful collaboration is not guaranteed. This has seemed to be the case at schools within the Houston County school district, in the state of Georgia.

The Houston County school district within the state of Georgia has provided training in co-teaching to all teachers currently participating in this model. This training has spanned the last two school years and been repeated so that new teachers would be able to participate. Training on the characteristics of collaboration has been woven throughout the co-teaching module

in an effort to encourage teachers to work toward developing a collaborative relationship. Although these teachers have been exposed to and trained in the use of collaboration, not all of the co-teaching relationships have developed into a viable partnership. In addition to training, Houston county teachers have benefitted from having co-taught classes scheduled before other classes, and from ongoing support of co-teaching from building level and central office administration. This fact indicates that other factors in addition to skills, scheduling, and favorable conditions influence the success of collaboration.

Teacher dispositions have been identified as important factors for effective teaching (Mullin, 2003). The National council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2002) has promoted the concept of teacher dispositions as vital to the success of highly qualified teachers in the classroom. NCATE (2002) defines disposition as

The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator's own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. For example, they might include a belief that all students can learn, a vision of

high and challenging standards, or a commitment to a safe and supportive learning environment (p. 53).

Although there are several definitions of disposition, the definition developed by NCATE is the one most used by educational institutions today (Richardson & Onwuegbuzie, 2003). This definition is the one used as the standard by which to measure the development of dispositions in teacher candidates in NCATE accredited teacher preparation programs.

Statement of the Problem

Collaboration is difficult work for teachers. This stems from a long history of training teachers to work individually in isolation to educate the students for which they were responsible. It is widely believed that such isolation is not what works best for students. It is now widely accepted that the entire faculty of a school is responsible for the education of every student in the building. This change in beliefs is resonating through the world of education as schools clamor to become Professional Learning Communities. This means that the roles of educators are changing as they are increasingly being called upon to teach all students in the general education setting. Often this is done through a collaborative or co-teaching model. This situation is proving to be very challenging for many educators, both general education and special education.

Literature indicates that co-teaching is a viable method of instructing students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Co-teaching places educators in positions to become partners within the classroom. While much attention has focused upon co-teaching as a service delivery option, there has not been a great deal of research on how two educators work together in a single classroom. Successful co-teaching does not occur simply because two teachers who are in the same classroom at the same time possess knowledge of what makes collaboration successful. It is not clear why some co-teaching relationships appear to thrive while others simply do not succeed.

Teachers of today are faced with the task of forming and nurturing viable collaborative relationships. Certain conditions are known to impact the co-teaching relationship. These conditions include voluntary co-teaching, parity in the relationship, shared responsibility, shared accountability, and shared resources. Even when conditions and skills are in place, some co-teaching relationships are successful while others are not; and the reasons for the presence or absence of success are unknown. A successful collaborative relationship is defined as one in which the teachers willingly partner together and have been observed successfully meeting the needs of students in their co-taught class. It is possible that the dispositions of teachers may be a factor that influences the success and

sustenance of collaborative teams. Research is needed to examine the dispositions of teachers who have been able to incorporate the conditions and skills necessary for the formation of a successful collaborative relationship. Identifying the ways in which co-teachers' dispositions impact the collaborative relationship will provide insight in to the development and support of successful co-teaching teams. The purpose of this study is to explore the dispositions of successful co-teachers in the Houston County school district in order to gain insight into the establishment of successful collaborative relationships.

Research Questions

This study aims to identify dispositions which better equip teachers to develop and maintain positive co-teaching relationships in inclusive settings. The sub-questions guiding the study are:

1. What dispositions do teachers in the Houston County school district who are participating in a successful collaborative relationship through a co-teaching partnership identify as necessary for success?
2. What dispositions are seen when teachers are observed in a successful co-teaching situation?

Significance of the Study

There is a sizable body of research devoted to educating students with disabilities in the general education setting. One of the models that has gained attention as a way to include special education students in the general curriculum is co-teaching. This is a relationship in which a general education and special education teacher share the responsibilities for a classroom of mixed abilities students, some of which have documented disabilities. Research has identified the characteristics that are necessary in order for a collaborative relationship to develop and flourish. Although the conditions and skills are identified, when these factors are in place in collaborative relationships, some are successful and some are not. This study will seek to identify the dispositions of teachers participating in successful collaborative relationships in the Houston County school district. School leaders and leaders in higher education teacher preparation programs will benefit from this research as it will provide a set of dispositions that can be identified and nurtured in potential co-teachers. This research will also provide any teacher who enters into a collaborative relationship via the co-teaching model with an idea of what they need to look for in their own disposition to help them determine if co-teaching is a situation where they may experience success.

Autobiographical Roots of the Study

In an era in which education is being driven by policies resulting from the federal mandate, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), the development of collaborative relationships is at the forefront of the work being done by school and district level educators. The researcher can attest to this in a personal sense, as she has been involved in the training of all co-teaching teams throughout her district. Teachers have been provided training including information and examples of successful collaboration, yet many teams do not become successful co-teaching partnerships. This research will be used by the researcher to continue training and allow for informed selection and matching of co-teachers in the Houston County school district.

Research Procedures

Research Design

The proposed research will be implemented with a qualitative approach. This research is reliant upon the constructivist belief that human beings construct their own perceptions of the world and that there is not one perception that is truer than another (Glesne, 2006). The researcher also acknowledges from a postpositivism perspective that this research relies upon such procedures and language as validity, reliability, bias, and others normally associated with

mainstream science, while asserting that research can reveal objective facts which are accurate enough to assist in making predictions and generalizations about behavior (Glesne).

This study will draw from a constructivist paradigm, recognizing that people develop their own perceptions of the world and that there is no correct or incorrect way in which that perception should be framed. The case-study method will be used as the primary way to report the data. Case-study research employs comprehensive research strategies which are informed by a distinct theoretical background (Kyburz-Graber, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the case study method is a way to improve the reader's level of understanding of the research topic. The case study method was selected because it is the best agent for communicating relevant content and findings.

Participants

The participants in this study will be teachers in the Houston County school district participating in a co-teaching model. The teachers will be drawn from seven middle schools, and four high schools within the county. Teacher participants will have been involved in co-teaching for at least one school year. The participants will be chosen based upon the recommendation of the principals that they meet the definition of a successful co-teaching team.

Instrumentation

This study will employ informal observations and follow-up/exit interviews. The case study method will be used as the format for data reporting as it allows for the analysis of existing, real-life situations which are complex. Using this method, it is possible to describe such situations in rich and clear detail (Kyburz-Graber, 2004).

Data Collection

Data for this study will be collected through multiple observations and follow up/exit interviews with six teachers participating in the co-teaching model in the Houston county school district. The six teachers will be chosen from the middle and high schools in the Houston County school district. Approval from the Houston County school district, as well as the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) will be obtained prior to survey observations and interviews since human participants will be involved.

Data Analysis

During this study, the six co-teachers will be observed in the classroom environment through nonparticipant observation. Once the initial observation has taken place, frequently observed interactions will be sorted into categorical themes drawn from the literature on dispositions. A set of codes will then be developed based upon dispositions identified in the

literature as favorable for teachers of diverse students and identified behavioral themes occurring in the classroom. Coding is a process of sorting and defining pieces of data which are relevant to the purpose of the research (Glesne, 2006). The category development will not be static, but one in which themes will be allowed to emerge and develop throughout the process. In addition to the code sheets, detailed field notes will be taken during the observations. These field notes will provide the researcher with a scripted picture of what took place within the classroom. The teachers will also participate in follow up interviews to ascertain their perceptions of the interaction between them during the observation. This interview data will provide insight into the teachers' perceptions of the observed behaviors. Interviews will be coded using the same themes as the observation data. Interview data, however, will represent the beliefs of the teachers rather than the observed behaviors of the teachers.

Limitations

1. The small size of this study may limit generalization to co-teaching populations in other settings.

Delimitations

1. The teachers that will be included in this study will have at least one year of experience in a co-taught classroom to strengthen the findings of the researcher.

2. This study will focus on the co-teaching experiences of teachers in one school district where the co-teachers have been trained.

Summary

The education of students with disabilities in the general education classroom has become an issue at the forefront of the American education system. Much of this is due to the mandates to provide LRE for students with disabilities, as well as those from NCLB to provide an equitable education to all students, regardless of any documented disability. Collaboration between educators is one of the ways in which equitable education can be accomplished. One way in which educators are collaborating is through co-teaching. Co-teaching appears to be a viable means of educating students with disabilities as indicated by the research. The conditions and skills necessary for successful co-teaching or collaboration have been identified; however, the presence of these elements and skills does not always ensure that a successful co-teaching relationship will develop. Six secondary school co-teachers in the Houston County school district will participate in observations and follow up/exit interviews to allow for deeper access of information about the dispositions that are necessary for a successful co-teaching relationship. This researcher expects to gain insight into the

dispositions that are helpful in the establishment and necessary to the maintenance of successful co-teaching relationships.

Chapter Two

Review of Research and Related Literature

In accordance with mandates set forth by the federal government through *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), all students will achieve at the proficient level on state testing by the 2013-2014 school year. This expectation implies that students with disabilities will be expected to perform at a level comparable to their non-disabled peers on grade-level assessments. In order to meet this expectation, schools throughout the country are implementing various instructional models and strategies believed to effectively close the achievement gap between general education and special education students. One widely-used method is including students with disabilities in the general education class environment (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & McDuffie, 2005; Murawski & Swanson, 2001). Such effort calls for close collaboration between educators who specialize in content areas and those who specialize in adapting curriculum so that students with disabilities have equal access to the general education curriculum (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, & Vanhover, 2006). This type of collaboration veers sharply away from the original goal of American schools as described by Darling-Hammond (1995) which was not to educate all students well, but to process all students in an efficient manner while focusing on

those few students who were identified as having deep thinking capabilities.

Educating students with disabilities in the general education setting is not only a method to bridge the gap in assessment results; it is also a practice that has been mandated by the federal government since the 1970's. Educating students in the Least Restrictive Environment, or LRE, pre-dated NCLB and was a major provision of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142). The law states that: "to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are nondisabled; and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplemental aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily" (34 C.F.R. Section 300.550).

The pairing of general and special education teachers in general education classes, commonly known as co-teaching, has become popular throughout the United States (Wilson, 2005). Several terms have been used to describe this pairing of general and special educators. Terms such as cooperative teaching, team teaching, inclusion, mainstreaming, and collaborative teaching have often been used interchangeably with co-teaching (Dieker, 2001). While cooperative, team, and collaborative teaching are

all based on the idea of two teachers working in a co-taught classroom, mainstreaming and inclusion have a different meaning. McCarty (2006) defines inclusion as a way of including students with disabilities in a general education classroom for the entire school day, bringing any necessary related services to them in that general education classroom. When participating in inclusion, a student is taught outside of the general education classroom only when all available methods have been tried within the general education setting without success (Bateman & Bateman, 2002). Mainstreaming occurs when students with disabilities spend the majority of their day in the special education classroom setting, participating in the general education setting for only part of the day (McCarty). Co-teaching is defined as "two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single physical space" (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 2). Co-teaching is an interactive process that allows a diverse group of students to access the content knowledge of a general educator, while also benefitting from access to the specialized knowledge of a special educator.

Keefe and Moore (2004) pointed out that the benefits and barriers of co-teaching in elementary schools have been relatively well documented. Benefits included enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence, strong academic progress, and

improved social adjustment (Rice & Zigmond, 1999). Barriers identified by Rice and Zigmond included that students with disabilities often experience difficulties adjusting to higher expectations with regard to tests, homework, and grading standards. In addition to the difficulties experienced by students, teachers had difficulty finding adequate planning time, even in elementary situations where planning periods can be scheduled more regularly.

Co-teaching at the secondary level has proved to be more challenging than co-teaching at the elementary level, with research just beginning to address such issues as implementation, instruction, and effectiveness (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) identified the following obstacles faced by co-teachers in the high school setting: the emphasis on content knowledge; expectation that students have independent study skills; faster pace of the instruction; emphasis on high stakes testing and competency exams; less positive attitudes of teachers; and the inappropriate application of strategies that were successful at the elementary level. Keefe and Moore (2004) found through focus groups with co-teachers at the high school level that additional barriers to co-teaching not identified by elementary teachers were identified by high school teachers. These barriers included larger class sizes, seeing more students each day, larger school

sizes, and lack of role clarity for general and special education teachers.

Educating students with disabilities in the general education setting calls for educators to understand and address the specific needs of students. This understanding is influenced by the attitudes and beliefs educators have about inclusive education (Lambert, Curran, Prigge, & Shorr, 2005). Disposition is the term commonly used to describe the beliefs and attitudes of individuals. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) defines disposition as a set of values, commitments, and professional ethics which influence behavior toward students, families, colleagues, and communities (2006). Reform movements of the early 1990s began the practice of using teacher disposition as a predictor of teacher success (Helm, 2006).

The major body of literature to be reviewed in this chapter is teacher dispositions, specifically in a co-teaching situation. Since the practice of co-teaching is closely affiliated with research on collaboration, it will be necessary to elaborate on this area to provide a comprehensive understanding of co-teaching situations. While there are identified components of collaboration, it is reasonable to assert that teacher disposition plays a major role in the success and maintenance of a co-teaching relationship. This

assertion is based upon the fact that even when the contextual conditions and skills necessary for collaboration are present, co-teachers are not always able to form and maintain a successful relationship.

School Culture

The culture of a school is the framework upon which all teaching and learning is based. It is the thread that the fabric of the school environment and climate is woven from. Dufour and Eaker (1998) opine that the culture of an organization is based upon the assumptions, beliefs, values, and habits that influence the norms governing how members think, feel, and act. School culture brings leadership and learning together by acting as the backbone of the school community. It is the joining of the two that make not only the day to day running of the school possible, but also the push toward change initiatives and school improvement (Sergiovanni, 2006). Bjork and Bond (2006) affirmed this by stating that districts can create cultures that lend themselves to continuous improvement and meaningful change. In order for such strides toward improvement and meaningful change to take place, culture must be understood.

The term culture became popular in the 1980s, interchangeably being used with climate, spirit, ethos, and ambience (Prosser, 1999; Solvanson, 2005). Culture can be found everywhere; it exists in schools, work, families, and businesses

(Goldring, 2005). All organizations have a culture and that culture is often affected by outside forces. Such forces can have a negative or positive impact, sometimes encouraging collegiality among group members while at other times invoking conflict (Solvanson).

School administrators are responsible for many things within the school community. One of the most important of these responsibilities is to cultivate the culture of the school. Unfortunately, the task of managing the day to day running of a school too often consumes administrators, leaving little time to focus on school culture. Bjork and Bond (2006) shared five keys to unlocking the kind of culture that makes improvement and change possible: (a) Create a trusting environment, (b) establish a shared vision, (c) create a collaborative culture, (d) expect high expectations, and (e) imbed continuous improvement and support. Eaker, Dufour, and Dufour (2002) assert that our best hope for re-culturing schools can be found within the premise of professional learning communities. Professional learning communities aim to create a collaborative culture that is embedded in the daily routine. Collaboration and a collaborative culture are common themes throughout research-based education reform models.

Collaboration

Teachers working together to achieve common goals has been at the center of many school reform efforts (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, & Vandover, 2006). Teachers are increasingly required to work collaboratively as they employ problem-solving skills to meet the needs of students who come from diverse backgrounds. The teachers of today are asked to adhere to a standardized curriculum for all students, no matter what the students' life experiences or ability levels are. In order to do this, teachers should be able to incorporate learning that accommodates for differing cognitive abilities while providing opportunities for students to broaden their knowledge base. This type of effective teaching requires that teachers have the opportunity to learn from one another, to examine the outcomes of their efforts, and to devise new practices (Darling-Hammond, 1995). Teachers are no longer viewed as solo practitioners, but as integral members of teams with the common goal of educating all students. General and special educators commonly work collaboratively to develop, implement, and evaluate educational programming for students with disabilities (Duke, 2004).

Friend and Cook (1992) describe the act of collaboration as a voluntary, professional relationship based upon goal-driven activities, as well as parity, shared responsibility for decisions, and shared accountability. In the school setting,

collaboration aims to enhance teaching in order to accomplish the goal of all students learning at their own optimum level, including students with disabilities. The education of students with disabilities has been a controversial topic in the face of NCLB. Scala (2001) noted that there are no longer clearly defined lines between the role of general educators and special educators. Historically, general education teachers have had limited responsibility for the education of students with disabilities (Winebrenner, 1996). Presently many schools are implementing an inclusive, or collaborative, model which is an approach in which two or more teachers interact in a manner that is supportive and beneficial for them, as well as the students they are supporting (Friend and Cook, 2000). As inclusion has become more widespread in American schools, the responsibility of educating students with disabilities has been put on the shoulders of all teachers, rather than just one group (Ritter, Michael, and Irby, 1999).

Co-Teaching

As more students with disabilities receive educational services in the general education setting, the effort to provide them with equal access to the curriculum has become a collaborative one between general and special educators. In many cases, this collaborative effort has taken the form of co-teaching. Gately and Gately (2001) defined co-teaching as the

"collaboration between general and special education teachers for all of the teaching responsibilities of all students assigned to a classroom. In a co-taught classroom, teachers share the planning, presentation, evaluation, and classroom management in an effort to enhance the learning environment for all students" (p. 43). This definition parallels the 1995 definition cited earlier from Cook and Friend. In 2000, Friend and Cook elaborated further on co-teaching as an approach to increase instructional options, improve educational programs, and reduce stigmatization for students labeled as special education, all while providing support to the professionals involved.

Co-teaching is not a new concept in public education (Walter-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend (1989) suggested the term *cooperative teaching* to describe the partnership between special and general educators designed to provide direct services to all students within the general education setting. Cook and Friend (1995) then shortened the term *cooperative teaching* to *co-teaching*. Co-teaching is an arrangement that has been widely studied and the expected benefits are documented throughout the co-teaching literature. The expected benefits include having a knowledgeable teacher available to all students; increased participation of all students, with and without disabilities; improved learning

outcomes for students; and the coupling of the expertise of general and special educators (Kim, 2006).

There are six identified models of co-teaching (Friend & Cook, 2000). In one teach-one observe, one teacher provides instruction to the students while the other teacher observes a single student or groups of students. This model is particularly useful for new co-teaching teams and for taking data on students. In one teach-one assist, one teacher delivers instruction while the other teacher drifts about the classroom providing assistance to students. In station teaching, the teachers set up stations through which the students rotate. Each teacher is responsible for delivering instruction to small groups as they rotate through the stations. In parallel teaching, the class is split into two groups and the teachers deliver the same instruction to the smaller groups. In alternative teaching, the class is split into two groups, usually one group is larger, and the teachers deliver different instruction to the groups. This model is useful for remediation or enrichment of content. In team teaching, the co-teachers work as a team to deliver the content to the class as a whole. This is the most advanced model of co-teaching and requires trust and commitment between the co-teachers.

The results of many qualitative research studies show that there are many potential benefits of co-teaching (Lawton, 1999).

Walter-Thomas (1997) conducted a three year qualitative investigation of 18 elementary and seven middle school teams who were involved in building programs aimed to support students with disabilities in the general education setting. Each of these teams used co-teaching as part of their program development and implementation. The purpose of the study was to investigate the benefits and problems encountered by the 23 school teams as they implemented a co-teaching model designed to facilitate the inclusion of special education students. The methodology used was naturalistic inquiry, with data collected through classroom observations, semi-structured individual interviews, and school developed documents. The study identified four major benefits for students with disabilities, including positive feelings about themselves as capable learners, enhanced academic performance, improved social skills, and stronger peer relationships. Benefits for general and special education teachers included increased professional satisfaction, opportunities for professional growth, personal support, and increased opportunities for collaboration.

The most persistent problems encountered by co-teachers were also identified in the study conducted by Walter-Thomas (1997). These problems included scheduled planning time, student scheduling, caseload concerns, administrative support, and staff development opportunities. Study participants more readily

reached consensus on the problems encountered while co-teaching than on the benefits. Participants reported a broad range of time spent in regular planning sessions with their co-teaching partners, being anywhere from 0 to 360 minutes weekly. Student scheduling was a labor intensive process that entailed a great deal of hand scheduling rather than using programs designed to randomly assign students to classes. A problematic component closely tied to scheduling was concern over the caseloads held by the special education teachers. Many schools in the study reported that their special education teachers were carrying such large caseloads that the needs of the students were difficult to meet. Three factors of administrative support were indicated as having influence over the success or failure of programs. Those factors were the interest of the special education teachers, building-level leadership, and support from district-level administrators. Most participants indicated that they had been given very few opportunities for professional development in the area of co-teaching and felt that such opportunities were warranted. The following topics were most often suggested for professional learning: co-planning and co-teaching skills, writing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) appropriate for general education settings, and effective communication to facilitate teamwork. Walter-Thomas concluded that additional research is needed to determine the impact of

these problems, as well as the benefits discussed earlier, to the development of inclusive programs.

Weiss and Brigham (2000) reviewed 23 quantitative and qualitative studies published on co-teaching between 1987 and 1999. The 23 studies encompassed elementary and secondary settings. The authors cited several problems with co-teaching research, including interviewing only those teachers in successful co-teaching relationships, finding that teacher personality was the most important variable in the success of co-teaching, and the lack of a consistent definition of co-teaching. Weiss and Brigham concluded that there were few overall reports of what teachers were actually doing in the classroom setting. Recent research has provided richer descriptions of the interactions of teachers in a co-taught classroom.

Murawski and Swanson (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of the co-teaching research, aimed at providing a synthesis of the quantitative data available on the effectiveness of co-teaching. Eighty-nine articles were reviewed for the purpose of this meta-analysis, with only six having sufficient quantitative information for an effect size to be calculated. The studies focused on differing outcomes, from social benefits gained by students to academic achievement in math and language arts. Of those six, only three included effect sizes related to students

with reported disabilities. The effect sizes for the individual studies varied from 0.08 to 0.95, with the overall mean effect size being a 0.40. These effect sizes indicate that co-teaching has a moderately effective influence on student outcomes. After reviewing and analyzing the studies related to co-teaching, the major variable identified as paramount in the success or failure of a co-teaching program appears to be the personalities of the co-teachers. Murawski and Swanson concluded that further research into the efficacy of co-teaching is needed before it can be generally recommended as a model of effectiveness for improving student performance. It is vital that data continue to be gathered from co-taught classes where the merger between teachers has been successful, as well as from those classes where the merger has been unsuccessful. This sort of information will lead to greater understanding of how co-teaching impacts student needs.

Weiss and Lloyd (2002) supported the findings of Murawski and Swanson (2001) and were able to identify several challenges for co-teachers after observing co-taught middle and high school classrooms. They were interested in exploring and interpreting the roles and actions of special education teachers in co-teaching situations. Participants were six special education teachers from a rural local education agency (LEA). Three of the teachers were from the middle school, while the other three were

from the high school. All six of the participants were involved in co-teaching across content areas, in addition to providing special education services in a resource setting. Data was collected using observations, interviews, and documents which consisted of journals maintained by the participants. They found that in most instances, general education teachers continued to be identified as the content area specialists, while special education teachers continued to take on the role of instructional aide. Although two teachers may be in one classroom at the same time, there is no guarantee that they are using optimal methods for co-teaching, which could negatively impact the co-taught situation (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & McDuffie, 2005).

Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & McDuffie (2005) examined co-teaching practices in different settings and content areas, attempting to draw some general conclusions about the co-teaching experience. The authors used extensive observations, field notes, videotapes of classes, interviews with teachers and students, and artifacts to look at effective teaching practices for the inclusion of students with disabilities in elementary, middle, and high school content-area classes. They found, in support of previous researchers that the relationship between the two teachers is a critical component which influences the success or failure of the co-teaching

situation. When co-teachers get along and are able to work together, students with disabilities are more likely to find academic and social success in the co-taught classroom. In contrast, when the teachers have a conflicted relationship, the inclusive setting is more challenging for students. There appear to be several factors which impact the co-teaching relationship. These factors include a mutual trust and respect for each other's expertise in the chosen field, a tendency for both teachers to practice behaviors recognized as effective teaching, and compatibility of beliefs in what effective teaching looks like. Mastropieri et al. found that, in addition to the relationship of the co-teachers, content knowledge and administrative decisions are also factors in the success of co-teaching. The authors pointed out that further research on these factors could provide implications for the use of co-teaching.

Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007) sought to gain understanding about the practice and process of co-teaching through a synthesis of qualitative research. The following general conclusions were drawn from the results: co-teaching is seen as generally beneficial for students both academically and socially, as well as for the professional development of teachers; teachers identified conditions such as sufficient planning time, compatibility of co-teachers, training in co-teaching, and students in co-taught classes having a minimum

academic and behavioral skill level necessary for success; and the special education teacher often plays a subordinate role, assisting students rather than providing content area instruction. The authors recommended that future research address the ways in which individual schools develop partnerships that are truly collaborative or genuine, while building on the gains research has shown can be realized from these partnerships.

Co-teaching at the secondary level

Research focused on co-teaching at the secondary level has generally been limited (Dieker, 2001). The challenge of meeting the needs of a diverse group of learners at the secondary level can be great. Secondary teachers often work with more than 100 students daily, leaving little time for individualized instruction. In addition, addressing requirements for graduation, college and career placements, as well as the rigor of a standardized curriculum emphasizing higher order thinking are all pressures experienced by secondary teachers. The goal of secondary teachers is to prepare their students to leave high school and become productive, responsible citizens (Murawski & Dieker, 2004). All of these issues support the fact that there are constraints on co-teaching at the secondary level that are not present at the elementary level (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

Research is clear that students with disabilities may not experience academic success at the secondary level. Factors that contribute to this lack of success are lack of communication between teachers, assignments with increased difficulty, and the inability of teachers to address the learning needs of diverse students in the face of a strong focus on content mastery (Murawski & Dieker, 2004). Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) point out that secondary students are expected to possess independent study skills as well as prerequisite content knowledge. Such expectations translate into the ability to organize class material, attend to lecture while taking notes, participate during class, prepare adequately for tests, and correctly complete assignments in a timely manner. Students with disabilities often struggle to meet such expectations. The use of co-teaching holds great potential for meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the general education setting, as well as for supporting the general education teachers who are faced with the task of educating these students (Weiss, 2004).

There is a shortage of relevant research on co-teaching at the secondary level (Dieker, 2001; Keefe & Moore, 2004). The research that has been focused on implementation and student outcomes in co-taught situations is inconclusive (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Murawski and Dieker (2004) point out that while many schools have adopted a co-teaching model in order to include

students with disabilities in the general education classroom, teachers continue to search for ways to make this model more feasible and beneficial.

Keefe and Moore (2004) conducted interviews with eight general and special education teachers participating in a co-teaching model in a large suburban high school. The following three major themes emerged from the interview analyses: the nature of collaboration, roles of the teachers, and outcomes for students and teachers. One of the sub-themes that emerged under *nature of collaboration* was the compatibility of co-teachers. There was no consistent method for determining partnerships in the high school studied. Many of the participants recommended that teachers interested in forming a co-teaching partnership should have input into the selection of their partner.

Teacher communication and compatibility emerged as the other sub-theme in the Keefe and Moore (2004) study. One special education teacher stated that "The most important thing and the most difficult thing to predict is how well the teachers get along" (p. 82). The authors concluded that the most important determinant in teachers viewing co-teaching as successful, as well as the likelihood that they would continue co-teaching, was the relationship between the co-teachers. This conclusion emphasized the fact that schools need to give careful

consideration to how teachers are paired and how co-teaching teams will be supported over time.

Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & McDuffie (2005) conducted case studies in science and social studies content-area classes, examining effective teaching practices during co-teaching in elementary, middle, and secondary schools. Findings from the observations conducted in the high school settings indicated that the teams had distinct working roles and responsibilities, as well as an emphasis on statewide high-stakes testing. The co-teachers in this study appeared comfortable in the roles of general education content specialist and special education curriculum adapter, special help teacher. It appeared that level of content knowledge was the determinant in who would be the dominant teacher. Mastropieri et al also found that the emphasis on high stakes testing that was noted at the high school level had a definite impact on classroom instruction and collaborative efforts. Findings of this study indicate that in some cases in which guidelines are provided to standardize the pace of instruction, fewer opportunities for extra practice or remediation activities are provided. This directly influences the role of the special educator in accommodating for students with disabilities in general education classes.

Magiera and Zigmond (2005) examined whether or not the presence of a special educator in a secondary general education setting caused the general educator to give less attention to the students with disabilities. The authors compared the experiences of students with disabilities in a co-taught class to the experiences of their general education counterparts that were not participating in a co-taught situation, and found that students with disabilities received less attention from the general education teacher when a special educator was added to the classroom setting. The time sampling method was used to determine how students with disabilities in 11 co-taught classes spent their time. The researchers found two significant differences. First, more individual instructional interactions occurred for students with disabilities under co-teaching conditions. Second, when special educators were in the classroom, students with disabilities were less likely to have interactions with general educators. Although two significant differences were found, the overall results did not indicate added benefits for students in classes taught by two teachers. The researchers' explanation for lack of results which indicated that students benefitted from two teachers was that the teachers were not adequately prepared to participate in a co-teaching relationship. Of the eight pairs of co-teachers in this study, four were teaching together for the first time and four of the

veteran teachers had not received co-teaching training within the past three years. In addition, common planning time was not shared by most of the co-teaching teams. Initial training in co-teaching, careful selection of co-teaching pairs, and ongoing skills training are common suggestions for success in co-teaching (Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Walter-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). Magiera and Zigmond state that in the absence of training in co-teaching and common planning, co-teachers often teach the same way whether another teacher is in the classroom or not.

Teacher Dispositions

A common thread woven throughout co-teaching research is the importance of the relationship between the two teachers. Weiss and Brigham (2000) reviewed 23 studies on co-teaching and found that teacher personality was indicated as the most important variable in the success of co-teaching. Murawski and Swanson (2001) reviewed 89 articles related to co-teaching and identified the personalities of the co-teachers as the determining factor in the success or failure of the co-teaching relationship. The findings of Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & McDuffie (2005) support the findings indicating that the relationship of co-teachers is worth examination when looking into what makes a co-teaching situation successful. The relationship between co-teachers is based upon the respect, parity, responsibility, and accountability that

they share. The ability to share such aspects in a professional relationship is impacted by the dispositions of the individual teachers.

Dispositions literature is grounded in the fields of psychology and philosophy (Thornton, 2006). Several researchers have defined the term disposition. For the purpose of this research, the definition from the NCATE (2002) will be used. The full definition is as follows:

The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator's own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. For example, they might include a belief that all students can learn, a vision of high and challenging standards, or a commitment to a safe and supportive learning environment (p. 53).

Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson (1998) conducted a cross-cultural analysis of the dispositions of teachers identified as exemplary in England, Ireland, and the United States. The teachers were identified as exemplary by their principals. Participants completed a pre-interview survey

followed by a two to three hour interview. The researchers concluded that teaching is a profession that relies as heavily on skillful human relations as it does on content knowledge and pedagogical skills. According to this study, exemplary teachers have learned that the dispositions which precede, as well as accompany the act of teaching, profoundly impact how student learning will occur. When considering a co-taught environment, research supports the assertion that sharing a set of common beliefs about the best teaching and learning practices for all children is a precursor to the implementation of successful inclusive practices in the classroom (Lambert, Curran, Prigg, & Shorr, 2005). A teacher's knowledge of how to teach the curriculum to a diverse group of students may not be enough to make a co-teaching situation successful when the necessary dispositions are not present.

Major and Brock (2003) found that a common core of knowledge, skills, and dispositions are shared by effective teachers of diverse learners. Through a dialogue format, the researchers attempted to explore ways in which they could prepare future teachers to effectively serve diverse learners. In further research on effectively teaching diverse learners, Cline and Necochea (2006) conducted an exploratory study to examine the characteristics of effective teachers in a borderland area where many of the students must navigate between

the cultures of the United States and Mexico. After collecting data from 40 teachers through reflections, evaluations, feedback, and artifacts, the researchers concluded that teachers of such diverse students must have the right dispositions to be effective. The following five themes on teacher disposition emerged from the data analysis: open-mindedness and flexibility; passion for borderland education; desire to seek ongoing professional development; cultural sensitivity; and pluralistic language orientation. The themes identified by Cline and Necochea were supportive of the findings by Major and Brock that empathy, attitude, insight, and pedagogical strategies as essential traits of teachers who effectively teach diverse students. It is reasonable to conclude that such dispositions are essential for teachers who serve such a diverse group as students with disabilities.

The concept of disposition has been promoted as essential to the success of highly qualified teachers in the classroom (Richardson & Onwuegbuzie, 2003). Research points to dispositions being included among educational goals because the simple acquisition of knowledge and skills does not guarantee that they will be used and applied (Katz, 1993; Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 1998). Katz described dispositions as habits of the mind, and indicated that they merit research in order to determine which ones may have the most important

outcomes for the field of education. Recognizing the importance of what has been indicated by disposition research, all NCATE accredited universities have incorporated dispositions into the assessment framework they use for pre-service teachers (Richardson & Onwuegbuzie, 2003).

Summary

Through NCLB the federal government has directed that all students will perform at grade level proficiency by the 2014 school year. This means that students with disabilities will be expected to perform at proficiency levels commensurate with their non-disabled peers. Co-teaching is an effective delivery model used to include students with disabilities in their LRE. This model provides students with disabilities an opportunity to interact with their non-disabled peers as teachers work to close the achievement gap.

Co-teaching continues to be in the forefront of educational research. In order for co-teaching to be effective, teachers must understand and be capable of addressing the needs of diverse learners. Findings indicate that this is more difficult at the secondary level due to larger class sizes, the fact that teachers see more students each day, work in larger schools, and struggle with a lack of role clarity between general and special education teachers.

A review of literature indicates that certain dispositions are essential for teacher success. Studies also indicate that a correlation can be made between teacher dispositions and co-teaching success. In many circumstances, teachers are not given the opportunity to express their opinions about co-teaching prior to being assigned to a co-teaching position. Research points to disposition as a determining factor of teacher success: therefore, careful consideration should be given prior to choosing staff for co-teaching positions.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the dispositions of successful co-teachers in the Houston County school district. While there are many ways to define and examine teacher dispositions, this study examined the dispositions of teachers participating in a co-teaching situation. Major and Brock (2003) identified empathy, attitude, insight, and pedagogical strategies as successful strategies used by effective teachers of diverse students. These findings were supported by the work of Cline and Necochea (2006), who also uncovered dispositional themes while researching teachers who work with culturally diverse learners, known as borderland students. These borderland students shared the cultures of the United States and Mexico in a school located on the border of America and Mexico. Although the students in this study were not identified as diverse due to having a disability, they were identified as diverse due to the cultural differences they encountered in everyday life. Cline and Necochea identified five themes on teacher disposition after researching effective teachers of these borderland students. The five identified themes were open-mindedness and flexibility; passion for borderland education; ongoing professional development; cultural sensitivity; and pluralistic language

orientation. These identified dispositions of effective teachers of diverse learners, as well as the strategies identified by Major and Brock, were used as a lens through which to begin to examine and describe the dispositions of co-teachers in the Houston County school district.

Research Questions

This research aimed to identify dispositions which better equip teachers to develop and maintain positive co-teaching relationships in inclusive settings. This inquiry focused on the following questions:

3. What dispositions did teachers in the Houston County school district who are participating in a collaborative relationship through a co-teaching partnership identify as necessary for success?
4. What dispositions were seen when teachers were observed in a co-teaching situation?

Research Design

The design of this study was qualitative. The goal of this study was to provide thick descriptions of classrooms where a general education teacher and a special education teacher share the responsibility of teaching a diverse group of students, ascertain what dispositions the co-teachers identified as present in themselves, and identify what dispositions were observed in co-taught classrooms. The study employed the

naturalistic inquiry paradigm using nonparticipant observation as the primary data-collection procedure and interviews as the secondary data collection procedure. Case study method was used as the format for reporting the data.

Naturalistic Inquiry.

Each researcher possesses his or her own view of the world. This view impacts the ways in which a researcher approaches the collection of data. This set of beliefs translates into the paradigm that a researcher adheres to throughout his or her study. This research was grounded in the naturalistic inquiry paradigm, which is based upon the following five axioms described by Lincoln and Guba (1985):

1. The nature of reality: Some level of understanding the world, which is made up of multiple constructed realities, can be achieved through holistic study. Prediction and control, however, are unlikely outcomes as each inquiry tends to spurn more questions than answers.
2. The relationship of knower to known: There is interaction between the inquirer and the object of inquiry. It is impossible to separate the knower from the known.
3. The possibility of the generalization: Inquiry aims to develop a body of knowledge which can be used to describe the individual case.

4. The possibility of causal linkages: It is impossible to distinguish cause from effect as simultaneous shaping is constantly occurring.

5. The role of values in inquiry: Inquiry is bound with values. Such values include those of the inquirer; those underlying the theories guiding the research; those that guide the methodology chosen by the inquirer; and those that are inherent to the context of the inquiry.

Naturalistic, or qualitative, inquirers seek to understand and interpret the ways in which people in a social setting construct the world around them (Glesne, 2006). In order to accomplish this, researchers must gain access to the many perspectives of the participants. As access is gained through observations, interactions, and questions, the researcher becomes the main research instrument. The inquiry in this study was conducted by a single researcher seeking a deep understanding of co-teaching relationships.

Glesne (2006) proposes that qualitative researchers are predisposed to the following research purposes: contextualization, understanding, and interpretation. In order to further these purposes, researchers tend to approach the research not with a specific hypothesis, but with an exploratory mind that is open to the variety of perspectives and issues that may be uncovered. Qualitative research methodology allowed this

researcher to explore the relationships of co-teachers within the Houston County school district without a pre-determined hypothesis, allowing for the revelation of perspectives and issues specific to the co-teaching relationships of the study participants. It was the intent of this researcher to add to the body of literature on co-teaching and teacher disposition through the insight gained by observing, interacting with, and questioning co-teachers in the Houston County school district.

Case-study methodology.

Case studies have been used for a variety of purposes, from describing phenomena impacting whole groups of people to that impacting people on an individual basis. Case study is often used as the method for reporting qualitative research.

Incorporating case study into this inquiry provided the researcher an opportunity to report participants' experiences using rich descriptions. According to Lamnek (as cited in Kyburz-Graber, 2004), certain principles are important when attempting to reconstruct the foundation upon which individuals construct their experiences. Those principles are as follows:

1. The individuals involved are included as subjects in the research process.
2. They are seen in the context of their actual life situation (as opposed to an artificial situation).
3. Their experiences are not isolated from their

environment, but are viewed in their specific context.

4. The phenomena observed are interpreted in a systemic context.

5. The research procedure is conducted close to the situation itself, through integrated communication and interaction with the people involved in the process.

This study followed the above principles using the case-study methodology as the primary means of communicating relevant content and findings. This methodology allowed for rich descriptions of the co-teaching experience.

Study participants

This study involved human participants, which required the approval of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Georgia Southern University. In addition to this approval, permission from the Houston County school district was obtained as it was teachers from this school district who participated in the study. The participants in this study were secondary teachers in the Houston County school district who had been participating in the co-teaching model for at least one school year, as verified by the administration of the schools where they teach.

Population.

This research aimed to expand the knowledge of dispositions that are related to successful co-teaching situations. The population for this inquiry was teachers who participated for at least one year in co-teaching at the secondary level in the Houston County school district, located in the state of Georgia. This district currently has 37 total schools, with four high schools and eight middle schools. There are approximately 25,500 students enrolled, with 12% of this population being identified as students with disabilities. This was determined to be the appropriate population for this study as teachers who have been co-teaching have been exposed to the nuances and issues that are relevant to that particular situation. In addition, Houston County co-teachers have been exposed to the skills and practices of collaboration through district-level training. The essential elements that are needed to best equip teachers for a collaborative relationship are best determined by asking the teachers themselves (Austin, 2001).

Participants.

The participants for this research were selected through convenience sampling. Three teams consisting of two teachers each were selected for the case-studies to provide in-depth, information-rich insight into the purpose of this research. These three teams were selected by the researcher based on being

identified by their principals as successful co-teaching teams. Principals were asked to give the names of co-teachers in successful collaborative relationships. A successful collaborative relationship was defined as one in which the teachers willingly partnered together and have been observed successfully meeting the needs of students in their co-taught class. In order for this research to provide depth rather than breadth of understanding, each co-teaching team was selected for the multiple purposes of illuminating, interpreting, and understanding (Glesne, 2006). These purposes lent themselves well to what the researcher attempted to accomplish through this study. Therefore, conducting case studies on three co-teaching teams provided a deep level of understanding and insight into the dispositions of co-teachers.

Data Collection

In an attempt to uncover rich data and believable findings, this inquiry employed two methods of data collection. The methods of participant observation as well as that of participant interviews were used to collect data. The researcher kept field notes during the observation and interview process. In order to ensure that the observations and interviews were processed in an unbiased manner by the researcher, debriefing occurred with an individual who possessed 29 years of experience in special education. This individual currently serves as the

Assistant Superintendent of Student Services in the researcher's school district.

Participant observation was conducted with the researcher observing as a nonparticipant in the co-taught classroom. The observer did not become a member of the group, but concentrated on the observation process. This enhanced the dependability of the data collected during the observation periods. This level of participation allowed the researcher to observe co-teachers and the dispositions that they display in the co-teaching situation. Field notes were taken during the observation, which allowed the researcher to review a real-time qualitative description of teacher actions in the co-taught classroom setting.

Five observations of each of the three co-teaching teams were conducted. In addition to observations, two types of interviews were also conducted with the participants: initial interviews and follow up/exit interviews. All interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed to ensure an accurate script of the interview. Prior to the first observation, telephone interviews were conducted to solicit demographic information. During the observations, the researcher kept field notes describing the interactions of the teachers with each other. A code sheet, as shown in Appendix A, was developed and used to identify themes that emerged related to the literature on teacher dispositions, as well as observed dispositions within

the co-taught classroom. Follow up/exit interviews were conducted with the co-teachers in order to gain further insight into the dispositions observed in the co-taught setting. Questions asked during the interviews were based upon the themes that emerged from the observations conducted on the co-teachers, allowing the researcher to clarify teachers' beliefs and attitudes about what was observed in the classroom setting.

Data Analysis

Code sheets from the observations were analyzed to determine what dispositions were observed in a co-teaching setting. These code sheets were compared with the field notes taken by the observer. Codes enabled the observer to identify the primary action of the teacher, while the field notes were used to describe the context of the action. The field notes were scripted versions of the classroom interactions which allowed the researcher to pinpoint instances that represented the categorical themes. The field notes were used alongside the means provided through the code sheets to yield a descriptive narrative of the observed instances within the co-taught classrooms.

The purpose of the interviews was to stimulate the teachers' recall of the observed events so that they could provide insight into their perceptions of the observed behaviors in the co-taught setting. These interviews enabled the

researcher to further explore the teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to co-teaching.

Summary

This study examined the dispositions of co-teachers within the Houston County school district. Participants were drawn from the population of secondary level co-teachers within the district. Observations were conducted on three teams of secondary level co-teachers. The dispositional instances noted during observations were categorized using a code sheet developed based upon the literature on teacher dispositions, as well as observed themes within the co-taught classroom. Detailed field notes were utilized to provide descriptive information on the instances annotated on the code sheets. In addition to the observations, initial and follow-up/exit interviews were held.

Chapter Four

Report of Data and Data Analysis

Introduction

The literature on co-teaching suggests that certain dispositions are indicative of success in working with diverse students. Although research on co-teaching at the elementary level is plentiful, research on co-teaching at the secondary level has been limited. The purpose of this study was to identify and examine dispositions which equip teachers at the secondary level to develop and maintain positive co-teaching relationships in inclusive settings. Through non-participant observations, the researcher used a pre-determined set of behaviors to identify instances in successful co-taught classrooms of dispositions linked to successful teachers of academically diverse learners. Through pre and post observation interviews, the researcher identified dispositions successful co-teachers in the Houston County school system considered necessary for success.

Three secondary co-teaching teams, each made up of a special education teacher and a general education teacher, were selected for this study through convenience sampling. The participating teams were identified by their principals as successful co-teaching teams based on their willingness to partner together, as well as their demonstrated ability to meet

the needs of students in the co-taught classroom. All co-teachers participated in pre and post observation interviews. Five observations of each of the co-teaching teams were conducted. Code sheets were developed and used during the observations to gather data on instances of teacher dispositions in the classroom setting. The code sheets were developed based on characteristics identified in the literature as essential for teachers of diverse learners. Data collected from the observation and interview processes was synthesized to form the basis of the findings reported in this study. This research aimed to answer the following research questions:

5. What dispositions did teachers in the Houston County school district who are participating in a collaborative relationship through a co-teaching partnership identify as necessary for success?
6. What dispositions were seen when teachers were observed in a co-teaching situation?

Teacher Dispositions

The concept of disposition is essential to the success of qualified classroom teachers (Richardson & Onwuegbuzie, 2003). In addition, there are common dispositions shared by teachers who effectively teach diverse learners. Empathy, attitude, insight, and pedagogical strategies have been identified as essential dispositions shared by teachers of academically

diverse learners. (Major & Brock, 2003). It is reasonable to surmise that these essential dispositions are also necessary for teachers who work with such a diverse group as students with disabilities. Therefore, the code sheets utilized during the observations contained the following four categories of teacher dispositions: empathy, attitude, insight, and pedagogical strategies.

Empathy

According to the literature reviewed for this study, empathy is a characteristic of effective teachers. In order to observe empathy in a secondary co-taught classroom, the researcher focused on three behaviors considered indicative of empathic feelings and identified by Cline and Necochea (2006) as necessary in teachers of diverse learners. Those three behaviors were open-mindedness, flexibility, and understanding. Co-taught teams were considered to display empathy when they responded in an open-minded fashion, displayed flexibility through the course of the lesson, and/or showed a degree of understanding for situational issues. The researcher used a code sheet to tally the number of instances that occurred throughout the course of the observations. The co-teachers were observed as a team, and data was taken on interactions with adults as well as students.

Across the co-teaching teams, instances of empathy were observed a total of 160 times, with a mean of 10.66. Considering

that the observations across teams lasted on average 47.47 minutes, an instance of empathy took place every 4.45 minutes.

Attitude

The research reviewed for the purpose of this study indicated that positive attitudes must accompany the skills and knowledge it takes to teach a group of diverse learners. In order to observe occurrences of positive attitude in the co-taught classroom, the researcher observed instances of positive feedback, passion for education, and indifference. Although indifference is not traditionally viewed as an instance of positive attitude, it does differ from negativity and can be seen in classroom settings as a response to the unwillingness of a student to delve deeper into content. Teachers may use indifference as a strategy to encourage student learning. Once again, the teachers were observed as a team and instances of positive attitude toward students and adults were tallied.

Across the co-teaching teams, instances of positive attitude were observed a total of 181 times, with a mean of 12.06. Considering that the observations across teams lasted on average 47.47 minutes, an instance of positive attitude occurred every 3.94 minutes.

Insight

The literature pointed to insight as another of the traits evident in teachers determined to be highly effective in

educating diverse students. In order to tally the number of insightful events in a co-taught classroom, the researcher observed the instances in which insights were shared by the co-teachers with students, with each other, and with the whole group. Teachers were observed independently sharing their insights, but the information was tallied for the co-teaching team.

Across the co-teaching teams, instances of insight were observed 75 times with a mean of 5. Over the course of the 15 total observations, insight was seen on an average every 9.49 minutes.

Pedagogical Strategies

The research on co-teaching indicates that co-teachers should have a strong understanding of pedagogical strategies to effectively educate groups of diverse learners. In order to measure the use of such strategies, the researcher focused on actual use of strategies during the course of the observations, discussions between co-teachers about pedagogical strategies, and references to professional learning made by the co-teachers. The observations informing on the use of pedagogical strategies were done on the co-teachers as a team.

Across the co-teaching teams, pedagogical strategies were employed 107 times, with a mean of 7.13. Considering that the observations across teams averaged 47.47 minutes in length, the

co-teachers utilized or referenced a pedagogical strategy on average every 6.66 minutes.

Case Studies

Case studies are presented on each of the co-teaching teams. The co-teaching teams were observed using a framework of dispositions identified through literature as essential for successful teachers of diverse learners. Each case study consists of background information about the context, including a description of observed dispositions within the classroom setting; a description of the observed relationship between the co-teachers; a description of dispositions identified by the teachers as important for the success of co-teaching. These descriptions will result in a set of context-grounded assumptions regarding the identified dispositions that best equip teachers to develop and maintain a collaborative relationship geared toward the education of diverse students. In addition, the case studies will include discussion of characteristics that were observed outside the boundaries of the four categories included on the code sheet used for observational data, as well as any that came up during the pre or post observation interviews. The characteristics observed outside of the identified categories include administrative support and input from teachers on what students would benefit from co-teaching; the ability to plan creatively when common

planning was not available; the use of encouragement within a successful co-taught classroom; and a belief that students with disabilities benefit from the co-taught setting.

Co-teaching Team Case Studies

Team FM

Teacher FM1 had 18 years of experience in education, with 6 of those years as a special education paraprofessional. She taught interrelated special education in a middle school setting. She held certification in Early Childhood education, as well as elementary and middle school special education. Teacher FM1 had been co-teaching for 8 years, and participated in co-teaching training offered by the county. Although she volunteered to co-teach, the fact that she was able to co-teach was dictated by the schedule and needs of the students. Teacher FM1 was able to plan with her co-teacher on a daily basis as they shared a common planning time.

Teacher FM2 had 11 years of experience in education. She held certification in all four academic areas through grade 8, as well as in administration. She taught sixth grade Language Arts in a middle school. Teacher FM2 had been co-teaching for 6 years, and participated in co-teaching training offered by the county. She was asked to co-teach by her current co-teaching partner and readily agreed. Teacher FM2 was able to plan with her co-teacher regularly during scheduled common planning time.

Team FM was observed for 236 minutes across five observations. Length of observations ranged from 38 to 53 minutes, with mean length being 47.2 minutes. All observations took place during language arts periods when all students were either receiving language arts instruction from the co-teachers, working in cooperative groups with support from the co-teachers, or working independently at their desks to reinforce previously taught concepts. There was an average of 20 students in the classroom, with four of those students being identified as having a disability.

Across observations, there were a total of 53 instances that were observed as empathy, resulting in a mean of 10.6. There were a total of 59 instances of attitude that could be construed as positive, resulting in a mean of 11.8. Insight was observed 31 times, for a mean of 6.2. Pedagogical strategies were observed on 45 occasions, for a mean of 9.0 (see Table 1).

Table 1

Instances observed across five observations of Team FM

	Empathy	Attitude	Insight	Ped. Strat.
Total	53	59	31	45
Mean	10.6	11.8	6.2	9.0

Team FM was observed using three different models of co-teaching: team teaching; one teach, one drift; and station teaching. Observation three took place during a class period in which students were taking a written exam, so none of the models of co-teaching were observed during that particular observation. Although observation three was unique in that there was not as much teacher/student interaction, code sheets and field notes indicated that instances of empathy, attitude, insight, and pedagogical strategies were still observed. For example, the co-teachers tended to consult more with each other during this time since the students were engaged in test-taking (pedagogical strategies). Field notes indicated that on two different occasions, teacher FM2 approached teacher FM1 and discussed some ways that they could have presented certain content to assist some of the struggling learners. This observation yielded the highest number of occurrences of the co-teachers sharing insight. Field notes indicated that the teachers came together on four occasions to share insightful information about certain students and the material that they appeared to either have mastered or not mastered, as well as some thoughts on why or why not mastery had taken place. When asked about this particular lesson during the interview, Teacher FM1 commented that "we don't always have as much time to process what we see in the classroom when the students are watching our every move. It's

when they are working independently that we have a chance to come together and talk about what's actually happening with the students."

During observation one of Team FM, the students were writing step by step directions on how to re-create a mythical creature that they had drawn. The one teach, one assist model of co-teaching was observed as the lesson began as Teacher FM2 provided instructions to the whole group, while Teacher FM1 circulated and provided support for individual students. Once the lesson had been delivered, the students worked independently at their desks, while both teachers circulated and provided feedback. During this observation, instances of flexibility and providing positive feedback were observed seven and eight times respectively. During dialogue with one student, Teacher FM2 commented on what an outstanding job a student was doing but then provided some feedback about how they might improve the written instructions on re-creating the mythical creature. The student proceeded to explain his thought process to Teacher FM2, with the result being that the teacher agreed that the student was providing even more detailed instructions than the teacher had envisioned. According to field notes, this was considered a display of understanding on the part of Teacher FM2. When asked about this instance during the interview, Teacher FM2 indicated that she holds the belief that sometimes it is the students who

show her what is correct, rather than her showing the students. She went on to explain that although she would never have thought to complete the assignment the way that particular student had, when she listened to his rationale she totally understood. When the researcher commented on the teacher's level of understanding and flexibility, the teacher replied that "being a successful co-teacher would be impossible if I was rigid and refused to see things any way but my own."

During observation five, the students participated in a parts of speech review led by Teacher FM2. While Teacher FM2 led the class review and discussion, Teacher FM1 circulated through the room, ensuring individual understanding for all students. Handouts that the students had completed were often referred to during the lesson, as well as references to information within the grammar textbook. The co-teachers were able to use and discuss pedagogical strategies during this lesson. For example, when Teacher FM2 was speaking with the students about appropriate verb tense, Teacher FM1 interjected a strategy that she had found useful in the past with other students. According to field notes, it appeared that this sharing of strategies was something that both teachers were comfortable with and that the students had experienced as a normal occurrence. When asked during the interview how often learning strategies were shared with students, Teacher FM1 indicated that the students, both

general and special education, often asked her for "hints" or "clues" that they could use to remember concepts they had learned. She expanded on this comment by stating that such strategies were often discussed during planning sessions as she and her co-teaching partner agreed that many students found them extremely useful.

Summary

Team FM was observed five times with a mean observation time of 47.2 minutes. Instances of empathy and positive attitude were both observed consistently over the course of the observations. Positive attitude was observed most frequently, followed by empathy, pedagogical strategies, and insight. Instances within the four dispositional categories were observed being used during large group instruction, as well as during individual instruction. In addition to the four categories observed, Team FM indicated that their success was due to administrative support. Team FM appeared to have created a co-teaching environment that was conducive to learning and safe for student inquiry.

The co-teachers were observed to have a positive relationship that transferred into a collaborative co-teaching situation. Teacher FM1 commented during the interview that co-teaching is "a wonderful thing, but it's not for all students." She clarified this statement by sharing that she holds the

belief that there should be many options available for students with disabilities because their needs are often so varied. She stressed how grateful she was that her administration recognized the fact that co-teaching was not the best learning environment for all students, and allowed the teachers input into which students would benefit from co-taught classes. Teacher FM2 shared that her love for co-teaching stemmed from her enjoyment of teaching students with "a variety of ability levels and needs." She also commented on the importance of administrative support and how she believed that one of the biggest predictors of success for co-taught classrooms was the level of support the teachers felt from administration.

Observed instances of empathy, attitude, insight, and pedagogical strategies, supported by feedback provided during the post observation interview process, indicated the presence of dispositions identified in the literature as essential for successful co-teaching. In addition to the presence of the pre-determined dispositions, Team FM stressed that they were successful due to the fact that they received a great amount of administrative support, and were able to voice their opinions on what students they believed would benefit from co-teaching. The importance these teachers attached to the level of administrative support mirrored the literature on co-teaching that identified administrative support as essential for

successful collaboration. Also, both of the teachers in Team FM appeared to believe that co-teaching was a model that worked well for educating students with disabilities.

Team WR

Teacher WR1 had 2 years of teaching experience. She held certification in special education, and taught interrelated special education in a high school setting. Teacher WR1 had co-taught during her 2 years of experience and participated in the co-teaching training offered by the county. She was placed in a co-teaching situation when she accepted her current teaching position. Teacher WR1 did not have a set time to plan with her co-teacher, but stated that they often discussed upcoming lessons as necessary. When asked about the difficulties faced by the team due to not having a common planning time, Teacher WR1 stated that although common planning would be ideal, they managed fine by getting together when they knew it would be necessary. She shared that they often planned over lunch, sometimes over dinner, and regularly over the telephone. She also shared that whenever planning together was not possible, Teacher WR2 provided her with a copy of the lesson plan well in advance of the lesson so she could be prepared for class.

Teacher WR2 had 20 years of experience in education. She held certification in language arts, and taught language arts in a high school. Teacher WR2 had 4 years of co-teaching experience

and participated in the training provided by the county. She volunteered to co-teach due to her belief that she would be a good candidate for that specific instructional model. Teacher WR2 did not have designated planning time with her partner, but utilized whatever opportunity arose to discuss lesson plans and teacher roles. Teacher WR2 shared that when co-planning was not possible; she provided Teacher WR1 with a copy of the lesson plan a few days in advance so that she would have a chance to familiarize herself with the content. She stressed how it was important for co-teachers to come up with creative ways to communicate in light of the fact that common planning time was not always possible.

Team WR was observed for 233 minutes across five observations. Length of observations ranges from 39 to 50 minutes, with mean length being 46.6 minutes. All observations took place during language arts periods when all students received either language arts instruction from one of the co-teachers while the other co-teacher circulated, worked in cooperative groups with support from the co-teachers, or worked independently at their desks to reinforce previously taught concepts. There was an average of 23 students in the classroom, with seven of those students being identified as a student with a disability.

Across observations, there were a total of 56 instances that were observed as empathy, resulting in a mean of 11.2. There were a total of 64 instances of attitude determined to be positive, resulting in a mean of 12.8. Insight was observed 24 times, for a mean of 4.8. Pedagogical strategies were displayed on 31 occasions, for a mean of 6.2 (see Table 2).

Table 2

Instances observed across five observations of Team WR

	Empathy	Attitude	Insight	Ped. Strat.
Total	56	64	24	31
Mean	11.2	12.8	4.8	6.2

Team WR was observed using three models of co-teaching: one teach, one observe; one teach, one assist; and station teaching. During observation two, students were working independently at their desks while the two teachers circulated and provided one on one assistance as needed.

This observation gave the researcher an opportunity to see 18 instances of positive feedback. According to field notes, the overall climate of the classroom during this observation was positive and nurturing, allowing students the opportunity to voice ideas in an environment they perceived as safe and conducive to learning. When asked about this particular observation during the interview, Teacher WR1 stated that co-teaching has been a supportive and positive experience not just for her, but also for her students. She stated her belief that the positive climate comes from the positive attitude that she and her co-teaching partner have about their teaching situation. Teacher WR2 reiterated this belief when she stated that all of the students in the class benefit from having two teachers rather than just one, and called herself an "advocate for co-teaching."

Observation one and observation four provided the researcher an opportunity to observe the co-teachers using the one teach, one assist model. During observation one, the class discussed the concept of satire. Teacher WR2 led the instruction

by introducing the students to political cartoons. Each student had been asked to bring in a political cartoon to share with the class. Teacher WR1 circulated among the students and was observed giving individual assistance when needed. Flexibility was observed twelve times. Field notes indicated that flexibility was observed on eight instances as students attempted to explain the satirical cartoons and the elements of exaggeration, irony, or understatement that they were based upon. Teacher WR2 accepted explanations for these elements, although she initially did not see the cartoons in the manner described by the students. She also willingly shared her own insight with the whole group on three occasions by describing the way in which she had perceived ironic political cartoons.

Observation four took place during a lesson covering Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The class had been independently reading the novel, and was now discussing the plot in a whole group setting. Teacher WR2 led the discussion, while Teacher WR1 circulated and supported students on an individual basis. One instance of indifference was noted and according to field notes, this occurred toward the end of the lesson when it seemed that Teacher WR2 needed to move forward rather than get bogged down in the minutiae of the novel. Specifically, a student made a statement concerning the motives of one of the characters and Teacher WR2 responded by stating, "Uhhmmm, ok, if that's the way

you see it." When asked during the interview about this particular occurrence, Teacher WR2 pointed out that the detail was not an important one and it would have taken valuable instructional time to incorporate such an irrelevant bit of information into the discussion. She elaborated by saying that to allow the class to go off on this tangent would have been doing them a disservice, as it was not relevant to the lesson, nor in her opinion to the novel. When prodded further on showing indifference toward students, Teacher WR2 shared with the researcher that she did not view this as indifference on her part, but an occasion when she had to ensure that the students did not veer off onto an unnecessary path. Therefore, she believed that it was a positive instance as far as the class was concerned. It was observed in field notes that this observation yielded fewer opportunities to collect data due to the nature of the lesson. The lesson was delivered in a lecture style with less interaction between the teachers and the students. However, even under these circumstances, flexibility was observed three times, and positive feedback was observed four times.

During observation three, the co-teachers were using station teaching as the students studied the influence of mass media on the population. The students had been assigned groups and were tasked with creating a visual display characterizing the topic. Various examples were set up at stations around the

room and the student groups were rotating through the stations to discuss ideas for their own projects. The co-teachers each rotated between three different stations, in order to monitor the six stations set up in the classroom. When asked during the interview about the rotation schedule, Teacher WR1 stated that there was no system for determining which three stations she supervised and which three stations Teacher WR2 supervised. They simply set the six stations up and she took three and her co-teacher took the other three. During this observation, there were nine instances of open-mindedness, which was five more than occurred during any other observation of Team WR. When asked during the interview about the high incidence of open-mindedness during this lesson, Teacher WR2 stated that the whole idea behind allowing the students to create their own visual representation in a group setting lent itself to creative freedom. She inquired of the researcher what the point of the lesson would be if the teachers had been prescriptive in what products the groups were to create. She elaborated by stating that although a high school teacher cannot always be open-minded about assignments, it's good for the students to experience situations where they are expected to make their own decisions and exercise their own creativity. Teacher WR2 also shared how much simpler it is to teach in this manner when there is a

second teacher in the room with whom she is able to share the teaching and monitoring responsibilities.

Summary

Team WR was observed five times with a mean observation time of 46.6 minutes. Instances of empathy and positive attitude were both observed consistently over the course of the observations. Positive attitude was observed most frequently, followed by empathy, pedagogical strategies, and insight. Team WR was observed displaying empathy and positive attitude throughout the course of the lessons, as well as during individual work with students. The co-teaching situation created by Team WR was observed to be one that ensured students felt that they were in a safe learning environment, where they could feel comfortable asking for help or clarification. In addition to the categorized dispositions, the co-teachers were observed to believe that the students benefit from co-teaching. Teacher WR2 stated during the interview that she considered herself an "advocate for co-teaching for many reasons." She expanded on this by stating that students really benefitted from having the perspective of two teachers rather than just one. She also discussed the fact that the extra support enabled the teachers to allow for more group activities and other kinds of instructional strategies that normally required more supervision. Overall, observed instances of empathy, attitude,

insight, and pedagogical strategies, as well as information shared by co-teachers during the post observation interview process, indicated the presence of dispositions identified in the literature as important in successful co-teaching. In addition to the observed categorized dispositions, Team WR appeared to believe that the co-teaching model benefitted students with disabilities.

Team WR appeared to have overcome one of the often cited barriers of co-teaching. Although they did not share a common planning time, they used strategies which enabled them to both be prepared for upcoming lessons. Both of the co-teachers stressed the importance of finding time to plan together, even when that meant using unconventional methods. Teacher WR2 stated that she and her co-teacher were able to successfully co-teach because of their willingness to be creative in how they could ensure preparedness without an allotted planning time during the course of the school day.

Team PH

Teacher PH1 had 4 years of teaching experience. She held certification in Language Arts and special education. She taught interrelated special education and served as department chair in a high school. Teacher PH1 had been co-teaching for 3 years and participated in the training offered by the county. She was asked and readily agreed to co-teach with her current partner.

Teacher PH1 reported ample opportunity to plan with her partner as they had common fifth period planning.

Teacher PH2 had 15 years of experience in education. She held certification in language arts and taught that subject in a high school setting. Teacher PH2 had been co-teaching for 3 years and participated in the training offered by the county. She was told by the school administration that she would be co-teaching. Teacher PH2 was able to regularly plan with her partner as they shared a common planning period.

Team PH was observed for 243 minutes across five observations. Length of observations ranged from 45 to 50 minutes, with mean length being 48.6 minutes. All observations took place during language arts periods when all students either received language arts instruction from the co-teachers, worked in cooperative groups with support from the co-teachers, or worked independently at their desks to reinforce previously taught concepts. There was an average of 18 students in the classroom, with four of those students being identified as a student with a disability.

Across observations, there were a total of 51 observations of empathy, resulting in a mean of 10.2. There were a total of 58 observed instances of positive attitude, resulting in a mean of 11.6. Insight was observed 20 times, for a mean of 4.0.

Pedagogical strategies were employed on 31 occasions, for a mean of 6.2 (see Table 3).

Table 3

Instances observed across five observations of Team PH

	Empathy	Attitude	Insight	Ped. Strat.
Total	51	58	20	31
Mean	10.2	11.6	4.0	6.2

Team PH was observed using three models of co-teaching: one teach, one assist; station teaching; and team teaching.

Observation four was conducted during an exam, which afforded the researcher an opportunity to observe four instances of the co-teachers sharing insight. According to field notes, the co-teachers discussed not only how test questions could have been worded in a way that the students understood them better, but particular students who might have benefitted from some additional instruction prior to the exam. It was also noted by the researcher that the teachers provided to students positive feedback on seven occasions. All seven of these instances took place in one on one situations where one of the co-teachers was providing clarification about an item on the exam. Prior to leaving the individual student to complete the exam, the teacher remarked on what good effort the student had put forth, or what a good job they did with the exam. The students appeared to respond well to this positive feedback and went right back to working on their exams.

When asked during the interview about providing positive feedback to the students during their exams, Teacher PH2 explained that she holds the belief that everyone responds well to encouragement. She went on to say that she provided students with encouragement every opportunity she had. Teacher PH1 expressed a similar belief when asked about positive feedback.

She shared that although she knows many high school teachers who hold the belief that students should get their encouragement from making good grades, she believed that students need to hear encouraging words from the teachers they look to as role models in the classroom.

Both teachers were asked if they provided the students with encouragement only when they were on the right track, or if encouragement was also used regularly to help students who were struggling. Teacher PH1 stated that encouragement was used every day in the classroom not only with successful students, but also with the students who were struggling academically or behaviorally. Teacher PH2 shared that the encouragement the students get in the co-taught classroom is often what drives them to succeed with assignments, as well as with their behavior. She went on to clarify that encouragement is "not reserved for students who are on the right track, but more often for those who need to get on the right track."

Team PH was the only team observed using team-teaching as a model of instruction. Team teaching was used in observation one, as well as in observation five. During observation one, the students were engaged in a unit on the terminology used by filmmakers and how literary techniques might be shown in film. The co-teachers guided the students through the film *E.T.*, providing commentary as a model for the students to refer back

to when they were asked to complete a similar task independently. It was noted by the researcher that the co-teachers shared their passion for education with the students on four occasions. As Teacher PH1 provided her commentary, she exclaimed how much she "loved the art of learning," followed by the comment "isn't knowledge powerful?!" According to field notes, Teacher PH2 stated on two different occasions, "I love my job!" The students responded positively by smiling and laughing when the co-teachers shared their passion for education. It was also noted by the researcher that the students appeared comfortable making their own positive comments during the course of this lesson. One student commented "this class rocks," while another was overheard telling Teacher PH2 that she "is the bomb."

Observation five consisted of the co-teachers delivering a lesson on the villanelle form of poetry. The co-teachers taught the students about the villanelle using the Dylan Thomas poem "Do Not Go Gentle." After delivering the lesson, the co-teachers provided to students a template and asked them to create their own villanelles. According to field notes, this lesson was difficult for some of the students, while some of them appeared to have no trouble at all. Empathy was observed on 14 occasions during this observation. The co-teachers appeared to be understanding and flexible as the students worked to complete

this assignment. They also provided to students positive feedback 12 times, encouraging the students by telling them how well they had done with what had already been written. When asked about the difficulty of this particular assignment, Teacher PH1 stated that several students did have trouble, and for those students she "helped them with the rhyme and that seemed to push them along." She also stated that she had found in the co-taught class, it did not take much to prod students into believing that they were capable of completing assignments. She expanded on her explanation that she believed that this was due to the fact that the students felt the support of two teachers, and they wanted to succeed in front of their peers. Teacher PH1 said that she had been a believer in co-teaching from the beginning of her career, but after participating in it she knows that it really works for students with disabilities.

Summary

Team PH was observed five times with a mean observation time of 48.6 minutes. Instances of empathy and positive attitude were both observed consistently over the course of the observations. Positive attitude was observed most frequently, followed by empathy, pedagogical strategies, and insight. Team PH was observed weaving the observed instances into the normal course of classroom instruction, as well as into conversations held with students on a one on one basis. The co-teaching

situation created by Team PH was observed to be one that fostered engagement and learning by the students. In addition, the co-teachers were observed to hold the belief that their students, as well as themselves, benefitted from the co-teaching environment that they had created. Teacher PH2 stated during the interview that she is in a "great situation" and feels "totally supported" by the administration of her school. She went on to say that she knew that the students benefitted from the fact that she and her co-teacher had developed such a good collaborative relationship. Observed instances of empathy, attitude, insight, and pedagogical strategies, as well as information shared by co-teachers during the post observation interview process, indicated the presence of dispositions identified in the literature as essential for successful co-teachers. Both teachers in Team PH appeared to believe that co-teaching is beneficial for students with disabilities.

In addition to the categorized dispositions, Team PH appeared to rely heavily on encouragement as necessary for success in the co-taught classroom. Both teachers stressed the importance of encouraging students in all endeavors, not just the ones in which they seemed to experience success. Teacher PH1 clearly stated that encouragement was not just positive feedback saved for when a student was doing something correctly, but most often used with students who were actually not correct in their

lessons or actions. She gave the example of a student who had received three days of in school suspension (ISS) due to repeated dress code violations. When the student arrived in class, he was angry and refused to do his assignment. Teacher PH1 shared that she was able to diffuse his anger by encouraging him to look at the ISS time as an opportunity to catch up on some assignments upon which he had fallen behind. At the end of class, the student had developed a schedule of how he would complete his current assignments during ISS, and then use his extra time to get caught up on his missing assignments. Teacher PH1 believed that through her encouragement, she was able to turn a potentially negative situation into a positive situation from which the student would benefit.

Conclusion

Research question one inquired as to what dispositions successful co-teachers in the Houston County school district identified as necessary for success in a collaborative relationship. This research indicated that successful co-teachers identified positive attitude, empathy, insight, and the use of pedagogical strategies as necessary for success. In addition to the four observed categories, the participants also identified administrative support, creativity in planning, encouragement of students, and a belief that co-teaching is

beneficial for students with disabilities as necessary for successful co-teaching relationships.

Research question two inquired as to what dispositions are observed in successful co-teaching situations. The findings of this research indicated that positive attitude, empathy, insight, and pedagogical strategies are all observed being utilized by teachers in successful co-taught classrooms. In addition, references to administrative support, creativity in planning, encouragement of students, and the belief that students with disabilities benefit from the co-teaching environment were observed in the co-teaching situations.

Observations and post observation interviews with the co-teaching teams indicated that positive attitude, empathy, insight, and pedagogical strategies were used by these teachers on a regular basis. In all case studies, the number of observed instances in each category was, from greatest to least: positive attitude, empathy, pedagogical strategies, and insight. Teacher feedback on specific instances within the classroom supported the findings of the researcher, as well as what is indicated by the literature, that the presence of behaviors from all four categories were important to the success of the co-teaching partnership. The observations and the interviews complimented each other in that a deeper understanding of what was observed

in the classroom setting was reached through the interview process.

In addition to the four categories observed, there were four other factors which appeared to impact the success of the co-teaching teams. These four factors were administrative support, creativity in planning, encouragement of students, and a belief that co-teaching is beneficial for students with disabilities. Team FM and Team PH both stressed the importance of administrative support, which is identified in the literature as essential for the success of co-teaching. Team WR believed that much of their success could be attributed to their willingness to find time to plan, even though they did not have any common planning time. The literature indicated that lack of common planning time was a barrier to the success of co-teachers at the secondary level. Team WR appeared to have eliminated this barrier through the use of creativity in planning. Both co-teachers on Team PH stressed the importance of using encouragement with all students. They did not believe that encouragement should be saved for students who are already on the right track, but often used to get students on the right track. It can also be surmised from observations and interviews with these successful co-teaching teams that it is crucial that co-teachers believe that co-teaching is beneficial for students with disabilities. Therefore, it can be concluded, as shown in

Figure 1, that in addition to the four observed categories, administrative support, creativity in planning, willingness to encourage students, and a belief that students with disabilities benefit from co-teaching are essential for successful co-teaching relationships.

Figure Caption

*Figure 1.*A graphic representation of dispositions related to successful co-teaching teams at the secondary level.

Teacher dispositions related to successful co-teaching

Positive attitude

Empathy

Insight

Pedagogical strategies

1. Positive feedback
2. Passion for education
3. Indifference

1. Open-mindedness
2. Flexibility
3. Understanding

1. Shared with students
2. Shared with each other
3. Shared with the group

1. Actual use of
2. Discussions between co-teachers
3. Reference to professional learning

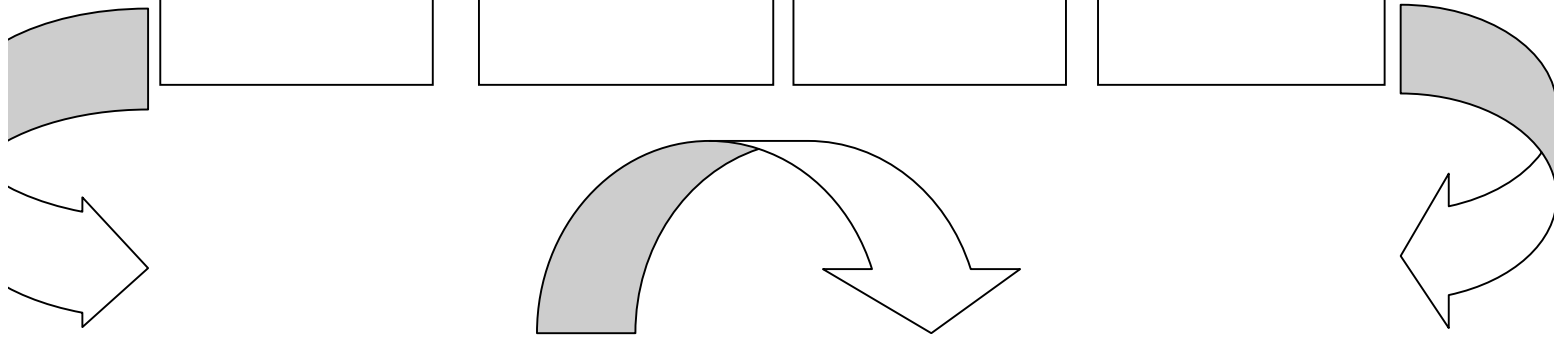
Perceived administrative support

The ability to plan creatively

The use of encouragement to motivate students

A belief that students with disabilities benefit from the co-taught setting

Successful Co-Teaching



Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

Summary

Co-teaching has become an accepted model to use when educating students with disabilities in the general education environment. In co-teaching, a general education teacher is paired with a special education teacher in order to educate students with and without disabilities in a single classroom. This particular instructional model requires collaboration between general and special educators. Co-teachers within the Houston County school district have been trained in the development of collaborative relationships, as well as in the components of successful co-teaching, yet not all of the co-teaching situations in this district have developed into successful partnerships. This indicates that factors other than knowledge, skills, scheduling and favorable conditions influence the success of the co-teaching relationship.

The term commonly used to describe the beliefs and attitudes of individuals is *disposition*. The dispositions of teachers have been identified as significant factors which impact effective teaching (Mullin, 2003). In the early 1990s, school reform movements began the practice of using teacher dispositions to predict teacher success. It is a reasonable

assertion that teacher disposition plays a major role in the success and maintenance of a co-teaching relationship.

The research on co-teaching has mainly focused on the elementary level, while co-teaching research at the secondary level has been limited. The research that has been accomplished at the secondary level revealed that there were constraints on co-teaching in secondary schools that were not present at the elementary level (Dieker, 2001). However, the co-teaching research at all levels indicated that the relationship shared by the co-teachers was a critical component in the development of the collaborative relationship which led to a successful co-teaching partnership.

Throughout the literature, the personalities of co-teachers were identified as paramount in the success or failure of co-teaching relationships (Murawski & Swanson, 2001). In addition to personalities of co-teachers being identified as paramount, the literature also indicated that effective teachers of diverse learners shared a common core of knowledge and skills (Major & Brock, 2003). However, simply possessing the knowledge and skills to deliver the curriculum to diverse learners may not be enough to create a successful co-teaching situation. It was found to be essential that teachers of diverse learners had the dispositions identified as necessary for effectiveness (Cline & Necochea, 2006). Research findings indicated that empathy,

attitude, insight, and pedagogical strategies were essential traits of teachers who effectively taught diverse learners (Major & Brock). It is reasonable to conclude that these dispositions are essential for teachers who work with such a diverse group as students with disabilities. The purpose of this study was to examine the dispositions of successful co-teachers in the Houston County school district.

Three teams of co-teachers at the secondary level were observed and interviewed in order to determine what dispositions were observed in a co-taught classroom, as well as what dispositions the co-teachers identified as necessary for success. Instances of positive attitude, empathy, pedagogical strategies, and insight were observed to be important to the co-teaching relationship. Interview feedback from the co-teachers supported this finding. In addition to the four observed dispositions, administrative support, creativity in planning, willingness to encourage students, and a belief that students with disabilities benefit from co-teaching are essential for successful co-teaching relationships.

Analysis of Research Findings

Six co-teachers from the Houston County school district participated in this study by allowing five classroom observations and participating in one pre observation telephone interview and one post observation telephone interview. Using

traits identified in the literature as essential for successful teachers of diverse learners, characteristics were sorted into the following four categories: (1) empathy, (2) positive attitude, (3) insight, and (4) pedagogical strategies. Within the four categories, three sub-categories of observable instances were observed and annotated on a code sheet. Sub-categories for empathy were open minded, flexible, and understanding. Sub-categories for attitude were positive feedback, passion for education, and indifference. Sub-categories for insight were shared with student, shared with co-teacher, shared with whole group. Sub-categories for pedagogical strategies were used during the course of observation, discussed with co-teacher, and reference to professional development. Of the four categories, positive attitude was most observed, followed by empathy, pedagogical strategies, and then insight. Interviews with the co-teachers supported the findings that the four characteristics were important for teachers of diverse learners.

In addition to the four categories of dispositions being essential for co-teachers, this research indicated some other characteristics that were observed in the classroom and reported to be essential by the co-teaching teams. Just as the literature indicated, administrative support appeared to be essential for two of the co-teaching teams. Team FM, as well as Team PH both

stressed the importance of administrative support in establishing and maintaining a successful co-teaching relationship. Team PH also attributed some of their success to the fact that they continuously encourage students. They stressed the fact that they use encouragement not just with students who are satisfactorily progressing, but also with students who appear to be struggling with academics or behavior. According to the literature, lack of common planning time is a barrier to successful co-teaching at the secondary level. Team WR appeared to have broken that barrier by using creative methods to plan together, albeit without any scheduled common planning time during the course of the school day. The use of creativity in planning seemed to be a factor in the success of a co-teaching team with no regularly scheduled planning time during the school day. All six of the co-teachers appeared to believe that students with disabilities benefitted from the co-teaching situation. This belief was observed within the classroom, and was stated by the co-teachers during the interview process.

Discussion of Research Findings

Positive Attitude

Of the four categories of behavior observed, positive attitude was observed most frequently. All of the co-teaching teams were observed displaying positive attitude. Within this

category, data was gathered by the researcher on instances of open-mindedness, flexibility, and understanding. In addition, the co-teachers were specifically asked about some of these instances during the post observation interview process.

The co-teachers appeared to connect to their students, as well as each other, through their ability to stay positive in the face of the many challenges that came with educating diverse learners. During one of the observations of Team WR, Teacher WR1 was observed encouraging a struggling learner to continue working on his assignment. The student had experienced extreme difficulty in constructing his own poem using a template that was provided by the teachers. Teacher WR1 sat down next to the struggling student and reviewed what he had already completed. She told him that he had done a great job on the first part, and then assisted him in coming up with a rhyming word for the next part of the poem. Once he had accomplished the task of finding the rhyming word, he was able to move forward with the assignment. Even when the students appeared to struggle with the lesson or assignment, the co-teachers re-directed them by providing positive support and displaying a willingness to listen to what they had to say.

The co-teachers not only exhibited a positive attitude with the students, but also with each other. One team was observed discussing an exam that some of the students appeared to be

struggling to complete. According to field notes, the teachers' discussion centered on ways in which material could be presented so that the students could gain a deeper understanding of the content. They seemed prepared to revisit the content, rather than remain satisfied with poor test performance on the part of several students. This attitude seemed to send the students a message that the teachers were pleased with their situation and believed that all students could learn in the co-teaching environment. The students' perception of the classroom environment seemed to be impacted by this message, resulting in a group of learners that felt steeped in a culture of positivity.

Empathy

Empathy was the second most frequently observed characteristic. Empathy was observed being used by all of the co-teaching teams. Within this category, data was gathered on instances of open-mindedness, flexibility, and understanding. The teachers were also asked to discuss these characteristics during the post observation interview process.

Empathy was observed to be an integral part of the behaviors displayed by the co-teachers. The flexible, open-minded, and understanding ways in which the co-teachers responded to the students created a classroom that was safe and open. Students were seemingly not afraid to ask for help or

express themselves when they lacked sufficient understanding of a concept being taught or reviewed. While working on a project in one of the co-taught classrooms, students were observed asking for assistance from teachers as they created projects that depicted their understanding of a previously taught concept. The students were seemingly comfortable asking for assistance and did not hesitate to request further clarification if needed. Students also appeared to be more empathic with each other. There were no observed instances that could be construed as bullying or teasing of other students. The level of empathy among teachers and students in the observed classrooms supports findings in the literature that empathy is a trait which assists significantly in the creation of a successful co-teaching partnership.

Pedagogical Strategies

Of the four categories observed, pedagogical strategies was observed happening third most often. Pedagogical strategies were used by all of the co-teaching teams. Within this category, instances were recorded when pedagogical strategies were actually used during the course of the observation, when the co-teachers discussed a pedagogical strategy with each other, and when the co-teachers referenced professional learning. The co-teachers also provided feedback on pedagogical strategies during the post observation interview process.

The co-teachers appeared to be comfortable employing the use of a variety of pedagogical strategies. They did not hesitate to help struggling learners by suggesting a different strategy that they could employ to assist with mastering the material. The co-teachers were also comfortable talking with each other about different strategies during the course of the observations, as well as during planning time. The post observation interview feedback supported this comfort level as one of the co-teachers pointed out that very often pedagogical strategies were discussed during planning time because the team had discovered that many students benefitted from exposure to different strategies. Results of this study indicated that discussion about and flexible use of a variety of pedagogical strategies by teachers in a co-teaching situation aided in the success of the co-teaching relationship.

Insight

All co-teaching teams were observed using insight within the classroom. Of the four categories, insight was observed the least amount of times. Instances were recorded when the co-teachers shared insight with individual students, with each other, or with the whole group. In addition, the co-teachers gave feedback on insight during the post observation interview process.

The co-teachers enhanced the learning environment by sharing insight with the students and with each other. The students appeared to gain understanding as they listened to the co-teachers share their own personal insights or the insights of others applicable to instruction being delivered. The co-teachers, as well as the students appeared comfortable with the sharing of insight, which at times consisted of personal information. The presence of this characteristic within the co-taught classroom contributed to the culture of a safe learning environment. Indeed, in the co-teaching setting where it was observed, students and teachers were able to share deep insights with each other.

Characteristics outside of the four code categories

There were characteristics outside of the four categories that were observed and referenced during the interview process. Those characteristics were administrative support, creativity in planning, use of encouragement to motivate students, and a belief that co-teaching is beneficial for students with disabilities.

Administrative Support

The co-teachers in Team FM and Team PH shared that they felt much support from their administration. The literature on co-teaching indicates that administrative support is necessary for success. This research supports the necessity of

administrative support for co-teaching success at the secondary level.

Common Planning

Literature on co-teaching at the secondary level points to the fact that a lack of common planning time is a barrier to successful co-teaching. Team WR did not have any common planning time throughout the school day, yet they were able to establish and maintain a successful co-teaching relationship. They used creativity in planning by meeting after school, during lunch, or over dinner, as well as on the telephone. When co-planning time was impossible to find, the co-teachers shared upcoming lesson plans to ensure that they would both be prepared for the delivery of content related material. It was observed that through creativity in planning, Team WR was able to overcome lack of common planning time as a barrier to co-teaching and establish a successful co-teaching relationship.

Encouragement to Motivate Students

The use of encouragement with students was observed in Team PH. The co-teachers of Team PH also discussed the importance of encouragement during the interview process. It appeared that they used encouragement as a tool to motivate students who were performing well, as well as students who were struggling with academic or behavioral issues. The co-teachers were observed using encouragement during each of five observations, and stated

during the interview process that they use encouragement with students on a daily basis.

Belief in the Value of Co-teaching

The co-teachers who participated in this study appeared to believe that co-teaching is a model that provides benefits for students with disabilities. Although not all of the participants chose to co-teach, they all appeared to go into the co-teaching situation with a belief that co-teaching is a valuable model for educating students with disabilities. This belief in co-teaching was substantiated by all six co-teachers during the interview process.

This research indicates that in addition to the categorized dispositions, successful co-teaching teams also benefit from administrative support, creativity in planning, use of encouragement with students, and the belief that co-teaching is beneficial for students. Two of the teams, Team FM and Team PH, stressed the importance of administrative support. Team WR found creativity in planning to be a vital part of their success; however, the other two teams had common planning time during the school day so creativity in planning was not necessary. Team PH believed that the use of encouragement with students on a daily basis enabled them to develop and maintain a successful co-teaching situation. All six of the participants appeared to

believe that co-teaching is beneficial for students with disabilities.

Conclusions

This research supports the fact that certain dispositions exist in co-teachers who have established a successful collaborative relationship. The dispositions identified in literature as important for teachers of diverse students coincide with the dispositions identified by this research as important for successful co-teaching partnerships. Positive attitude, empathy, pedagogical strategies, and insight were observed multiple times across co-teaching teams. In addition, interviews with co-teachers indicated the importance of these characteristics in a co-teaching situation. Therefore, it can be concluded that teacher dispositions, specifically attitude, empathy, pedagogical strategies, and insight are important in the development and maintenance of successful co-teaching teams.

Based on the observations and interviews, administrative support, creativity in planning, encouragement of students, and a belief that students with disabilities benefit from co-teaching were also factors that contributed to the success of the co-teaching teams. Co-teaching literature has emphasized the fact that administrative support is crucial for successful co-teaching. This research supports the literature as two of the

co-teaching teams identified administrative support as a crucial factor in developing and maintaining successful co-teaching.

One of the participating co-teaching teams did not share a common planning time, while the other two teams did have that common planning time that the literature indicated is vital for the success of co-teaching. The team that did not share common planning was able to plan using unconventional methods such as planning over lunch or dinner, planning over the phone, or sharing copies of lesson plans in advance to ensure both teachers were prepared for content delivery. Although lack of common planning time is identified in the literature as a barrier to effective co-teaching at the secondary level, the team that had no common planning time was able to overcome this barrier through the use of creativity in planning.

The literature on teacher dispositions indicated that skill in human relations is as vital for teacher success as content knowledge and pedagogical skills (Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 1998). Team PH appeared to rely heavily on skills in human relations as they used encouragement to ensure that students participated in the lessons as active learners. The students seemingly responded to the encouragement provided by the co-teachers, helping to create a group of learners willing to take risks and ask for assistance as a part of the learning process.

Co-teaching at the secondary level has many obstacles to success, including less positive attitudes of teachers (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2001). The successful secondary level co-teachers in this study seemingly had a positive attitude toward co-teaching. They appeared to believe that co-teaching was beneficial for students with disabilities. This belief assisted the participants in building and maintaining successful co-teaching relationships.

Implications

This research identified a common set of dispositions present in teachers who are successful in the secondary level co-teaching environment. The literature which indicated that knowledge of content paired with skill in delivering instruction does not ensure that a teacher will experience success in a co-teaching environment is supported by the findings of this study. It is crucial that school administrators examine the dispositions of teachers before selecting them to participate in the co-teaching model. In addition, teachers who are contemplating co-teaching should carefully consider to what extent they typically exhibit the characteristics of positive attitude, empathy, pedagogical strategies, and insight in the classroom environment. Teachers should also give thought to the level of support that they believe the school administration can offer in a co-teaching situation. The literature on co-teaching

clearly states that administrative support is vital for successful co-teaching. Two of the three teams that participated in this study indicated that their success was due in part to the support given to them by their administrators.

Administrators, as well as teachers, should consider the amount of common planning time that can be allotted to co-teaching teams. Two of the three teams that participated in this study shared common planning time. However, the team that did not have common planning time managed to overcome that barrier by creatively scheduling planning time. Although the literature indicated that lack of common planning time is indeed a barrier to successful co-teaching, this barrier can be overcome as seen by the success of Team WR.

Literature on teacher dispositions indicates that skill in human relations is a vital component of exemplary teaching. One of the three co-teaching teams in this study exemplified the use of human relations by utilizing student encouragement as a means to gain student trust and ensure learner engagement. Co-teachers should be able to provide students with encouragement when they are succeeding, as well as when they are struggling to succeed.

School administrators should not allow the master schedule to dictate which teachers will co-teach and with whom they will co-teach, but should ensure that selected co-teachers value the idea of co-teaching and have dispositions which lend themselves

to success in the co-taught classroom. Selected co-teachers should be chosen based upon their dispositions, perceptions about administrative support, ability to creatively plan, desire to encourage all students, and belief that co-teaching is beneficial for students with disabilities.

Recommendations

Research on dispositions of co-teachers, particularly at the secondary level, should continue. A comparison of observed dispositions within a successful general education classroom, a successful special education classroom, and a successful co-taught classroom would inform the profession regarding whether or not there is any variation in the dispositions necessary for success in different settings.

Research should also be conducted in secondary level co-taught classrooms which have been identified as unsuccessful. This research would delve even further into the dispositions that are necessary for a successful co-teaching classroom, through an examination of the level of positive attitude, empathy, pedagogical strategies, and insight present in unsuccessful co-taught classrooms. In addition, this would enable the researcher to see if one or more dispositions were absent, allowing them to chronicle targeted development of those dispositions identified as absent.

Research should be conducted on perceived administrative support versus actual administrative support of secondary level co-taught classrooms. Such research could provide clarification on the level of administrative support that is optimal for successful co-teaching. Co-teaching teams with common planning time versus co-teaching teams without common planning time should be examined to determine if lack of common planning time is truly a barrier to successful co-teaching. Finally, school administrators, as well as classroom teachers considering co-teaching would benefit from an accepted framework of necessary dispositions that indicate the probability of success in the co-teaching relationship. Further research into the dispositions of successful secondary level co-teachers should yield a dispositional index that administrators could reference when determining which teachers should be considered to participate in co-teaching. A companion index should be developed for administrators to use as they examine what dispositions they may need to support successful co-teaching. Such tools would be valuable to the field of education as students with disabilities continue to be educated in the general education environment.

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Appendix
Coding Sheet
Co-Teaching Team A B C
Observation 1 2 3 4 5

A. EMPATHY	1. Open Minded	2. Flexible	3. Understanding
B. ATTITUDE	1. Positive feedback	2. Passionate about education	3. Indifferent
C. INSIGHT	1. Shared with student	2. Shared with co-teacher	3. Shared with whole group
D. PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES	1. Used during the course of observation	2. Discussed with co-teacher	3. Reference to professional development