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A Case Study of Collaboration Between General Education Teachers and Special Education Teachers in a Southern Rural High School

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Education Teachers in a Southern Rural High School

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Approval Page

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Statement of Original Work

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Name

April 5, 2017
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Abstract

A Case Study of Collaboration Between General Education Teachers and Special Education Teachers in a Southern Rural High School. Oassie Jean Daniels, 2017: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. Keywords: general education, special education, teacher collaboration, inclusion, classrooms

This applied dissertation was framed around issues associated with the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom as these issues related to teacher collaboration. Specifically, the problem on which this study focused was that according to the principal at the research site, the general education teachers and special education teacher needed to collaborate more successfully in order to be more helpful to the students. The purpose of this case study was twofold. First, the researcher wished to determine how and to what extent collaboration practices occurred between general education teachers and special education teachers in a southern rural high school in southeastern Alabama. Second, the purpose of this study was to develop an action plan based on data collected and the research literature for professional development focused on extending teachers' collaborative skills.

The researcher used a single holistic case study designed employing Glaser's choice theory as the theoretical framework. The central research question that the study was designed to answer was "How and to what extent does collaboration occurs between general education teachers and special education teachers in a southern rural high school?" Data were collected through classroom observations, a questionnaire, and a focus group. The researcher also kept a reflection journal. The results indicated that collaboration occurred in varied ways and it usually occurred informally based on student needs. Informal training to collaborate, and the one-lead and one-support model were the most commonly used collaborative methods. Additionally, results demonstrated teachers often were cooperating rather than fully collaborating.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Topic

Since the enactment of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, public education has focused on integrating students with disabilities into general education classrooms (Blanton & Pugach, 2007; Reese, 2008). This integration includes those who have severe and multiple severe challenges. The supporters of this integration movement drew their incentive from the mandate of least restrictive environment in the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, previously known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. The provision of least restrictive environment mandates that students with disabilities be educated with their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent possible. Moreover, it strongly promotes the placement of these students in general education classrooms (Matthews, 2012).

Many students with disabilities are mainstreamed into general education classes, and their teachers have little to no experience as to how to meet their needs. Many school districts have adopted an inclusion model or models in which general and special education teachers work together in order to ensure that progress is evident for all students (Reese, 2008). Some aspects of these inclusive models require close working relationships, coplanning, coteaching, and consulting on behalf of general and special educators working together.

This applied dissertation research was based on the research literature and was framed around issues associated with the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom as those issues relate to teacher collaboration. Researchers continue to believe, for the most part, that collaboration between general education and special education teachers is so fundamental to successful instruction of diverse learners

that the knowledge and skills of collaboration must be deeply embedded into teachers and teacher education programs (Pellegrino, Weiss, Regan, & Mann, 2014).

The key to the integration of students with disabilities in the mainstream classroom is the collaboration between general education and special education teachers. According to research studies (Kern, 2006; Kluth & Straut, 2003; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007), collaboration between general education and special education teachers often does not occur or occurs inadequately, particularly in rural high schools. Hence, this study was designed to examine the collaboration practices between general education and special education teachers in regard to instructional planning, the instructional practices that are selected and implemented in a standard classroom setting to service special education students, and professional development.

Collaboration between general education and special education teachers can be very valuable in meeting many of the needs conveyed by school districts for helping students with disabilities remain in school, reintegrate into regular education classes, prepare for life beyond secondary education, and graduate. Central to this is the need to develop a clear picture of the essence and makeup of teachers' attitudes and efficacy regarding inclusion so that children with disabilities are fully accepted and supported in the standard education learning environment (Bouck & Satsangi, 2014). The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms is an unusual concept for many teachers. Many veteran teachers never experienced an inclusive environment when they were children, and they never expected to experience inclusion when they entered the field of teaching (Matthews, 2012).

Research Problem

According to the principal at the research site, general education teachers and

special education teacher needed to collaborate more successfully in order to be more helpful to the students. The principal stated that the general education teachers often complained about not having the proper training to assist students with disabilities in their classroom to master objectives and standards set by the district and state department of education. He also stated that special education teachers often complained about having to follow exceptional students around to their classes because the general education teachers chose not to accept suggestions, strategies, instructional ideas, or techniques suggested by them that would enable special needs student to succeed in general education classrooms. However, at this school, no data had been systematically collected and analyzed regarding (a) the extent of collaboration between general education teachers and the special education teacher, (b) the degree to which it may be successful, (c) factors that facilitate it, or (d) barriers that may hinder it, or (e) the lack of training of general education teachers to assist students with disabilities. This is the problem on which this study focused.

Geter (2012) indicated that there is a strong relationship between teacher expectancy and student achievement, two components that are essential to a successful inclusion model that benefits students. This requires a collaborative and supportive partnership between general and special education teachers (Carpenter & Allen, 2007; Geter, 2012). Collectively as a team, when both teachers contribute their strengths and know-how to the process, it strengthens the success rates for students (Geter, 2012; Worrell, 2008). However, collaboration between general education and special education teachers often does not occur or occurs inadequately, particularly in rural high schools (Kern, 2006; Kluth & Straut, 2003; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Scruggs et al., 2007; Worrell, 2008).

Background and Justification for Study

According to Blanton and Pugach (2007), the preliminary motivation for discussing collaboration in teacher education was, without a doubt, the passage of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, first known as Public Law 94-142, with its focus on integrating students with disabilities into general education. Many teacher education programs have taken action to include some preliminary level of collaboration so that teachers are better equipped to teach all students (Blanton & Pugach, 2007). Course work in collaboration for special and general educators is a common mechanism for providing this training (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014).

However, adding courses to teacher-education curricula does little to address the larger reform issues in teacher education identified by a wide range of national studies and reports (Blanton & Pugach, 2007). Furthermore, according to Reese (2008), data indicate that school districts are making increasing efforts to comply with federal laws, such as No Child Left Behind and Individuals With Disabilities Education Act to insure that students with disabilities have the opportunity to receive quality education along with their peers in general education classrooms. However, there is still much needed research to determine the extent of effective collaboration occurring between general and special educators, especially in school districts at the secondary level (Reese, 2008).

Deficiencies in the Evidence

According to the literature (Geter, 2012; Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Kern, 2006), there is a great need for more studies regarding effective collaboration practices between general and special education teachers at the secondary level and more so in rural school districts than urban and suburban school districts. Rural schools are faced with obstacles such as deficiencies in skill levels, unsuccessful

collaboration, and inadequate teacher training and learning programs as hindering factors for nurturing success of special-needs students (Goddard et al., 2007).

Leonard (2013) suggested that more research is needed to determine whether or not collaboration between general and special education teachers is being carried out appropriately. He further suggested that it is tremendously important for school district leaders to know the methodology and process that their schools are implementing for successful collaboration between general and special educators that are beneficial to students. Tibbott (2012) indicated that future research studies should investigate how professional-development experiences benefit both general and special educators as they continue to develop the expertise and professional personality essential for successful collaboration to be more useful to students.

Wallace, Anderson, and Batholomay (2009) stated that professional collaboration provides a context for the type of teacher development, curriculum innovation, and site-based decision-making processes that must occur to include students with disabilities successfully in the general education classroom. Most of the literature about collaboration has focused on types of collaborative relationships, skills, and roles needed for collaboration and barriers to successful collaboration, rather than on outcomes for all students (Wallace et al., 2009). Little of this literature has focused on secondary schools. Therefore, there is a great deal of work to be done in the area of collaboration between general and special education teachers in secondary schools (Wallace et al., 2009).

Audience

General and special education teachers were the primary beneficiaries of this study, as the research focused on exploring how these teachers bring together strategies, instructional ideas, suggestions, and techniques within a workable learning environment

relationship (Geter, 2012; Leonard, 2013). Indirectly, this study benefited parents and students. Students and parents benefit in several ways when collaboration between general and special educators merits success (Tibbott, 2012). First, students are no longer perceived to be different than their peers, and they receive more exposure to the standard academic curriculum (Geter, 2012). Parents are proud that their children are capable of achieving in the general education classrooms.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this applied dissertation, the following terms are defined.

Attitude. This term refers to a psychological state that predisposes a person to action, or a personal feeling with regard to some situation or matter (Hull, 2005).

Cogenerative conversations. This term refers to conversations that are reflective discussions, planning, and remediating between teachers when students are not present (Reese, 2008).

Collaboration. This term refers to an interactive process that enables people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems (Gardern, Stormont, & Goel, 2012). Also, it is people coming together to resolve differences and working toward shared goals (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). As specifically related to education, collaboration between teachers is defined as an educational approach in which general and special educators work in a coordinated and coactive manner to teach heterogeneous groups of students in educational integrated settings (Scruggs et al., 2007).

Coteaching. This term refers to a teaching approach in which regular and special education teachers have common responsibilities for teaching and planning the regular academic curriculum (Murawski & Hughes, 2009).

General educator. This term refers to a teacher who engages in the delivery of a

specific subject matter in the general education curriculum teaching students without disabilities (Council for Exceptional Children, 2004).

Inclusive education. This term refers to an education designed to support and provide schools with resources that grant all students access so they can achieve and progress through the general education curriculum with general education peers (Leonard, 2013). It is the process of acquiring, interpreting, selecting, and organizing sensory information (West, 2013).

Perception. This term refers to the process of putting information together for a usable mental representation of the world or a group of people (Hull, 2005).

Special educators. This term refers to specialists who effectively include and teach individuals with exceptional learning needs (Council for Exceptional Children, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was twofold. First, the researcher wished to determine how and to what extent collaboration practices occurred between general and special education teachers in a southern rural high school in the southeastern section of Alabama. Second, based on the literature and data collected, the study was designed to develop an action plan for professional development focused on extending teachers' collaborative skills.

Chapter: 2 Literature Review

Introduction

In response to the need for access of diverse students to the general education curriculum and success in general education classrooms and in compliance with state and federal requirements, school districts have undertaken utilization of collaboration between general education and special education teachers (Matthews, 2012; Reginelli, 2009). However, efficient collaboration requires teachers to be not only autonomous individuals, but also dependent upon the expertise of another instructor (Matthews, 2012; Reese, 2008). When many secondary teachers began their careers, teaching was a solitary profession in which only professional collaboration took place during lunch, departmental meetings, or in the teachers' lounge. Today's models of collaboration require teachers to engage in extensive transformational learning in which previously held beliefs undergo a dramatic change; they must demonstrate numerous emotional intelligence competencies in order to differentiate instruction and to share classrooms, beliefs, and ideas (Matthews, 2012; Reginelli, 2009).

The remainder of this chapter focuses on several subtopics related to collaboration, especially collaboration between general education and special education teachers. These are inclusion and teacher collaboration, teacher attitudes regarding inclusive education, preparing special educators and general educators for collaboration in the classroom, barriers to collaboration, collaboration between general and special education teachers: necessary conditions, successful collaboration practices in middle and secondary schools, functional curriculum for secondary students, collaboration and academic achievement, professional development, models of collaboration, and methodology. The discussion of these topics is followed by research questions and

summary.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual perspective in which this applied dissertation study was grounded is Glasser's choice theory (Glasser, 1996). In this theory, Glasser provided a comprehensive explanation of human behavior, and, as indicated in the definition of collaboration provided earlier, collaboration involves interactive human behavior. Humans are driven by internal motivations of needs and wants. To achieve inner satisfaction, humans must satisfy those needs and wants. (Glasser, 1996). Behavior is an attempt to satisfy these current inner drives. Its purposefulness is to control the outside world as well as send a message to the world proclaiming one's ability (Parish, Huberman, & Navo, 2012; Wubbolding, 2007).

According to Glasser (1996), the brain is a control system that constantly monitors and meets one's need for power, freedom, fun, survival, love, belonging, and feelings in order to decide how well he or she is managing his or her lifelong desires. Glasser considered that a key component to determining the success or failure of students with disabilities in general education classrooms involved the inner drives of their teachers (Glasser, 1996). Furthermore, there is evidence suggesting that teacher collaboration is significant in the success of students with disabilities (Matthews, 2012; Reese, 2008; Reginelli, 2009). The more collaboration occurs between general educators and special educators, the more they are able to converse successfully about knowledge of methods, theories, and teaching and learning practices that improve instructional strategies and increase the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Goddard et al., 2007).

According to Glaser's choice theory, successful implementation of collaboration

depends on an individual feeling competent in his or her quality world, which is, according to Glasser, a personal world that each person starts to create and recreate throughout life through lived experiences (Allison, 2012). Therefore, positive social change of general education teachers being receptive of integrating students with disabilities into general education classrooms and special education teachers taking an active role in the implementation of the inclusion must be part of both teachers' ideas and beliefs that will nurture their quality world (Allison, 2012).

Inclusion and Teacher Collaboration

Public school systems have undergone many changes over the years. One of the most recent and controversial changes is that students with disabilities must be educated with the general education students with the general education curriculum in general education classrooms. For both students and teachers, this can be overwhelming as it can cause distressing changes. Be that as it may, the increase in such inclusionary practices has increased the need for effective collaboration for all school educators, especially general and special education teachers (Farrell, 2009).

The obligation to include students with disabilities in general education has been manifested in legislation. For example, the reauthorization of the Individuals With Disabilities Act emphasized the continuous need to focus on students' with disabilities access to the general education curriculum. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandated giving students with disabilities the necessary access in meeting standard benchmarks just as their peers without disabilities do in general education classrooms. Without a doubt, student success in school depends on both general and special education teachers' knowledge and skills to facilitate their participation and learning. The role of general education teachers is critical as content instruction and curriculum development

may largely fall within their area of expertise (Allison, 2012; Pugach & Blanton, 2009).

Collaboration between general and special education teachers has been regarded as a necessary element in the success of learners with disabilities (Reginelli, 2009). This collaboration refers to general and special educators working together as a team with a shared vision and shared goals. According to Reginelli (2009), teacher collaboration is a critical factor in the communication process. Both sets of teachers working together can create a win-win situation for all students. Each teacher brings an abundance of diverse knowledge to the classroom. Therefore, a partnership must be formed between the two teachers. Although current educational reforms emphasize the importance of collaboration between general and special education teachers, collaboration is neither taught nor modeled through course work provided by universities (Goddard et al., 2007). There is still much needed preparation for improvement in collaborative practices (Goddard et al., 2007; Leonard, 2013).

For years, special education teachers have been concerned about the perceptions of general education teachers (Pugach & Winn, 2011; Varnish, 2014). This concern comes from the need for special education educators to work collaboratively with general education educators to provide the best education for students with disabilities. An important factor in the inclusive setting is the direct collaboration between the general and special education teachers working together in the same classroom or consulting with each other the majority of the day (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). The level of responsibility that general educators have for students with disabilities has increased, and therefore, demands their attention for effective tools for students with disabilities and collaborative practice models with special education teachers (Varnish, 2014; Villa, 2005).

As noted earlier, collaboration between teachers since the 1980s has been defined as an educational approach in which general and special educators work in a coordinated and coactive manner to teach heterogeneous groups of students in educational integrated settings. Some investigators have described collaboration between general and special education as a marriage (Scruggs et al., 2007). For collaboration to be successful, the individuals involved should be equalitarians; that is, they must believe that all individuals have equal rights and opportunities, regardless of race, gender, or class background. Otherwise, there needs to be a mutual understanding that one teacher is clearly advanced, experienced, expertized, or is able to professionally make judgments for the good of students (Scruggs et al., 2007).

One example of a marriage between general and special education teachers is the coteaching model (Matthews, 2012; Villa, 2005). The coteaching model requires the cooperation of general education and special education teachers working collaboratively in the same classroom environment through the sharing of responsibilities for planning, instructing, and evaluating instruction for a heterogeneous group of students just as a married couple would do for their children (Gurgur & Uzner, 2010; Matthews, 2012). Moreover, collaborative coteaching is the opportunity for general and special educators to expand their knowledge and share ideas and strategies. The literature supports collaborative teaching models because both educators bring a variety of ideas, skills, and talents to the educational setting and share the aspects of instructions (Matthews, 2012).

It is imperative that collaboration takes place successfully between general and special education teachers in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Glomb & Morgan, 1991; Matthews, 2012). Many special education teachers believe this successful collaboration is imperative because the

numbers of students with various disabilities continue to increase in general education classrooms. No one teacher can meet the needs of numerous students from various diverse backgrounds and with different learning needs (Matthews, 2012). Because academic progress and accountability for all students are mandatory now more than ever before, collaboration between teachers is a critical component of ensuring that all students reach their fullest potential both academically and socially.

Federal law now permits the use of data on response to intervention as a component of determining whether a student should be identified as having a learning disability. This means that children will receive high-quality, scientifically based, and documented instruction before they are referred for special education (Aldridge, 2008). The general education classroom is the right place to support students even when their behavior presents significant challenges (Schwarz, 2007). General educators and special educators collaborating to address such issues increase the possibility that these students will remain within an inclusive classroom setting. As students move through intensive and highly structured interventions, data are gathered as evidence. Therefore, collaboration is integral to response to intervention (Friend, 2008). Differentiated instruction, curriculum-based assessment, and positive behavior supports will be provided in all areas in which special educators have highly specialized knowledge to share with their general education colleagues (Friend, 2008).

The initiative of response to intervention has been described as an important component of the framework across both general and special education as collaboration with teachers, administrators, and families across the school continues to increase (Council for Exceptional Children, 2004; Varnish, 2014). The framework includes an increased emphasis on research-based practices for inclusion and accountability measures

for teachers but requires mutually collaborative efforts between general and special educators to realize its full potential as a teaching strategy and necessary tool (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2012; Varnish, 2014). Supporters of response to intervention identify several potential advantages such as avoiding the wait-to-fail approach by early identification of students experiencing academic difficulties, reducing the number of students receiving special education services outside general education settings, and reducing the number of minority students referred for special education services (Bouck & Flanagan, 2010; Varnish, 2014).

Two of the major concerns of response to intervention are that general education teachers may not have the necessary skills to increase support within their classes and may not have the skill to support a collaborative model with special education teachers in order to increase social and academic outcomes for students with disabilities (Varnish, 2014). According to Varnish (2014), most studies show that the pedagogy used to prepare teacher candidates for collaborative efforts has not been well documented. According to McCray and McHatton (2011), less than one third of general education teachers in training receive training regarding effective collaboration with special education teachers. These findings were reported by a study conducted in 2001 by the Personnel Needs in Special Education under the U.S. Department of Education. In this study, data collected by 96% of general educators surveyed, both elementary and secondary, indicated that they currently are teaching or have taught students with disabilities with no prior training in collaboration with special educators, and this is the area they admit as having the most significant impact on their sense of efficacy of working with students with disabilities (McCray & McHatton, 2011).

To improve learning in a rapidly changing global and diverse society is the

educational challenge of the 21st century. The growing number of students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds poses a complex educational challenge that must be addressed by innovative instructional practices (Overall, 2006). Effective collaboration among educators is one such practice that has become an educational priority (Overall, 2006). The challenge for all educators is to learn to collaborate so they can teach students to collaborate in learning. Collaboration is embedded in the belief that teaching and learning are socially engaged and are best conducted in an environment where educators and learners are able to interact with one another as a community (Overall, 2006).

Teacher Attitudes Regarding Inclusive Education

In order for collaboration to be effective for all persons involved, it must be implemented appropriately (Kern, 2006). Research indicates that a key component for appropriate implementation is an understanding of the initial attitudes of general and special education teachers regarding inclusive education (Kern, 2006; Landever, 2010; Montgomery, 2012). According to Kern (2006), attitude is composed of three conceptually eminent reactions to certain objects. These reactions are defined as cognitive (i.e., knowledge about disabilities), behavioral (i.e., intention to interact with individuals who have a disability), and affective, or feelings about individuals with a disability (Kern, 2006). For teachers who are uncomfortable or unprepared for an inclusive classroom setting, these reactions may be negative and they may inadvertently pass these negative reactions on to students, which, in turn, will possibly reduce students' confidence and achievements.

According to Givens (2010), it is not general teaching experience but teaching in an inclusive setting that influences perceptions (e.g., perceptions about training, providing accommodations, modifications of the curriculum, planning time for students

with special needs) among general education teachers. Matthews (2012) revealed that overall teaching experience had no significant impact on the overall perceptions of the general education teachers; rather, the following issues influenced general education teachers' attitudes about inclusion: support provided by the administration, attitudes of fellow teachers toward inclusion, or resistance to the addition of another teacher in the classroom or acting as a consultant with information about how to teach or deliver instructions. General education teachers also believe that they lack the skills in collaboration necessary to work successfully with special education teachers. Therefore, teachers' negative attitudes and perceptions are a barrier to inclusive education because of the need for general and special education teachers to work collaboratively as a team (Matthews, 2012).

Preparing Special and General Educators for Collaboration in Classrooms

A global movement toward inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms has increased the focus on skills needed by teachers in order to meet the distinguishing demands of this challenging, but equal educational opportunity (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). Since the 1970s, collaboration between special and general educators has been a major topic in education because legislation required students with disabilities to be educated as close to their peers without disabilities as possible while maintaining academic success (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). Therefore, professional teaching standards have since then emphasized the vital skill and knowledge of successful collaboration needed in the teaching domain (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). The Council of Exceptional Children (2004) prepared programs and guidelines, but these programs are often flawed and provide insufficient training in collaboration skills for teachers. Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2014) suggested that much more training is

needed within school settings for both general and special educators.

Adding a course to teacher education programs is a step in the right direction to improving collaboration between general and special teachers. However, it does little to address or represent the full-bodied systematic integration necessary for special and general education across aspects of the preservice curriculum (Blanton & Pugach, 2007). The course approach does not address how general education may contribute to the preparation of special education teachers. It is based on the assumption that barriers, such as the exploration of understanding one another and moving beyond simple misconception to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual (i.e., diversity association), will hinder the quality of collaboration among teachers, especially in rural secondary level schools (Blanton & Pugach, 2007). Therefore, strategies that include addressing such barriers will prepare both general and special educators to educate students in general education classrooms.

Successfully including students in general education classrooms not only requires general education teachers to have the skills to teach, but they also need to have basic knowledge about special education requirements and the ability to collaborate with others in the assessment and educational planning of students with special needs (Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009). Teachers' beliefs and confidence to teach are key characteristics that predict teaching ability and student outcomes (Eggan & Kauchak, 2006; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009). Most first-year general education and special education teachers as well as veteran teachers believe that professional development constantly does very little with helping to address the specific needs of general educators' ability to serve students with disabilities (Eggan & Kauch, 2006; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009).

A study conducted by DeSimone and Parmar (2006) involved surveying

elementary and high school teachers for the purpose of identifying teachers' high and low areas of confidence in teaching students with disabilities. It was discovered that many general education teachers receive inservice training only occasionally or not at all about special education. General educators felt that inservice training was occasional or nonexistent, especially after their first year of teaching experience (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006). Therefore, it is critical that teachers receive consistent and ongoing support through inservice training. However, the first step is to determine the specific needs of the teaching population in order to provide appropriate inservice support (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Eggan & Kauch, 2006; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009).

Barriers to Collaboration

Collaboration has become increasingly important because the needs of students are more diverse. When the needs of students are more diverse, it becomes increasingly difficult for a teacher to meet the needs in isolation (Hall, 2007; Landever, 2010). Effective collaboration between general education and special education teachers can facilitate a successful inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Carter, Prater, Jackson, & Marchant, 2009). Moreover, teachers may agree that collaboration is a valuable goal. Special education and general education teachers must learn to work together to develop curriculum and instruction based on best practices that accommodate the needs of diverse learners (Landever, 2010; Winn & Branton, 2005). However, collaborative relationships are difficult to develop and maintain due to barriers that include competing priorities, limited resources, planning time, administrative support, philosophical differences, and lack of focused professional development (Carter et al., 2009; Landever, 2010; Matthews, 2012).

Competing priorities. General education and special education teachers often

report not having enough time to collaborate about issues of concerns regarding students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Not having enough time often is due to other priorities that must be attended to first. According to the literature, some priorities that are hindrances are personal matters (e.g., family) faculty meetings, assigned or additional duties set by administration (e.g., bus duty, hall duty, central office or school district meetings), and different instructional planning times (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014; Landever, 2010; La Salle, Roach, & McGrath, 2013; Wallace et al., 2009).

Limited resources. Special education teachers often reported struggling to gain access to comparable curricular tools or access to grade-level curricula that were provided for general education teachers and that students with disabilities had limited opportunity to interact with their peers (La Salle et al., 2013). This is significant because evidence shows that limited access of students with disabilities to the general curriculum or to individual education plans (IEP) linked to curricular access subsequently influenced their performance on standardized assessments (La Salle et al., 2013). In addition, many secondary-level general education teachers reported needing support to help identify resources and modifications that facilitated students' access to grade-level curricular concepts and skills (La Salle et al., 2013). Therefore, data collection and reporting about students' progress and present levels of performance are important resources to the general education and special education teachers' collaborative process because they influence the type of instructional tasks that must be provided (La Salle et al., 2013).

Planning time. According to Friend (2008), most professionals express concern about finding the time needed to form a collaborative working relationship with colleagues. They also worry about setting realistic expectations regarding time for collaboration. In most schools, special education teachers and general education teachers

have a planning time. The problem is that they do not have shared planning time together to discuss shared students' issues. Special education teachers and general education teachers need adequate time to meet in order to focus on tasks and opportunities to discuss previous lessons that have been taught, to plan future lessons and to assess student progress (Friend, 2008).

Administrative support. Regardless of the type of collaboration structure that is used (e.g., consultant, coteaching), successful collaboration requires administrative support (Carter et al., 2009; Landever, 2010). Therefore, poor leadership is a barrier that impacts collaborative partnership (Villa, 2005). Principals must support the collaborative relationship or partnership in order for it to be a success (Fleischer, 2005). Administrators must be willing to listen and earnestly work toward overcoming obstacles, such as scheduling, challenge priorities, and personal allocations (Fleischer, 2005). They must support this by a partnership consistently providing training to the teachers, listening to their concerns, assisting in problem solving, and providing sufficient amount of time for general and special educators to collaborate (Fleischer, 2005).

Philosophical differences. Most professional agree collaboration is important (Matthews, 2012). However, it is very challenging to develop because general education and special education teachers must understand each other's instructional beliefs. The beliefs that influence decisions about instruction that influence teachers' ability to work collaboratively include (a) how a partnership will assist students, (b) what skills each teacher offers the classroom to implement the collaborative process, and (c) the perceived strengths and weaknesses of various courses of action. Philosophical differences among general and special educators exist even on the best service delivery paradigm for students with disabilities (Fleischer, 2005). The differences exist because general and

special education teachers are trained separately during their preservice education and staff development training (Fleisher, 2005; Matthews, 2012). Buffum and Hinman (2006) stated that educators must be prepared at the preservice level and continue through professional-development training to deal sufficiently with the challenges of collaborating.

Lack of focused professional development. Growing numbers of students with disabilities are now being served in the general education classrooms (Bouck & Satsangi, 2014). Although inclusion can be extremely beneficial, many students are placed with teachers who have little or no training in collaborative practices. Research has found that targeted and ongoing professional development is critical in supporting and maintaining collaboration between general education and special education teachers in schools (Pugach & Winn, 2011). Pugach and Winn (2011) found that general and special education teachers working together were more successful when these teachers were collaboratively working together during ongoing professional support. Also, Scruggs et al. (2007) revealed in their study that general and special educators benefitted from collaborating during professional development about students' success and outcomes that suggested instructional interventions; when the teachers collaborated during professional development (Pugach & Winn, 2011; Scruggs et al., 2007).

This is based on the testimony of teachers who participated in the study. The two previously mentioned studies were qualitative and findings were based on data gathered from focus groups, electronic surveys, interviews, and program evaluations (Pugach & Winn, 2011; Scruggs et al., 2007). The participants were various grade levels of middle and high school general and special education teachers (Pugach & Winn, 2011; Scruggs et al., 2007). Without a doubt, teachers must be adequately trained on effective

collaborative practices in order for inclusion to be successful and for students to receive the best education possible (Bouck & Satsangi, 2014). According to the literature, teachers who have not been trained with necessary collaborative skills reported significant difficulties collaborating. General education teachers and special education teachers require considerable knowledge and skills necessary to collaborate effectively (Friend, 2008; Friend & Cook, 2007).

Professional development is critical to high quality educators (Bouck & Satsangi, 2014). A lack of indepth training diminishes their effectiveness. Put differently, professional-development workshops positively impact teachers' ability to teach students with specific learning disorders, and opportunities must be offered on a regular basis (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006). Deficiency of professional-development opportunities results in a continual cycle of teachers feeling frustrated in their ability to collaborate effectively (Bouck & Satsangi, 2014; DeSimone & Parmar, 2006).

Collaboration Between General and Special Education Teachers: Necessary Conditions

According to Cagney (2009), effective collaboration is the process of working to create meaningful learning experiences for students. School cultures that reflect collaborative practices are referred to as communities, and these communities expect, respect, and embrace diverse learners (Cagney, 2009; Landever, 2010). Moreover, when teachers use a specific model and procedures to guide the collaboration process, students can improve academically. Unless there is a structured model for collaboration between general education and special education teachers, teachers may only share information about students instead of planning instructional interventions for all students (Carter et al., 2009; Landever, 2010).

They may only talk about accommodations and instructional adaptations necessary for students' general education classroom success. According to Carter et al. (2009), research studies revealed secondary schools' special education teachers reported that the majority of their collaboration focused on sharing information with general education teachers rather than on collaborative problem solving or planning. Also, secondary schools' general education teachers reported that they hardly ever collaborated with special education teachers (Carter et al., 2009).

Collaboration must be embedded within the concept of people's ability to work together (Fore, Hagan-Burke, Burke, Boon, & Smith, 2008). In the arena of school reform, the notion of improving relationships of teachers is viewed as multidimensional and encompasses more than just procedural knowledge and skills. Many researchers acknowledge that the major factor in accomplishing the goals of school reform are the formal and informal collaborative networks teachers establish within their schools (Fore et al., 2008). Collaboration should be voluntary. In the field of education, one's ultimate goals should be to improve the knowledge of others. Collaborative interaction will allow teachers and school leaders to bring together their expertise in an effort to address issues such as improving the educational performance of all diverse learners.

Collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers has been regarded as an essential element in the success of learners with disabilities (Reginelli, 2009). Educators must not view this collaboration as interference with the job of another teacher. It must be seen as a team effort to meet the needs of all students in their least restrictive environment. The major conditions that play a part in making collaboration work are shared goals, high standards for all students, role clarity, leadership and systemic support, communication and respect. Each of these is discussed

below.

Shared goals. Effective collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers requires common goals. The primary goal of both groups of teachers' must be to provide all students with appropriate classroom and homework assignments so that each is learning, challenged, and participating (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). Both sets of teachers must share the expectation that participation in the general education classroom, will prepare students with disabilities with the skills needed to meet the challenging expectations that have been established for all students. These challenging expectations include related services and necessary supports based on each student's needs. Collaboration will provide the necessary support. General education and special education teachers' perceptions regarding this support are crucial to the success of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Reginelli, 2009).

High standards for all students. Throughout the last decade, basically every state across the nation has committed to implementing some kind of standards-based reform. Believing that all students should be given the opportunity for high standards of learning, these states have theoretically restructured their educational systems in an effort to demonstrate greater accountability for all students' results. Therefore, in order for effective collaboration between special and general educators to transpire, both teachers must maintain high educational standards for all students, while also ensuring that each child's unique instructional needs are met (Sharpe & Hawes, 2003). They must reflect on their personal philosophy of education and how it can be transferred into action that reflects teaching all students regardless of their present level of functioning or ethnic group. They must collaborate to ensure the instructional repertoire of the curriculum is strengthened to reflect high standards for all students and that parents and students'

reports reflect those high standards (Landever, 2010). These ideas are consistent with the findings of Farrell (2009) and provide insight and direction as to characteristics of a successful collaboration between special and general education teachers.

Role clarity. In order to change in a collaborative direction that is conducive to a successful inclusion classroom for all students, there must be guidance (Reginelli, 2009). This guidance needs to come from the principal of the school more so than from the office of the superintendent, special education coordinator or general education department offices. The principal should provide the vision for the direction in which a plan of action shall occur for both general education and special education departments within the school. School leaders are viewed as curriculum planners by individuals within their school. Administrators may allocate certain duties to general and special educators and expect them to be experts in their area of expertise collaborating together to ensure all students are successful with the standard curriculum within all general education classrooms. Therefore, it is very important for general education teachers and special education teachers to know their expected roles in the collaborative process for helping all students succeed in general education classrooms.

There are some responsibilities that general education teachers and special education teachers have in common. Karten (2007) defined special education and general education teachers' roles as equal or equally important and indicates they must collaborate to figure out ways that all students can and will be successful in school and in their futures by creating and instilling high expectations for all. Both the general education teacher and the special education teacher are responsible for content knowledge and meeting the needs in a class of all students with and without disabilities. Both teachers are responsible for planning lessons for instruction, collaborating with

parents, working with related service personnel and others, and assigning responsibilities for and supervising paraprofessional educators (Karten, 2007).

There are also responsibilities that are specific to the general education teachers. According to Reginelli (2009), in an inclusion setting, the primary responsibility of general education teachers is to use their individual skills to instruct students in curricula as their respective school districts have dictated and prescribed. They must have the ability to present material in an effective manner. Furthermore, general education teachers should maintain students' cumulative records related to general education curriculum, record daily and weekly achievements, inform special education teachers about grade-level and subject-area curricula and general education approaches, use whole-group and small-group management techniques, consider the students with disabilities when deciding on a classroom activity, take part in the direct instruction of the students, monitor and evaluate IEPs and attend IEP meetings, teach standards-of-learning curricula, and administer daily classroom and testing accommodations (Reginelli, 2009).

In an inclusion setting, the special education teachers, as well as the general education teachers, have responsibilities that are specific to them. The primary responsibility of special education teachers is to provide specialized instruction by developing and adapting materials that match the strengths, learning styles, and special needs of students (Reginelli, 2009; Ripley, 2007). This requires knowledge of each individual student's learning characteristics. They should be well versed in providing research-based strategies that are effective for students with and without disabilities in the general education classroom.

To do this, another responsibility of special education teachers is to be able to

identify information regarding processing deficits that include auditory, visual, attention, motor, memory, and language for students. In addition, special education teachers are responsible for getting familiar with various modes of assistive technology that are available for assisting students with disabilities in gaining access to the general curriculum. Assessing students for the purpose of monitoring progress is also their responsibility (Reginelli, 2009).

Finally, according to Reginelli (2009), by differentiating instruction, they will teach to the standards, and work toward meeting the goals of the students with individual educational programs while addressing the individual learning of each student. Moreover, special education teachers are to provide consultation, technical support, assistive devices, support facilitation, lesson adaptations, and materials that work for students with and without disabilities in the classes, as well as walk by and check on how things are going, usually on a daily basis or more often and assist or handle emergencies, such as administering medication (Jackson, 2011). Similarly, according to Karten (2007), special education teachers should (a) maintain the students' confidential records related to IEPs and record daily or weekly achievements; (b) inform general education teachers about specialized teaching methods, materials, and technology; (c) analyze individual student behavior and create behavior plans; (d) take part in the instruction of the students through direct instruction or consultation; (e) create, monitor, and evaluate IEPs and attend these meetings; (f) create and administer daily classroom testing accommodations; (g) teach learning strategies; and (h) include the students with disabilities by scheduling varied people in the support network.

Leadership and systemic support. Studies indicate general educators are still more likely to interact collaboratively with other general educators than with special

educators (Sharpe & Hawes, 2003). Effective collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers depends in large measure upon leadership and systemic support. It is important for teachers to see the commitment that their system and building leaders have toward the collaborative process. It is essential for them to see the administrators are supportive and taking an active role in the process. The action and support could be simple such as attending departmental meetings to answer questions or more complex such as evaluating every possibility to ensure general and special educators have common planning time or arranging in-school and extended professional development programs that require both general and special educator working together. The support of their leaders may help both set of teachers develop a trust that they may not otherwise have had.

Research indicates there are more infrastructures (e.g., supporting policies, local-level administrative support, shared goals, acknowledgment of special education as an integral part of education) for collaborative support needed that focus on the infusion of all factors that make up quality teaching for both special and general educators (Sharpe & Hawes, 2003). The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education recommended that general education teachers learn more about special education policies and practices. Waldron and McLeskey (2010) recommended the development of a collaborative culture, the use of high-quality professional development to improve teacher practices, and a strong leadership for collaboration by the building administrators.

Communication and respect. The special education teacher and the general education teacher both bring training and experience in teaching techniques and learning processes to the collaborative process. They must be willing to acknowledge and respect that they both are professionals who ultimately want to create meaningful experiences for

all students (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). Both sets of teachers must abandon communicating segregated disciplinary roles and isolated practices and embrace effective collaboration between general and special education teachers as a vital skill and domain to teaching diverse learners in the 21st century. Both general and special educators must view and respect that effective collaboration is a process of giving and taking between them in order for a child to learn and succeed academically. They must be willing to relinquish power and control and accept both are equal professionals. They must communicate neither is an outsider or an intruder in the classroom and that no one teacher can teach numerous students from a variety of backgrounds (Givens, 2010; Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014).

Successful Collaboration Practices in Middle and Secondary Schools

Most of the studies regarding the outcome of collaboration between general and special educators have focused on elementary-age students. Very little is known about collaboration in high school classrooms between general education and special education teachers (Wallace et al., 2009). One reason is that inclusion of secondary-level students with disabilities into general education classrooms is considered to be, for the most part, complex due to teaching loads that allow very little time for individualization, planning, and collaborating. Moreover, secondary classrooms are content focused rather than student focused. However, even though challenging, providing access to the standard curriculum within general education classrooms in secondary schools must continue to go forward for educators to accomplish positive results for all students with or without disabilities.

Despite the knowledge of benefits and key qualities for promoting inclusive schooling, documented examples of inclusive education programs at the high school

grade levels are not as plentiful as at the elementary grade levels (Villa, 2005). However, many secondary schools' general and special educators continue to increase collaboration (Villa, 2005). This collaboration, along with responsive practices such as special educators and general educators offering specialized instruction, benefits students with disabilities in general education settings (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2002). Both teachers are working together to help students with various learning and behavioral problems.

Both teachers are creating learning goals and objectives that incorporate multicultural aspects, such as developing students' ability to write persuasively about social justice concerns (Smith et al., 2008; Wood, 2006) in order to improve curricula, instruction, and assessment practices for all students' needs. Furthermore, both the general and special educators are working together to ensure that students who enter the classroom each day at the high school level receive differentiation in curriculum development and instructional delivery. Both teachers are working together to ensure that assessment occurs to facilitate meaningful and effective instruction not only for students with disabilities, but also for students without disabilities (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Haager & Klinger, 2005).

Wallace et al. (2009) described collaboration practices between general education and special education teachers within secondary schools from sites that represented urban, suburban, and rural locations as successors. These schools demonstrated success with including students with disabilities in general education classes. Factors contributing to the success of these inclusive arrangements included the following: (a) block scheduling in order to increase instructional flexibility and teacher collaboration, (b) close monitoring by the special education teacher and a planned automatic response with

general educators involving steps the students must take to improve their performance if their grades drop below a C (e.g., study team strategy meetings), (c) strong emphasis and participation with the school's individual educational plan process for general education teachers, (d) a school climate in which general and special education teachers freely share their knowledge and materials with each other as a way of increasing each other's instructional effectiveness, (e) commitment of both general education teachers and special education teachers to serving all students, (f) joint professional-development opportunities for general education and special education teachers, and (g) joint planning between special and general education teachers.

A study conducted by Smith et al. (2002) was part of a larger study known as the Beacons of Excellence Project, which is a project designed to identify elements associated with the success of high schools that achieve exemplary learning results for students with and without disabilities. The results of the study were similar in several ways to the factors described above by Wallace et al. (2009). Specifically, the results revealed that, in order for exemplary learning to occur among students with and without disabilities in general education classrooms, schools must challenge all students and their teachers to high standards, build an inclusive and collaborative community of learning, foster a school culture of innovation and creativity, engage stakeholders in school leadership, promote professional development, hire staff who reinforce school values and vision, and use data for decision-making processes and school-improvement planning.

Functional Curriculum for Secondary Students

According to Bouck and Satsangi (2014), the field of education, especially at the secondary level, encounters discussions regarding instructional methods and curriculum as to how and what to teach students with or without disabilities. Discussions are often

centered on a more functional curriculum versus a more academically based curriculum. Since the No Child Left Behind Act legislation, debate over how to educate students particularly in secondary education and regardless of identity has increased. One way researchers have discovered the debate can be resolved is a functional, academic-based curriculum designed for meeting the needs of all students (Bouck & Satsangi, 2014).

It is a type of curriculum that focuses on preparing students to successfully function in life after high school whether immediately entering college or the workforce. A functional curriculum addresses many aspects of life including, but not limited to, academics, career readiness, and social involvement. A functional curriculum is not new. It has existed since the early 1970s and 1980s. A functional curriculum is usually associated mainly with students with disabilities. However, researchers have found it can be useful with many other populations (Bouck & Satsangi, 2014). Furthermore, with discussions as to how to reach all students in general education classrooms due to No Child Left Behind, educators must now consider using multiple curricula and not just the one standard or philosophical belief.

However, in spite of these findings, the establishment and use of this curriculum will depend on the success of collaboration between general education and special education teachers' understanding and willingness to incorporate portions of the curriculum (e.g., social-relationship skills, age-appropriate skills for daily functioning, self-determination, community access, employment) into general education classrooms and curriculum so that students show an increase in social skills, acceptance behavior, and knowledge needed to intellectually function beyond high school (Bouck & Flanagan, 2010; Bouck & Joshi, 2012).

Collaboration and Academic Achievement

Many studies focused on academic achievement and the collaboration process between general and special education teachers have revealed mixed results (Varnish, 2014). Research on elementary school students indicated achievement of both groups was higher in inclusive classroom settings when general educators and special educators collaborated on behalf of students with disabilities as compared with inclusive classroom settings where no collaboration occurred. However, recent studies focused on middle school students revealed that noninclusive students had fewer behavior infractions as well as fewer attendance issues (Fore et al., 2008; Varnish, 2014).

Varnish (2014) indicated that students with severe learning disabilities as well as behavior and emotional problems achieved more in special education settings in which they were able to receive more individual attention. In a study conducted on 57 high school students with learning disabilities, Fore et al. (2008) discovered that there is no significant evidence that academic levels change either way for students in either special education settings or general education settings at the high school level. Furthermore, even though the numbers of students with learning disabilities placed into general education classes has dramatically increased over the years, there are limited studies to indicate that students are more successful academically in general education classrooms (Fore et al. 2008).

According to the second National Longitudinal Transition Study (Varnish, 2014), the percentages of subjects in which students with disabilities participate in general education classes are related to their social adjustment and academic performance at school. Interactions between students and teachers have a substantial impact on how students envision themselves and their identities (Reese, 2008). Reese (2008) discovered

that identities of students were not immutable and that their interrelationships with their teachers mattered, as well as how their teachers interacted with each other and could be viewed as an outcome of their participation in various activities. Reese stated that, in high school, students may fail to see relevancy of the connection between what they are learning and their own lives.

According to Paulson (2006), schools wishing to improve the percentage of students who remain in school until graduation should make adjustments regarding effective collaboration relationships between general and special education teachers as well as adapting a core curriculum that is relevant, engaging, and personalized to students. In a high school reformation, there must be notable positive collaboration, positive relationships, and significant evidence that these adjustments are taking place in order to improve the percentage of students remaining in school and graduating. The relevancy connection between what students are learning and their own lives will make a tremendous difference in self-esteem and academic performance in secondary level youths when they observe collaboration between special and general education teachers (Paulson, 2006; Reese, 2008). In other words, collaboration between teachers led to increased student success (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014).

For several decades, educational researchers and practitioners have been advocating the use of collaboration as a means of improving teachers' instructional practice and subsequently student outcomes (Goddard et al., 2007; Green, 2008; Jones & West, 2010). Students with disabilities achieved more academically in programs that combined the use of a special education teacher and a general education teacher than they did in programs that did not include a special education teacher (Fore et al., 2008; Montgomery, 2012). Moreover, there is new research available on the implementation of

effective collaborative instruction that demonstrates that, when the least restrictive

environment is the right fit, students with disabilities perform well in general education

classrooms when general educators and special educators collaborate.

Professional Development

Effective collaboration between general education teachers and special education

teachers is a critical component of the inclusion process. Haager and Klinger (2005) and

Geter (2012) stated that it is essential for educators to be well-informed on how to

participate in productive collaboration and use it to provide successful instructional

approaches for all students. Regular education teachers as well as special education

teachers also must be knowledgeable about the key aspects related to students and

inclusion that are vital for academic success.

Rae, Murray, and McKenzie (2010) indicated that inclusion requires proper

instruction and classroom management, which often can impact teachers negatively. A lot

of teachers, especially first-year ones, often acknowledge they are not adequately trained

in inclusion strategies and techniques. Moreover, general education teachers struggle with

students with disabilities in inclusive settings because they lack experience in teaching

them. McIntyre (2009) indicated that 90% of teachers' negative attitudes are due to lack

of training in collaborative instructional inclusive models.

Improving professional learning for educators is a crucial step in transforming

schools and improving academic achievement (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree,

Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). In order to meet public expectations and federal

requirements for schools and student performance, the nation must bolster teacher

knowledge and skills in order to ensure that every teacher is proficient to teach diverse

learners, well informed about student learning, competent in complex core academic

content, and skillful at the artistry of teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Professional learning can have a powerful effect on teacher skills and knowledge and on student learning if it is sustained over time, focused on important content, and embedded in the work of professional learning communities that support ongoing improvements in teachers' practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). More specifically, in order to support teacher effectiveness, it should be (a) intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; (b) focused on student learning and address the teaching of specific curriculum content; (c) aligned with school improvement priorities and goals, focus on building strong working relationships among teachers; (d) framed around school-based coaching programs; and (e) focused on mentoring and induction programs for new teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Each of these characteristics is discussed below.

Intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice. Experimental research studies of inservice programs revealed that programs of greater intensity and duration are positively associated with student learning. Programs that offer teachers 30 to 100 professional learning contact hours spread out over a course of 6 to 12 months showed a positive and significant effect on student achievement gains (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Furthermore, a study designed to support inquiry-based science instruction found that teachers who received 80 or more hours of professional learning time implemented the given teaching strategies into practice significantly more than the teachers who received fewer hours (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). These findings are consistent with a national survey of teachers' self-reported beliefs about the value of intensive ongoing professional development. They view inservice activities most effective when they are sustained in number of hours and over an extended period of time (Darling-Hammond et

al, 2009).

Focus on student and the teaching of specific curriculum content. Research suggests that professional learning is most effective when it addresses the concrete, everyday challenges involved in teaching and learning specific academic subject matter, rather than focusing on teaching methods taken out of context or nonconcrete educational principles (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). In other words, researchers have discovered teachers use classroom practices more often that have been modeled for them through professional development training (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Equally, teachers themselves judge professional learning to be most valuable when it provides hands-on opportunities to work and build their knowledge and skills of academic content needed that take into account the local context (e.g., local schools' curriculum guidelines, specific resources, systems' accountability practices) that will show them how to teach it to their students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Alignment with school-improvement priorities and goals. Researchers discovered that professional development is more effective when the activities are not isolated, but are an integral part of a larger part of the school reform efforts, initiatives or changes underway at schools. For example, the National Science Foundation's Discovery program implemented in Ohio in the early 1990s offered teachers continued support as part of a larger statewide effort to improve student achievement in science. Six weeks of intensive institutes focused on the contents of science and instruction matching the state's standards. Teachers were given release time to attend a series of six seminars covering curriculum and assessment. They were also provided on-demand support and site visits from regional staff developers, and contact with peers through newsletters and annual conferences. An independent evaluation of the process revealed this combination of

support led to a significant increase in and continued use of inquiry-based instructional practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Strong working relationships among teachers. Traditionally, schools have been structured so that teachers work alone. They are rarely given time to plan lessons together, share instructional practices, design curriculum, evaluate students, or help make managerial decisions which is an indication that a strong professional collaborative development is not present (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Such traditional norms are not easily changed if schools continue to support private and isolated teaching practices. A comprehensive 5-year study indicated that schools that underwent major reforms discovered that teachers in schools who formed active professional collaborative learning communities had fewer student absences and dropouts and more achievement in reading, math, science, and history in general education inclusion classes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Although efforts of strengthening teachers' professional relationships can take many forms, many researchers have identified specific conditions contributing to their success. For example, research shows that when schools are strategic in creating time and productive working relationships within academic departments or grade levels, across them and among teachers across the school, the benefits can include greater consistency in instruction, more willingness to share practices as well as try new ways of teaching, and successful ways in solving problems of practice. In a study conducted consisting of 900 teachers in 24 secondary schools across the country, researchers discovered that teachers formed more solid and productive professional communities in smaller schools, schools in which teachers were more relatively involved in the educational decision-making processes, and especially in schools that scheduled regular blocks of time for

general education and special education teachers to meet and plan courses and
assignments together (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Models of Collaboration

When teachers use specific models and procedures to guide collaborative
planning processes, students can improve academic performance and social functioning
(Carter et al., 2009). Because collaboration is a critical aspect of effective inclusion,
schools that adopt specific procedures or models for collaboration are permitting students
with disabilities to benefit from teachers' collaborative planning (Carter et al., 2009). The
applied collaboration model (Sharpe & Hawes, 2003) is a professional-development
training model in which teams of general education and special education teachers work
together to identify mutual goals and use negotiation skills to address the needs of
students with disabilities within general education classes.

Within this training, general education and special education teachers are
provided with collaborative strategies that increase communication and facilitate
cooperative working relationships between them and instructional strategies that focus on
various teaching strategies (e.g., differentiated instruction, shared classroom
management) that are practiced in general education classroom settings (Sharpe &
Hawes, 2003). However, there is still much needed research about collaboration between
general and special education teachers (Sharpe & Hawes, 2003).

The applied collaboration model was designed by the University of Minnesota
and the staff of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning Division
of Special Education. It is a teacher training model designed to provide general and
special education teachers with collaborative planning and instructional skills necessary
to meet the needs of students with disabilities within the context of high standards and

educational reform. The model represents a collection of collaborative and instructional strategies for general educators and special educators to apply, as a team, in the general education classroom. It is another training model in which general and special education teachers work together.

To provide structure for general education and special education teachers who need school-wide support with collaboration to focus their efforts in planning adaptation and accommodations for students with disabilities in general education classrooms, Carter et al. (2009) developed the collaboration model known as curriculum, rules, instruction, materials, environment. It is a four-step process that (a) evaluates the curriculum, rules, instruction, materials, and environment of the general education classroom; (b) lists the students' learning and behavioral strengths and limitations; (c) compares the classroom environment with the students' profile to identify learning facilitators and barriers; and (d) plans adaptations and accommodations that will facilitate learning and mitigate the effect of learning barriers.

In the current study, the researcher used this professional-development model as a framework for the action plan to be developed. The model's process requires general education teachers to analyze their classrooms and compare their classroom practices and environment to their students' profiles. As the teachers complete each step of the process, they share, discuss, and analyze information about themselves, their colleagues, and the student (Carter et al., 2009). Information is filtered through teachers' own perspectives and philosophies and depends on the information discussed and the teachers' analysis of it.

Both the general education teacher and the special education teacher must agree and move through the process or both encounter differences that require additional

discussion (Carter et al., 2009). If an agreement is the result of a discussion, both teachers assume joint responsibility for the problem identified and needs to be addressed. If an agreement is not result of a discussion, teachers identify separate problems that need to be addressed and assume responsibility individually. However, addressing the problems separately is not the correct implementation of the model. The general education and the special education teachers need to come to consensus agreement about the student problem and how to best to address it.

Methodology

A case study is a way of doing social science research. It is the preferred strategy when the researcher has little control over the events and when the focus is on a present-day phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 2003, 2004). Moreover, case studies are used when the researcher's goal is to generalize or expand on theories. There are explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive case studies. A case study is use in many situations (e.g., community psychology, dissertations and theses in the social sciences). The type of research question determines which case study strategy approach should be used. Research questions that focus on the what will use the exploratory case study approach, such as the following: What are the barriers to and the successes of collaboration at the research site as measured by observational, interview, and questionnaire data? Research questions that focus on the how and why should use the explanatory case study approach. Explanatory and descriptive case studies are appropriate to use when describing or tracing a series of events over time, such as career advancement of lower income youths and their ability or inability to break neighborhood ties (Yin, 2003).

In case studies, construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and

reliability are the four tests used to determine the quality of the social research. Construct

validity is used to establish correct operational measures for the concepts being studied.

Internal validity is used to establish a causal relationship (e.g., whether x led to y).

External validity is used to establish the domain to which a study's findings can be

generalized. Reliability is use to demonstrate the operations of the study. Put differently,

the data-collection procedures can be recurrent with the same results (Yin, 2003). Also,

generalizability in case studies must be dealt with through the use of analytical

generalizing (i.e., replication logic).

There are strengths and weaknesses associated with case study research (Yin,

2003). Weaknesses are they provide little basis for scientific generalization, the

researcher often allows bias views to influence the direction of the findings and

conclusions, they take too long and result in massive unreadable documents, and, finally,

they can be difficult to do because good case-study skills have not yet been identified.

Case-study research strengths are they are good for expanding on studies or theories and

they are a form of inquiry that does not depend exclusively on ethnographic or

participant-observer data. Therefore, a valid, high-quality case study can be done without

leaving the library or telephone, depending upon the topic that is being studied (Yin,

2003).

Research Questions

One central question and four supporting questions guided this study. The central

research question was as follows: How and to what extent does collaboration occur

between general education teachers and the special education teachers in a southern rural

high school? The four supporting research questions were as follows:

1. In what ways do the special education teacher and general education teachers at

the research site collaborate, as measured by questionnaire data, focus-group data, and observation data?

2. What are the attitudes of the general education teachers and the special education teachers at the research site regarding collaboration, as measured by questionnaire and focus-group data?

3. What training in collaboration have the general education teachers and the special education teachers at the research site participated in, as measured by questionnaire data, focus-group data, and classroom observations?

4. What are the barriers to and successes of collaboration at the research site, as measured by focus-group data and classroom observations?

Summary

Educating students with disabilities in their least restrictive environment is a mandate that has caused meticulous change across the United States. The literature points out that teacher knowledge and experience are two aspects that discourage teachers toward educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Matthews, 2012). There is consistent evidence in the literature that proclaims general education teachers do not feel prepared to teach students with disabilities (Aldridge, 2008; Allison, 2012; Matthews, 2012). Special education teachers feel they will not be considered equally capable of suggesting strategies that will benefit all students in general education classrooms. However, both groups of teachers feel they do not have enough time to collaborate and that they need more professional-development training that will enable them to serve students with and without disabilities in general education classrooms.

In order for general and special educators to change in a collaborative direction conducive to a successful inclusion classroom for all students, there has to be guidance.

Regular education teachers as well as special education teachers must be knowledgeable about key aspects related to students and inclusion that are vital to academic success (Geter, 2012; Haager & Klinger, 2005; Reginelli, 2009). Furthermore, administrators should allocate certain roles and responsibilities to general education and special education teachers with the expectancy that each group bring expertise in those roles and areas of responsibility to the collaborative process. It is vital for general education teachers and special education teachers to know their expected roles and responsibilities in the collaborative process contribute to successful student outcomes in general education classrooms.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter addresses the reasons and benefits of using a case-study research methodology to explore how general education teachers and special education teachers collaborate in a southern rural high school. The selection of participants and the instruments chosen to elicit data are discussed. A section is dedicated to the procedures on how the study was conducted including how the data were collected and analyzed. Lastly, the issues of ethical considerations, trustworthiness, and potential bias are discussed.

Design

The purpose of this case study was twofold. First, the researcher wished to determine how and to what extent collaboration practices occurred between general education teachers and special education teachers in a southern rural high school in southeastern Alabama. Second, the study was designed to develop an action plan based on data collected and the research literature for professional development focused on extending teachers' collaborative skills. A case-study design was used because it is a standard and suitable qualitative research method in the field of psychology and education. It can contribute to knowledge regarding individuals and related phenomena (Oramas, 2012; Yin, 2003). A case study benefits researchers by permitting them a close look at real-life situations while they receive feedback from participants (Oramas, 2012). This increases researchers' understanding of the phenomenon being studied and helps develop their research skills (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Oramas, 2012).

More specifically, the researcher used a single holistic case-study design employing Glaser's choice theory as the theoretical framework as described in chapter

two. A single case-study design, according to Yin (2003), is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. A case study strives to illuminate a decision or set of decisions as to why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what results (Yin, 2003). This design is appropriate because it would help to identify the factors, barriers, or influences, if any, related to collaboration between general education and special education teachers in a rural high school. Furthermore, this approach helped to identify resources and professional-development needs that study participants believed would improve collaboration between general and special education teachers in a southern rural high school.

Participants

All 38 teachers at the research site were invited to participate in the study by completing a questionnaire. From this group, a purposeful sample (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2003) of 10 teachers selected by subjects taught were invited to participate more intensively through observations and focus groups. They were certified as either general education teachers or special education teachers. Of this number, nine were general education teachers and two were the only special education teachers at the school). The participants were teachers in Grades 9 through 12 at the research site. They were male and female, Caucasian and African American, secondary-level teachers. There were two math general education teachers, two history general education teachers, one science general education teacher, three language-arts general education teachers, and two special education teachers.

Instruments

The instruments for data collection were a questionnaire (see Appendix A),

classroom-observation form (see Appendix B), a reflection journal, and focus-group protocol (see Appendix C). Questionnaires are a simple way to collect data on participants and frequently show trends (Matthews, 2012). Observations are another way to collect data about participants and must consist of at least two persons (Glesne, 2011). Focus groups are a selected set of individuals gathered together to discuss viewpoints on a topic of interest augmented by focused activities (Glesne, 2011). Each of the specific instruments that were used in this study is described below.

Questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire in this study was to determine general education teachers' perceptions of collaboration for the purpose of providing the most appropriate instruction for all students. The researcher combined selected items from two previous questionnaires to meet the needs of the study. The authors had indicated their permission for the questionnaires to be used for educational purposes (Glomb & Morgan, 1991; Lukacs, 2009). The questionnaire is divided into three sections. The first section is demographical information, and there are six questions. The second section focuses on collaboration, and there are 21 items.

The third section is a self-assessment focused on teachers' attitudes and knowledge regarding collaboration, and there are 15 items. The questionnaire has a total of 42 questions. It uses a multiple-choice format that ranges from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. It was given to all the general education teachers at the school. Items 7 to 16, Items 18 to 20, Item 22, Items 25 to 27, and Item 30 related to Supporting Research Question 1. Item 10, Items 22 and 23, Item 29, and Items 31 to 45 related to Supporting Research Question 2. Item 19, Item 21, and Items 28 and 29 related to Supporting Research Question 3. Items 14 to 17 related to Supporting Research Question 4.

The questionnaire was piloted by three people who were knowledgeable about

special education and teacher collaboration. They were a university professor, the

principal of the research site, and the reading coach of the research site. Feedback

regarding the questionnaire was provided by each participant. The university professor

commented that the questionnaire was appropriate and aligned with the study's research

questions. The research site principal and reading coach commented that the

questionnaire was fine and appropriately designed. However, the reading coach and the

principal at the research site suggested that the teachers participating in the study have the

definition for each collaborative model mentioned in the questionnaire.

      Classroom observation form. The researcher developed an observation form in

order to record field notes. The observations were of general and special education

teachers. The recording of the field notes was continuous during each observation period.

Recorded observations were consisted of time, event, impressions, and themes of the

information observed and were noted every 5 minutes. The classroom observation form

was divided into four columns. The form was used to state the beginning and ending time

of each classroom observation. It was also used to state what the researcher observed

during the classroom observation and any reflections the researcher may have had during

that time as well.

      The first column involved time. The second column involved field notes. The

third column involved reflections, and the fourth column involved events. The focus of

the classroom observations was on how and the extent to which both general and special

education teachers (a) collaborated during planning time and departmental meetings

classroom in order to address students' needs, (b) collaborated in the general education

classroom in order to address the needs of the students, and (c) whether both sets of

teachers attended professional sessions together, and if so, whether, and the extent to

which, they collaborated during these sessions about how to address various students'
needs in general education classrooms. In addition, observation was intended to focus on
whether or not the professional development materials were focused on addressing the
needs of students with and without disabilities in the general education classroom and
how to best meet those needs.

Reflection journal. The researcher kept a journal in order to write down any
random thoughts and reflections about anything she had seen, heard and done during the
study. The researcher indicated the date and topic of each reflection (e.g., interacting with
the principal, special education teacher, reading coach).

Focus-group protocol. The purpose of the focus group in this study was to bring
together persons and personalities and to understand the lived experience of a group of
selected people and the meaning they make of that experience as described by (Glesne,
2011). Another purpose of the focus group in this study was to develop an understanding
of how the participants discussed perspective issues related to inclusion and elicited
multiple perspectives in the inclusion process as suggested by (Glesne, 2011). The focus-
group protocol included general and special education teachers' perceptions and
definitions of collaboration between general and special education teachers and how their
perceptions influenced their decisions and behaviors about students' readiness to follow
the standard curriculum and general education classroom environment. Eight open-ended
questions and 15 associated probes were used to elicit a detailed account of participants'
stories and help explore the content as thoroughly and deeply as possible as described by
Yin (2004). According to Yin (2003), open-ended questions let participants express their
ideas and experiences, allowing them to create their own options and responses without
constraints.

Procedures

The researcher contacted the principal of the selected high school and explained the purpose of the study and scheduled a visit to the site. The researcher conducted an informal meeting during the first visit to explain the study to the potential participants and describe how the confidentiality of data collected would be maintained and how results would be used and reported (Creswell, 2013). Before starting the study, the researcher obtained informed consent explaining in writing the purpose of the study, the approximate time it would require of the participants, their voluntary participation, plans for using the study's results, and possible risks and benefits associated with the study (Creswell, 2013).

Once they agreed to participate in the study, the researcher arranged to meet with the 10 participants as a group to conduct a face-to-face focus group at a quiet location at school, a place without distractions or interruptions as suggested by Creswell (2013). The researcher used a protocol to guide the focus-group discussion. Questions included general and special education teachers' perceptions and definitions of collaboration between general and special education teachers and how their perceptions influenced their decisions and behaviors about students' readiness to follow the standard curriculum and general education classroom environment. Open-ended questions and probes were used to elicit a detailed account of participants' stories and help explore the content as thoroughly and deeply as possible (Yin, 2004). According to Yin (2003), open-ended questions let participants express their ideas and experiences, allowing them to create their own options and responses without constraints.

The site provided a structured and safe environment in which the researcher observed activities and interactions related to the phenomenon of collaboration.

Classroom observations lasted for 50 minutes each time and were recorded through field notes. There were nine general education teachers observed. There were two classroom observations per teacher, for a total of 18 classroom observations. Four observations were planned during professional-development meetings; however, no formal professional development occurred during the time of this study. There were four observations of at least 50 minutes each during teacher planning time and two observations of at least 50 minutes each during departmental meetings. The observations were both scheduled and unscheduled. The researcher conducted observations over a four month period of time in order to obtain the most accurate knowledge and understanding of the individuals, their experiences, and the context, as suggested by Creswell (2013).

Data collection. The researcher collected data through questionnaires, observations, a reflection journal, and a focus group. The focus group data were recorded using a tape recorder and field notes. The researcher chose a quiet location such as an empty conference room to conduct the focus group. Participants were given a list of the questions a week in advance to review and decide which would be the best way to respond to each question asked. The researcher used a protocol to guide the focus group. During the focus group conversation, the researcher listened intently and recorded using an audiotape device in order to obtain an exact account of the focus group discussion which was later be transcribed as suggested by Creswell (2013). The researcher did not edit the conversations (narratives) regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers because other people may want to review them and corroborate conclusions made (Yin, 2003). In this regard, the researcher provided a written report of focus group findings to the focus group participants and asked them to confirm its accuracy. The participants' comments at this point would be additional data for analysis.

The reflection journal was used to write down any random thoughts and reflections regarding anything the researcher may have seen, heard, and done during the study. She indicated the date and topic of each reflection and thought. Entries in the journal were made at least semiweekly during the time of the study, but were made more frequently as needed. The questionnaire data were collected through Survey Monkey. Teachers were given login information regarding access to the website and how to complete the questionnaire once they were logged in. They were asked to complete the questionnaire within one week. The information was written on a sheet of paper and placed in each teacher's mailbox. A reminder letter was sent to teachers on the fifth day to ask them to complete the questionnaire by the deadline if they had not already done so.

All observations were conducted by the researcher during regular school hours or immediately following dismissal and included specific dates, times, and topics observed. Collaboration was the focus of the interaction between the general education and special education teachers. The researcher recorded the activities she observed between the two by writing field notes in a notebook reserved for that purpose only. The researcher also noted time every five minutes during observations. The field notes included dialogues of verbal conversations, body language, or facial expressions. Observations took place during classroom instruction, instructional planning time, and departmental meetings.

Data analysis. The data were analyzed to determine the extent to which collaboration occurred between the general education teachers and the special education teacher at the research site. More specifically, the data were analyzed in order to answer the research questions that guided this study. The researcher analyzed the focus-group data, classroom-observation data, and reflection journal notes as outlined by Yin (2003). Specifically, in regard to the focus-group data, the researcher began by reading

transcriptions multiple times to identify main ideas. Meaningful text was coded to identify common patterns or categories. After analyzing each transcript, in the same manner, the researcher developed a matrix or visual description of the data. Narratives were composed later.

In regard to the field notes, the researcher began by reading the field notes multiple times to identify main ideas. Meaningful text was coded to identify common patterns or categories. Initially, she used the following codes: teacher planning, teacher classroom interaction, and professional development. These were broken down into more specific codes as the data-analysis process proceeded. The researcher analyzed the questionnaire data through Survey Monkey. Descriptive statistics were used. The frequency and percentage as well as the mean and range of scores were calculated for each item as well as for each section of the questionnaire with the exception of the demographic section. In addition, the overall mean score for each participant on the questionnaire was calculated.

Collaborative action plan. Based on the literature reviewed and the data analyzed, an action plan (see Appendix D) was developed for professional development focused on extending teachers' collaborative skills. This plan was designed to meet two sets of criteria. Specifically, it was designed to meet the criteria for (a) effective collaboration and (b) effective professional development, as these criteria were described in the literature review. Regarding collaboration, the plan was framed around a structured model of collaboration. Specifically, the action plan was framed around the Carter et al. (2009) model of collaboration, as described earlier.

Regarding professional development, the plan was framed around elements of effective professional development as described in chapter two. Specifically, the plan was

designed to meet the following criteria: (a) The professional development would be

ongoing, (b) special education teachers and general education teachers would attend

together, (c) teachers would be provided the opportunity to work together and share their

knowledge, (d) the professional development would be connected to practice, (e) there

would be follow-up in the classroom to determine if participants are implementing

correctly what they have learned, and (f) the professional development would be focused

on student learning, and address the teaching of specific curriculum content aligned with

school-improvement priorities and goals.

Upon completion, the plan was submitted to a panel of three experts for review

and feedback: the reading coach at the research site, a teacher at the research site, and a

professor at Nova Southeastern University. Recommendations made by this panel were

considered, and the plan was appropriately revised. Revisions made based on the

feedback from the panel included the following: (a) The small groups should be

composed of participants who teach the same subject or same age-group, (b) the

facilitator provide definitions of cooperation and collaboration and examples of each, (c)

the facilitator should provide definitions of communication and comprehensive

collaboration and examples of each, (d) the facilitator provide a literature-based

definition as well as examples of specialized instruction, and (e) there should be follow-

up in the classroom to see if participants are implementing what was addressed or learned

during the professional development.

Weekly Time Line

Below is a time line showing the weekly activities that was completed for this

dissertation study beginning immediately after university approval:

1. The researcher met with the principal and asked to meet with the teachers at the

school during a scheduled faculty meeting to explain the purpose of the study, what would be required of them if they chose to participate, and answer any questions. Next, the researcher attended the faculty meeting and distributed the consent forms and asked participates to return them to her 2 to 3 days later in a brown cardboard box placed on the counter in the front office near the entrance door to the office. The researcher wrote in the reflection journal.

2. The researcher distributed the web link and password to study participants and asked them to follow directions regarding completing the questionnaire. The teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire within the week. The researcher wrote in the reflection journal.

3. To any teachers who had not completed the questionnaire, the researcher sent out a reminder that was placed in each teacher's school mailbox. The researcher began the classroom observations and completed two. The researcher wrote in reflection the journal.

4. The researcher continued classroom observation doing two more and one departmental meeting observation. The researcher began analyzing the questionnaire data and wrote in the reflection journal.

5. The researcher continued with two more classroom observations and observed one planning meeting. The researcher continued analyzing the questionnaire data and wrote in the reflection journal.

6. The researcher continued with two more classroom observations and one planning meeting observation. The researcher wrote in the reflection journal.

7. The researcher continued with two more classroom observations and one planning time and one departmental meeting observation. The researcher wrote in the

reflection journal.

8. The researcher continued with two more classroom observations and one planning time observation meeting. The researcher wrote in the reflection journal.

9. The researcher continued with two more classroom observations. The researcher wrote in the reflection journal.

10. The researcher continued with two more classroom observations and one professional-development observation. The researcher wrote in the reflection journal.

11. The researcher continued with two more classroom observations and one planning time meeting observation. The researcher began analyzing the observation data and wrote in the reflection journal.

12. The researcher conducted the meeting with focus group. The researcher began transcribing the focus-group data, continued analyzing the observation data, and wrote in the reflection journal.

13. The researcher finished transcribing the focus-group data, continued analyzing the observation data, and wrote in the reflection journal.

14. The researcher provided the written findings to the focus-group members and asked them to confirm their accuracy. She also finished analyzing the observation data and wrote in the reflection journal.

15. The researcher began developing the data matrix and wrote in reflection journal.

16. The researcher continued developing the data matrix and wrote in reflection journal.

17. The researcher began writing Chapters 4 and 5 of the dissertation and continued for several weeks until the dissertation was completed.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical risks and issues are greater in qualitative research than other research methods because of the close involvement of and shared responsibilities between the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2013; Oramas, 2012). To reduce the impact of ethical issues, the researcher followed the guidelines set by the university to protect participants during research studies (Oramas, 2012). The researcher also informed participants that they could withdraw from the study at any given time if it was in their best interest. She explained that this is strictly a volunteer participation and that the information they chose to give would be kept confidential throughout the study and afterwards, but could be revealed.

The researcher informed the participants that their responses could be used to develop future professional development plans that would lead to general education and special education teachers collaborating more effectively in order to increase student achievement at the high school level. Furthermore, the researcher maintained confidentiality with no names used in reports throughout the study. As suggested by the research literature, the researcher used pseudonyms to identify each participant and limited the reporting of findings to quotes, descriptions, and themes that would not be credited to individual participants (Oramas, 2012). Participants were also assured that no relationship would be made between them and the findings reported (Creswell, 2013; Oramas, 2012).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established by triangulation of the data and by member checking. Triangulation involved corroborating findings from four different types of data to include focus-group interviews, questionnaires, the reflection journal, and classroom

observation forms and field notes (Creswell, 2013; Oramas, 2012). Triangulation showed that the topic under study was explored and viewed from different perspectives (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This enhanced the study's credibility as it helped the researcher develop a report that is both credible and accurate (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011). Member checking also helped establish trustworthiness as the researcher shared transcripts and drafts of the findings with the participants (Creswell, 2013; Oramas, 2012). Member checking helped determine whether the findings were accurate as the participants were asked their opinion regarding the accuracy of the findings and the interpretation made (Creswell, 2013). Validity of the data were established by having participants verify themes identified by the researcher (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2003).

Potential Research Bias

The researcher's own reasons for wanting to conduct a study on a specific phenomenon and the experiences and perspectives in which these are grounded are a source of bias (Creswell, 2013). The researcher had experience with general education teachers collaborating in situations similar to the ones described in the study. As a special education teacher, she had part of the social resources needed for collaboration. She had the ability to work together with general education teachers to develop curriculum and instruction that would accommodate the needs of diverse learners. She had the ability to respect feedback and insights from general education teachers in order to resolve differences as soon as they arose. It has been her experience that general education teachers or colleagues do not have the social resources to adjust to collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers in order to promote successful academic outcome for students. She was aware of this potential bias and did everything possible not to let it interfere with her data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was twofold: First, to determine how and to what extent collaboration practices occurred between general education and special education teachers in a southern rural high school in southeastern Alabama, and second, develop an action plan based on data collected and the research literature for professional development focused on extending teachers' collaborative skills. The researcher documented and described the experiences of these teachers. Data were obtained through a questionnaire, focus-group interview, and observations and then analyzed. Each participant shared individual experiences about how he or she collaborated and the strategies used. The focus-group discussions provided indepth data. The central question that guided this study was stated as follows: How and to what extent does collaboration occur between general education teachers and the special education teachers in a southern rural high school? The following question supported the central question:

1. In what ways do the special education teacher and general education teachers at the research site collaborate, as measured by questionnaire data, focus-group data, and classroom observations?

2. What are the attitudes of the general education teachers and the special education teachers at the research site regarding collaboration, as measured by questionnaire and focus-group data?

3. What training in collaboration have the general education teachers and the special education teachers at the research site participated in, as measured by questionnaire data, focus-group data, and classroom observations?

4. What are the barriers to and successes of collaboration at the research site, as

measured by focus-group data and classroom observations?

Participant characteristics are described in the following section. Following that section, the findings of the study are presented as they relate to each research question. Each supporting question is answered first. Findings from each of these questions were compiled to answer the central question.

Participant Characteristics

At the beginning of the study, nine of 10 core teachers at the research site agreed to participate. Each participant was assigned a number and color to protect anonymity. There were six female participants and three male participants during the focus-group discussion. Of these, seven were general education teachers and two were special education teachers. However, one of the male general education participants declined to participate in the classroom-observation component of the study. Additionally, only eight participants completed the survey. Therefore, there were six female participants and two male participants who participated in the entire study. The participants' experience as a teacher varied from 1 to 22 years, and the content areas taught included social studies, mathematics, and language arts.

Findings for Supporting Research Question 1

In what ways do the special education teacher and general education teachers at the research site collaborate, as measured by questionnaire data, focus-group data, and observation data? This question was answered by data collected from Item 8, Items 12 to 18, Items 20 to 22, Items 23 to 26, Item 30, and Item 33 of the questionnaire, Focus-Group Questions 1 and 3, the classroom observation form, and the reflection journal. Data from each of these sources were analyzed as described in Chapter 3.

Questionnaire data. For Item 8 (To the best of my knowledge, other teachers at

my school are involved in collaboration with the special education teacher), four of the participants strongly agreed and four of the participants agreed. For Item 12 (At my school and in collaboration occurrences, special education teachers and general education teachers collaboratively work together to ensure students have a behavior management plan available), two of the participants strongly agreed. Six of the participants agreed. For Item 13 (When evaluating or assessing students at my school, and in regard to a collaborative model, the special education teachers and general education teachers collaboratively work together), two of the participants strongly agreed and six of the participants agreed.

For Item 14 (During my years as a teacher, the One Lead and One Support Collaborative Model has been used successfully at my school, meaning one teacher is responsible for whole-class instruction while the other teacher monitors students or provide instructional support during class and independent work time), three of the participants strongly agreed and five of the participants agreed. For Item 15 (During my years as a teacher, the Team Teaching Collaborative Model has been used successfully at my school, meaning each teacher sharing responsibility in a classroom developing, implementing, and evaluating direct service in the form of instructional or behavioral intervention to students with diverse needs), one participants strongly agreed and two participants agreed. Three of the participants had no opinion and two participants disagreed.

For Item 16 (During my years as a teacher, the Station Teaching Collaborative Model has been used successfully at my school, meaning each teacher leads instruction at a table and every student in the class has an opportunity to engage in small-group instructions with a lead teacher), four of the participants agreed. Two of the participants

had no opinion and two participants disagreed. For Item 17 (During my years as a teacher, the Consultant Teaching Model has been used successfully at my school, meaning general education teacher consults regularly with special education; special education teacher is not present in the general education class), one of the participants strongly agreed and two of the participants agreed. One participant had no opinion and four of the participants disagreed.

For Item 18 (During my years as a teacher, I have not participated in a Collaborative Teaching Model at my school), one of the participants strongly agreed. Three of the participants agreed. Three of the participants disagreed and one participants strongly disagreed. For Item 20 (At my school, all the instructional materials made available to general education teachers are equally made available to the special education teachers), four of the participants strongly agreed and four of the participants agreed. For Item 22 (At my school, general education teachers and special education teachers collaborate consistently when special education issues arise), three of the participants strongly agreed and five of the participants agreed.

For Item 23 (At my school, during parent-teacher conference, the general education and the special education teacher are both present), one of the participants strongly agreed. Six of the participants agreed and one participant had no opinion. For Item 24 (Other than collaborating with the special education teacher, have you ever collaborated with others to provide special needs students with instructions?), one participant strongly agreed, six participants agreed, and one participant had no opinion. For Item 25 (My principal is available to talk about special education concerns), five of the participants strongly agree and three of the participants agreed.

For Item 26 (At my school, in regard to all students learning, the administration,

for example, principal and assistant principal, support equal opportunity), five of the

participants strongly agreed and three of the participants agreed. For Item 30 (At my

school, general education teachers and special education teachers' planning time is

separate), two of the participants strongly agreed and three of the participants agreed.

Three of the participants had no opinion. For Item 32 (I can adapt to the needs of my

students when necessary), two of the participants strongly agreed and six of the

participants agreed. For Item 33 (I am able to assess and evaluate student understanding

using a variety of techniques), one participant strongly agreed and seven of the

participants agreed.

Focus-group data. In response to Focus-Group Question 1 (How would you

define collaboration?), the participants indicated that collaboration is when teachers work

together in different ways to help their students be successful in general education

classrooms and with successfully accomplishing goals that they have set for themselves

and achievements, expectations or goals their teachers have set for them as well. The

participants agreed that general education teachers and the special education teachers

must understand each other's instructional beliefs and share information in order to solve

problems or to avoid them all together. An example of this would be when one

participant mentioned during the focus-group discussion that one of the best things about

being across the hall from the resource room is that when there something in the IEP that

he does not understand or if a student is having difficulties completing an assignment, he

simply goes across the hall and discusses it with the special education teacher.

The participants agreed that collaboration is necessary to ensure that all the

students' performance will increase within the general education classroom. For example,

another participant stated, "Collaboration is when teachers come together and discuss

their students and ways they can improve their performance. Another participant stated, "Collaboration is working with other teachers in order to find creative solutions to complex problems and sharing responsibility for student learning." One participant stated, "Collaboration is working in a variety of different ways, different classrooms settings, working with teachers. I say collaboration is not formal or informal. I mean it can take place in a variety of ways." Clarence said, "Working with other teachers in order to find creative solutions to complex problems. In any setting, collaboration can take place in any setting." Sarah said, "Working with teachers." All participants shared that the purpose of collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers is to ensure the overall success of students not only in the school environment and general education classrooms, but beyond as well.

In response to Focus-Group Question 3 (How would you describe collaboration as it occurs at your school between the general education and special education teacher?), the participants at the research site indicated that in a small school, collaboration can take place at different times and at different locations. They explained that collaboration is based on seeing the need to collaborate such as an immediate need to address a need or needs of a student. Sharon stated the following:

> A small school collaboration is a little bit different here. It can take place at all
> different times and in different places; if we see the need or general education
> teachers see the need they can stop and address that individual student's needs
> and collaborate right then for whatever we need to do.

The participants agreed that the most important thing is that they are receiving help with their students. Knowing there is a teacher you can go to if you have issues with a child the participants believed is the best thing to do and the best way to learn to

collaborate. The participants indicated that every angle has to be considered in order for student achievement to be accomplished. For example, Jessica stated, "We also look at their grades to see how they are doing. Are they mastering their skills and goals and objectives?" Jessica went on to say, "I think we have to be flexible to see what works or is not working and adjust our instructions from that point forward." Cassidy stated the following:

> The special education teachers and the general education teachers will talk about the different assignments, discuss the needs and IEPs; we discuss everything that we need to know to work together for the benefit of the child and what accommodations we need to have for them.

Participants agreed that when students with and without disabilities are in the general education classrooms, it is important that the general education teacher and the special education teacher get together and collaborate. The discussion can be about a student's performance in class or when will be a good time to give a makeup test or assignment. The teachers agreed that they discuss the importance of having the necessary resources available and in use. These resources include projects inside and outside the classroom. For example, Sabrina stated the following:

> Having a lot of regular education kids in my room in most classes, I spend a lot of time with the special education teacher and we usually on a regular daily basis. We are discussing the students' work, accommodations, assignments, whether we need to shorten the assignments or whatever objective, seeing if they need to cover more, things like that.

Cassidy stated, "One thing we do is we both consider the data from our bench marks testing and global scholars." Jasmine stated, "We discuss the students' needs in

various ways." Clarence stated the following:

> Collaboration is not always in class. We just recently worked on a collaborative project in which we were involved in a field trip and which a couple of our special education students would be able to attend and we had to collaborate in getting all the necessary paper work and forms filled out for that trip.

> Probes 1, 2, and 3 that were part of Focus-Group Question 4 received no response

from participants. However, for Probe 4 (How do you and the special education teacher collaborate to use data to meet the needs of varying interest levels of students with disabilities during instruction? Please give examples of a time you have done this), the participants stated that they used a variety of data to determine the best method of instruction to successfully meet the needs of all their students. Data that they used included but were not limited to surveys and IEPs. Participants stated that the data can be used to help with determining students' interests or favorite subjects as well as how the students will perform in class. For example, Sonny stated the following:

> I take the surveys on how they perform in different subject matter and ask the kids sometimes, which classes do you like or which classes do you not like? What do you like to do on your own time? I ask a broad variety of questions in order to take different ways in finding out what that student or how that student will perform in the classroom.

Participants agreed that these methods have been successful with helping students maintain success rates in all their classes even the ones they do not like because the teachers know how to plan instruction.

Classroom-observation data. Based on the classroom observations. There was very little collaboration between the general education teacher and the special education

teacher. This occurred in all the classes the researcher observed. The general education teacher led the lessons and the special education teacher either monitored, took notes about the lesson, or worked with students individually or in small groups that consisted of two to three students. Collaboration between the two teachers consisted of discussing sections of the lesson with each other or when the special education teacher rephrased a statement or question to the class that was previously asked by the general education teacher for further clarification purposes. For example, during one classroom observation, the researcher observed the general teacher asked the class a question and when he or she did not receive an answer, the special education teacher restated what the general education teacher had previously asked. Also, the same two teachers discussed a small portion of the story at the end of class about how the boy character in the story spent all the family's savings all at once.

Based on hallway observations, as indicated in the researcher's reflection journal, collaboration between special and general education teachers does not always concern the students' progress such as successes academically. The collaboration can be about paper resources such as understanding a student's IEP data or data needed before a student can participate in field trip activities. An example of this is when the researcher observed a general education teacher telling the special education teacher that the test would be rescheduled until after the field trip and that the special education teacher could give it at her convenience. Another time was when a general education teacher told the special education teacher that a student had not been taking notes in his or her class and something needed to be done about it.

The most used collaborative teaching approach observed by the researcher between general education teachers and special education teachers at the research site

was the one lead and one support collaborative model. The general education teachers were responsible for the entire class instruction and the special education teachers monitored the students and provided instructional support to them as needed with lessons' instruction or assignments during class and independent work time. However, there were a couple of times during classroom observations, the researcher observed the team-teaching collaborative model.

The special education teacher worked with a small group of students at a table located in the back of the classroom while the general education teacher continued to teach the majority of the class. This model of teaching occurred approximately 30 minutes before the class period ended. Before then, the one lead and one support collaborative model mentioned earlier was being used and observed by the researcher. There were a total of 12 classroom observations. Of those 12 times, the one lead and one support collaborative model was observed three times. The teachers did not discuss the teaching model used at least not in the presence of the researcher. However, the researcher recognized the model used.

Summary. Based on data collected and analyzed related to Supporting Research Question 1, the special education teachers and the general education teachers who were participants in this study collaborate in a variety of ways to help meet the needs of students and believe other teachers collaborate as well to meet students' needs. The participants overwhelmingly agreed or strongly agreed that they collaborate regarding resources, making accommodations for assignments, developing behavior-management plans, and evaluating and assessing students. That teachers collaborate to meet students' needs was supported by both the survey and focus group data. However, little collaboration occurred in the classroom according to the researcher's observations.

It often occurred at the spur of the moment such as when a problem arose with a student and the general education teacher needed immediate help or the general education teacher was having problems understanding data included in a student's IEP. Based on the researcher's observation, the participants collaborated more informally such as in the hallway between changing of class periods than formally such as scheduling a time to collaborate. Based on the survey and focus-group data, they agreed collaboration is most effective when it is done in an informal manner and as needed. Based on the survey data, participants agreed and strongly agreed that the one lead and one support collaborative model is the most used between the general and special education teachers at the research site.

Findings for Supporting Research Question 2

What are the attitudes of the general education teachers and the special education teachers at the research site regarding collaboration, as measured by questionnaire and focus-group data? This question was answered by data collected and analyzed from Item 10, Item 18, Items 31 and 32, Items 38 to 42, and Items 44 and 45 on the questionnaire and Focus-Group Question 2.

Questionnaire data. For Item 10 (Based on the collaborative models used at my school, special education teachers and general education teachers are perceived as equal in the instructional process), two of the participants strongly agreed and three of the participants agreed. Two of the participants had no opinion and one participants disagreed. For Item 18 (During my years as a teacher, I have not participated in a collaborative teaching model at my school), one participant strongly agreed and three of the participants agreed. Three of the participants disagreed and one participant strongly disagreed. For Item 31 (I am known as a person who is not afraid to take risks), six of the

participants agreed. One participant had no opinion and one participant disagreed. For Item 32 (I can adapt to the needs of my students when necessary), two participants strongly agreed, and six participants agreed.

For Item 38 (I am reluctant to rely on others), one participant strongly agreed. Four of the participants had no opinion and two of the participants disagreed and one participant strongly disagreed. For Item 39 (I value working collaboratively with other teachers), seven of the participants agreed and one participants had no opinion. For Item 40 (I cannot get through to the most difficult students), one participant agreed. Three of the participants had no opinion and four of the participants disagreed. For Item 41 (I believe that when teachers work together, they are able to influence practice in their school), three of the participants strongly agreed and five of the participants agreed. For Item 42 (I believe that in order for change to be successful, teachers must work together), three of the participants strongly agreed and five of the participants agreed. For Item 44 (If I feel it is necessary, I will speak out and express my views to my colleagues), all eight participants agreed. For Item 45 (I am resistant to suggesting changes), one participant agreed. Five participants had no opinion and one participant disagreed.

Focus-group data. In response to Focus-Group Question 2 (What do you think is important when planning lessons?), according to the participants, there are many things that are important for teachers to know and that must be considered when planning lessons for students. One participant indicated that teachers must know the students' strengths and weaknesses. Another participant pointed out that teachers must know students likes and dislikes; their interests aside from an academic curriculum. This participant believed this is important because it helps teachers know what the student's motivators are and other things about the student. Some other comments were it is

important to know students' learning styles, students' work ethics, students' prior performance and students' reading level.

Summary. Based on the data collected and analyzed related to Supporting Research Question 2, overall, the participants expressed a positive attitude at the research site about collaboration. The participants believe collaboration is important because students learn differently and have various likes and dislikes and motivators. These teachers at the research site value working together because it gives them an opportunity to discuss their views and influence the practices in their school used to help all students to be successful. Moreover, the participants strongly agreed or agreed that a variety of things must be considered about students when planning lessons. However, the responses were not totally positive. For example, several participants had no opinion or disagreed that the special education teachers and general education teachers are perceived as equal. Half of the participants had no opinion or disagreed that they had participated in a collaborative teaching model at their school; several had no opinion or agreed they were resistant to suggesting changes and were reluctant to rely on others.

Findings for Supporting Research Question 3

What training in collaboration have the general education teachers and the special education teachers at the research site participated in, as measured by questionnaire data, focus-group data, and classroom observations? This question was answered by data collected and analyzed from Item 19, Item 21, and Items 28 and 29 on the questionnaire, Focus-Group Questions 6, 7 and 8, and classroom observations at the research site.

Questionnaire data. For Item 19 (At my school, special education teachers are given chances to take part in staff development activities, such as school-based content areas), five of the participants strongly agreed. Two of the participants agreed and one

participant had no opinion. For Item 21 (Special education teachers are given the opportunity for training in the administration of state assessments), four of the participants strongly agreed. Two of the participants agreed and two of the participants had no opinion. For Item 28 (I feel that I need more training on the statewide IEP), four of the participants agreed. One of the participants had no opinion and three of the participants disagreed. For Item 29 (I need additional knowledge or expertise about how to collaborate with other teachers), three of the participants agreed. Two participants had no opinion and three of the participants disagreed.

Focus-group data. In response to Focus-Group Question 6 (Have you attended professional development on teacher collaboration? If so, please describe it), the participants explained that they had had professional development where general education teachers and special education teachers learned to collaborate across the curriculum and the role of the special education teachers are to play in the general education classroom. For example, the most common model used involved the general education teachers leading the instruction and the special education teachers monitoring the students and assisting as needed. There were three probe questions.

For Probe 1 (How if at all, did the professional development influence your teaching?), the participants echoed similar responses. The training the general education teachers received helped make them more aware of the many resources available. Sonny stated the following:

When I am planning for something that has special education students in it, the training I received makes me more aware of what tools I can go to the resource teacher and get, you know it helps me with my lesson planning because I can go to them and find out what I need to do for these students.

Sharon added the following statement:

>We also have professional development days and or core teachers have common
>planning periods where special education teachers and resource teachers move
>around and attend all of those meetings to see what is going on. The resource
>teachers and special education teachers also have syllabuses at the beginning of
>the nine weeks so they can work directly with the general education teachers.

For Probe 2 (How, if at all, did it influence your communication between the general education teachers and the special education teachers?), none of the participants responded. For Probe 3 (Has there been any on-the-job training or learning that has helped you to collaborate effectively? If so, please describe it), participants stated that professional development had been recently offered to them through various universities regarding the new common core course of study and techniques that can be used to help general education teachers and special education teachers better serve all students. However, the training was offered at the universities not at the research site. The teachers stated that the best training was when teachers use the trial and error technique to see what will and will not work.

In response to Focus-Group Question 7 (Is there any additional professional development that you feel you need to improve your collaborative skills?), participants indicated that scheduling a time at the beginning of the school year to meet with the elementary teachers would be most helpful. However, they were not sure if this would fall under the category of professional development. The participants also believe that the best professional development in collaborative skills training is informal and as previously mentioned works best when a trial and error approach is taken to help students. One participant stated the following:

The only thing that I can think of as far as professional development is getting together to talk about individual students at maybe the beginning of the school year, especially with students we've had before and it's our first time to teach them, so if we could meet with the elementary special education teachers, you learn more about that student; of course, I wouldn't qualify that as professional development.

Another participant stated, "I think we can overkill on professional development sometimes." However, the participants believe that extensive professional development for teachers is not necessarily the answer to learning to collaborate effectively so that all students are successful in general education classrooms. They believe informal collaboration is most effective with trial and error techniques to problem solving. Teachers used the term informal collaboration to refer to situations when they exchanged helpful information about students to address an immediate problem or need.

In response to Focus-Group Question 8 (Is there anything else about collaboration between general education teachers and the special education teachers at your school that would be important to know about?), participants then proceeded to point out that knowing their specific roles in the classroom would be helpful for teachers especially if they are not comfortable with working together. The participants continued to point out that teachers must have a good working relationship. However, they indicated that they could not foresee any teacher not welcoming help with students. For example, Cassidy stated, "I can't imagine any general ed classroom not wanting help." She also stated, "I will go on record and say I love having help in my classroom!"

Classroom-observation data. Based on classroom observations, the participants seem to have had some training in the one lead and one support collaborative model and

the collaborative team-teaching model. These models were observed during the 12

classroom observation conducted by the researcher at the research site.

Summary. Based on the data collected and analyzed related to Supporting

Research Question 3, the general education teachers and the special education teachers

who were participants in this study are trained to collaborate both formally and

informally to meet the needs of all students. They agreed on the importance of being

trained professionally through professional development, but believed informal training

in collaboration to be more useful such as when issues arise regarding a specific student

or an assignment needs to be altered so that all students have an opportunity to be

successful. Teachers used the term informal training to refer to situations in which they

learned from each other on the job when the need arose. In addition, the participants have

been trained in administering state assessments. Moreover, the participants believe that a

good working relationship constitutes the best training in collaboration between general

education teachers and special education teachers. However, the participants had mixed

perceptions about whether they needed additional training, knowledge, or expertise on

how to collaborate with other teachers. They agreed, disagreed or had no opinion.

Findings for Supporting Research Question 4

What are the barriers to and successes of collaboration at the research site, as

measured by focus-group data and classroom observations? This question was answer by

data collected from Focus-Group Questions 4, 5, and 8 and classroom observations.

Focus-group data. In response to Focus-Group Question 4 (What, if any, are the

successes you can describe as related to collaboration between the general education

teachers and the special education teachers at your school?), the participants indicated

that successful collaboration between general and special education teachers consisted of

helping students gain the confidence they needed in order to present presentations in front of their entire class of peers. The participants explained that the general education and special education teachers discussed it and came up with the solution of letting the students practice speaking in front of a small group of peers in the resource room before presenting in front of the entire class. Another description of successful collaboration, according to the participants, was when students saw the special education teacher constantly in the general education classes. General education students saw the help the special needs students were getting and realized the help was available to them as well. Therefore, the stigma of special education was relinquished. For example, Sharon stated the following:

> I think that with having the special education teachers in and out of the classes, it kind of takes the stigma away from special education and so most of the students here know who the special education teachers are. I mean we're a small school, and all the kids know who gets help and who doesn't but other general education kids, if they need something just as basic as pencils or calculators or some other assistant, I mean they know that they can get it and so we have a lot of kids that are special ed and general ed come in and out and I think that it sort of takes the stigma away in classes so that general education kids no matter who you know they are comfortable that there are two teachers in the classroom and if they've got a question, they know that they can ask whoever they need to; they are more comfortable with the entire student body.

The participants also indicated that the special education teachers can rely on the general education teachers serving and making accommodations for the students. For example, Sharon stated the following:

We are a small school and we only have just the two core in each subject but I know that if am with another group or I have students and sometimes in our groups, especially nine to 12, as some of the groups are larger, I can really count on my general education teachers to just make changes and just adapt and go. They will even change their plans from like it was supposed to be, like test or things. My general education teachers will hold those students in there and they will come to me afterward and I can get those students the next day by you know working with elective teachers and pull them and my general education teachers, if they were going to do something individually or however they might change their whole plan, especially if they know if I'm in meetings.

You know they may say, well we will work in pairs. All my teachers are good about pairing one of those higher students with some of mine. So they just make those adjustments in the general education classrooms and then they are great. We can accommodate individually; just by rearranging the schedule or you just make changes. We adapt a lot of that in their classroom because they know there are only two of us. You know, we just make it work, as long it is to benefit my students and the other students. They just make that work for those students.

Probes 1 and 2 received no response from participants. However, for Probe 3 of the fourth focus-group question (What, if any, are the barriers to collaboration between the general education teachers and special education teachers at your school?), the participants stated that, because there are only two special education teachers, it can be difficult for them to be in all the classes when needed because there are a large number of students to serve and the teachers have additional duties and responsibilities. For example Cassidy stated the following:

The only thing that I would say is negative is special education teachers have a lot of students to service and a lot of times they are expected to be in two places at one time and I think that, I don't know whether to call it a barrier or a hardship on them you know, that they can't get to where they need to be all the times because they have so many to service."

In response to Focus-Group Question 5 (To what extent, do you believe collaboration between the general education and special education teacher at this school is working for students' academic achievement in general education classrooms?), the participants believed overall that collaboration between the general education teachers and the special education teachers are working to the fullest extent to help students be successful academic achievers. In response to Focus-Group Question 8 (Is there anything else about collaboration between general education teachers and the special education teachers at your school that would be important to know about?), the participants agreed that having a faculty member available that they can just go to and express any issues or concerns they may have is the best way to learn and get things accomplished successfully.

Additionally, they believe a good relationship or working with someone you are comfortable with is the most effective collaborative method. However, the participants unanimously agreed that if one is paired with a general education teacher or a special education teacher that he or she is not comfortable with or not able to work out duties between themselves, then it would help if they had specified roles to clarify the general education teacher and the special education teacher' s duties. For example, the special education teacher's role would be to monitor the students and assist as needed and the general education teacher role would be to deliver instructions. Additionally, one

participant believed that clarification of roles is not necessarily important because special education teachers are not core teachers and roles can get overplayed more or less. Another participant indicated that teachers must put aside their differences and work together for the benefit of the students.

Classroom-observation data. Very little collaboration occurred between the general education teachers and the special education teachers in the classroom in a way that could be considered contributing factors to student success. The general education teachers were always the lead teachers of the entire lesson and the entire class period. Based on appearance, it seemed some teachers had different philosophies toward instruction which could be considered a barrier to collaboration. For example, one teacher used more formal and directed instruction and the other teacher seemed more laissez-faire. They did not seem to share a vision related to instructional strategies and teaching methodology.

Summary. Based on the data collected and analyzed related to Supporting Research Question 4, the special education teachers and the general education teachers who were participants in this study have had many successes collaborating because there is no stigma associated with the collaboration. They have collaborated successfully when various issues arise, during parent-teacher conferences, and when data are needed to determine the best way to adapt to the needs of students. Surveys, IEPs, and previous grades are contributions to the success of their collaboration. Participants believe informal collaboration is the most successful way to establish collaboration because one can approach teachers as needed instead of a more formal or planned way.

Additionally, lack of planning time together, the number of students being serviced, and not being able to talk with previous teachers such as elementary teachers of

the students were considered as barriers. Attitude toward planning together was also a barrier. One participant pointed out that at a small school, planning time together is considered irrelevant to collaboration. Additionally, identifying specific roles for general and special education teachers as well as relationships among them was not viewed as important. In contrast, however, the participants indicated that identifying roles and relationships would be helpful and essential if collaboration between general education and special education teachers was not occurring successfully.

Findings for Central Research Question

How and to what extent does collaboration occur between general education teachers and the special education teachers in a southern rural high school? General and special education teachers at the research site indicated they collaborated formally during professional development at both district and school levels and informally based on an immediate need to collaborate during their day to day practices at their school. They collaborated using varied collaborative models. The most used model was the one lead and one support collaborative model in which one teacher is responsible for whole-class instruction while the other teacher monitors students or provides instructional support during class and independent work time. Based on observation data, questionnaire data, and focus-group data, it has been the most successful between general education teachers and special education teachers at the research site.

Based on observation, questionnaire, and focus-group data, the general and special education teachers collaborate by working together to evaluate and assess students, having a behavior-management plan available for students, working together when issues arise and during parent-teacher conferences, and determining students' level of interests. The extent of the collaboration between general education teachers and

special education teachers is typically based on an immediate need. According to the teachers, this type of informal collaboration, which occurs as the need arises, is the most common type of collaboration at the research site. Additionally, they viewed the informal training (i.e., learning from each other on the job) as the most effective professional development.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided findings based on data collected through the administration of a questionnaire, focus group discussion, and classroom observations regarding how and to what extent collaboration occurs between general education teachers and the special education teachers in a southern rural high school. The findings indicated that collaboration occurs in varied ways, such as at the spur of moment when problems arise with students, in the hallway between changing of classes, and when general education teachers are having problems understanding data. Collaborating informally and informal training to collaborate and one lead and one support collaborative model are the most commonly used collaborative methods between general and special education teachers at the research site.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of the Study

This chapter provides a discussion and interpretation of the results of the applied dissertation. The study was completed using a single, holistic, case-study method through a qualitative description. The problem, a discussion of the findings, conclusions, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research and practice are included. Over the years, the public school educational system has undergone many changes (Sinclair, Christenson, & Thurlow, 2005). One of the most controversial changes is that students with disabilities must be educated with general education students and the general education curriculum in general education classrooms (Sinclair et al., 2005). The increase in such an inclusionary practice has increased the need for effective collaboration for all school educators, especially the general and special educator (Aldridge, 2008; Bouck & Satsangi, 2014).

In response to the general education curriculum and success in general education classrooms and in compliance with state and federal requirements, school districts have undertaken utilization of collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers at all grade levels (Matthews, 2012; Reginelli, 2009). Schools wishing to improve the percentage of students remaining in school until graduation should make adjustments regarding effective collaboration relationships between general educators and special education educators as well as adapting a core curriculum that is relevant, engaging, and personalized to students (Paulson, 2006). In a high school reformation, there must be significant positive collaboration, positive relationships, and substantial evidence that these adjustments are taking place in order to increase the percentage of the students remaining in school and graduating (Paulson, 2006; Pellegrino, Weiss, & Regan,

2015; Reese, 2008; Varnish, 2014).

The problem addressed in the study was that, according to the principal at the research site, general education teachers and the special education teachers needed to collaborate more successfully in order to be more helpful to the students. However, no data had been systematically collected and analyzed regarding (a) the extent of collaboration between general education teachers and the special education teachers, (b) the degree to which it was successful, (c) factors that facilitated it, (d) barriers that may have hindered it, or (e) the lack of training of general education teachers to assist students with disabilities. The central research question that guided the study was stated as follows: How and to what extent does collaboration occur between general education teachers and special education teachers in a southern rural high school? The central research question was guided by four supporting questions:

1. In what ways do the special education teachers and the general education teachers at the research site collaborate, as measured by questionnaire data, focus-group data, and classroom observations?

2. What are the attitudes of the general education teachers and the special education teachers at the research site regarding collaboration, as measured by questionnaire and focus-group data?

3. What training in collaboration have the general education teachers and the special education teachers at the research site participated in, as measured by questionnaire data, focus-group data, and classroom observations?

4. What are the barriers to and successes of collaboration at the research site, as measured by focus-group data and classroom observations?

The instruments used to collect the data included a questionnaire, a form on which

to record field notes and observations, a reflective journal, and a focus-group protocol. Data were collected between March 2016 and June 2016. Participants included nine high school teachers in Grades 9 through 12. Seven were general education teachers and two were special education teachers. Glasser's choice theory is the conceptual framework in which the study was grounded.

Interpretation of the Findings

This section includes a discussion of each supporting research question as it relates to the results of the findings. The central research question that guided this study is discussed as well.

Supporting Research Question 1. In what ways do the general education teachers and the special education teachers at the research site collaborate, as measured by questionnaire data, focus-group data, and classroom observations? One way is that the general education teachers and the special education teachers collaborate informally consistently when special education issues arose. Many researchers acknowledge that the major factor in accomplishing the goals of school reform are the formal and informal collaborative networks teachers establish within their schools (Conderman, Rodriguez-Johnson, & Hartman, 2009).

Both the general education teachers and the special education teachers at the research site agreed that collaboration is most effective when it is done in an informal manner and as needed. This is approach is not typical for general and special education teachers at the secondary level. According to Conderman et al. (2009), research studies revealed secondary schools' special education teachers reported that the majority of their collaboration focused on sharing information with general education teachers rather than collaborating for problem solving or planning for the success for all students. Moreover,

they may only talk about accommodations and instructional adaptations necessary for students to be successful in the general education classroom (Landever, 2010).

At the research site, the general education teachers and the special education teachers disagree with these findings. Teachers collaborate to meet students' needs was supported by both the survey and focus group data. However, little collaboration occurs in the classroom based on observation data collected and analyzed. Power struggles in the classroom between teachers are a strong implication as a challenge to collaboration (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). According to the literature, an important factor in an inclusive setting is the direct collaboration between the general and special education teachers working together in the same classroom in a coactive and coordinated manner to teach diverse groups of students (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). Also, secondary schools' general education teachers reported that they hardly ever collaborated with special education teachers (Florian & Rouse, 2009; Leonard, 2013; Scruggs et al., 2007; Varnish, 2014).

General education teachers usually communicate with other general education teachers about problems they may be experiencing with students with disabilities in their classroom (Carter et al., 2009; Hardman, 2009; Landever, 2010). Additionally, studies indicate general education teachers are mostly likely to interact collaboratively with other general education teachers than with special education teachers regarding students' overall success (Jordon, Schwarta, & Richmond-McGhie, 2009; Kozik, Conney, Vinciguerra, Gradel, & Black, 2009; Sharpe & Hawes, 2003). Unless there is a structured model for collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers, teachers may only share information about students instead of planning instructional interventions for all students and continue to view the collaboration between

the general education teacher and the special education teacher as interference with the job of another teacher (Carter et al., 2009; Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014; Landever, 2010; Reginelli, 2009; Varnish, 2014). It must be seen as a team effort to meet the needs of al all students in their least restrictive environment (Givens, 2010; Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014).

Another way the general education teachers and the special education teachers collaborated was to secure essential resources for meeting students' needs. The teachers agreed that they discuss the importance of having the necessary resources available and in use and these resources include inside and outside the classroom projects and assignments. One general education participant commented that she spends a lot of time with the special education teacher on a regular daily basis discussing the students' work, assignments, accommodations, and regarding whether or not the assignments need to be shortened or more material needed to be covered. These ideas are inconsistent with the literature findings at the secondary level. According to the literature (Goddard et al., 2007; Matthews, 2012; McCray & McHatton, 2011; Overall, 2006; Varnish, 2014), direct collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers occurs merely to share information about students instead of ability to collaborate with others in the assessment and educational planning of successfully including students with special needs in general education classrooms.

Supporting Research Question 2. What are the attitudes of the general education teachers and the special education teachers at the research site regarding collaboration, as measured by questionnaire and focus-group data? Overall, the participants had a positive attitude at the research site about collaboration and they valued working together because it gave them an opportunity to discuss their views and influence the practices in their

school that are used to help all students to be successful. Three trends emerged related to overall attitude toward collaboration. First, participants perceived the administration at the research site had a positive attitude toward inclusion. Second, participants reported a positive attitude toward comprehensive lesson planning. Third, several participants indicated attitudes of being resistant to suggesting changes and reluctant relying on others. Each of these trends is discussed below.

The participants in this study strongly agreed and agreed the administration (i.e., principal and assistant principal) at their school is supportive toward inclusion. Based on the literature, when administrative support is provided, fellow teachers' attitude toward inclusion is positive (Givens, 2010; Landever, 2010; Matthews, 2012). According to Landever (2010), regardless of the collaborative structure used between general and special educators, a successful collaborative partnership requires administrative support (Carter et al., 2009; Landever, 2010).

When there are no rebellious attitudes and behaviors toward having two teachers in the same classroom or having a teacher acting as a consultant for students' success, such as such as the general education educator exhibiting or stating the fact that she does not want the special educator coming into her classroom to teach, then secondary-level general education teachers' and special education teachers' overall attitudes of collaborating and working together are known to be positive because of the administrative support they received (Givens, 2010; Matthews, 2012), and teachers agree collaboration is a valuable goal (Landever, 2010). Also, research studies revealed that secondary-level general education teachers reported that they hardly ever collaborated with special education teachers without the support of their principal or assistant principal (Carter et al., 2009).

Another trend was that participants disagreed or had no opinion that the special education teachers and the general education teachers are perceived as equal partners in the collaborative process. This is consistent with the literature. According to Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2014), general and special educators do not equally respect each other. Without having equal respect for each other (i.e., giving and taking, equally respecting each other as professionals), collaboration cannot be implemented successfully. Although collaboration is a process that requires giving and taking between special and general education teachers in order to accomplish a common goal such as a child learning and succeeding both socially and academically secondary general and special education teachers are not accepted as equal professionals, and therefore it is difficult for them to accomplish a common goal (Givens, 2010; Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014).

Findings of a study conducted by Friend and Cook (2007) indicated general and special education teachers reported that when school recognition of equality was lacking, the ability to collaborate was challenging (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014; Pellegrino et al., 2014). However, the participants in this study indicated that there is no stigma associated with their collaboration. For example, one participant commented during the focus-group discussion that she welcomed having another teacher both inside and outside the classroom (e.g., special education teacher) to consult with about students in her class and could not imagine any teacher opposing such collaborative practices. Another participant commented during the focus group that he was glad to have the special education teacher right across the hall from him because when he is handed something such as paperwork concerning a student that he does not understand he immediately goes across the hall and asks the special education teacher to explain it.

The second trend was that participants expressed positive attitudes toward

comprehensive lesson planning. They valued considering a variety of things about things about students when planning lessons. Based on the literature, in order for effective collaboration between special educators and general educators to occur with a positive attitude, both teachers must consider a variety of things when planning lessons for students while also ensuring that each child's unique instructional needs are met (Sharpe & Hawes, 2003). For example, participants mentioned students' strengths and weaknesses, and another participant indicated that teacher must know students' likes and dislikes, interests aside from an academic curriculum, students' learning styles, work ethics, prior performance, and reading level.

The participants believed these things are important because they help teachers know what students' motivators are and other things about the students. Based on the literature, when planning lessons for students, general and special education teachers must share the expectation that participation in the general education classroom will prepare students with disabilities with skills needed to meet the challenging expectations that have been created for all students. Moreover, the primary goal of both sets of teachers must be to provide all students with appropriate classroom and homework assignments so that each is learning, challenged, and participating (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014; Pellegrino et al., 2014; Rae et al., 2010; Ripley, 2007).

The third trend was that some participants indicated attitudes of being resistant to suggesting changes and reluctant to relying on others. This is consistent with the literature. Research indicates at the secondary level, resistance to the addition of another teacher in the classroom or acting as a consultant with information about how to teach or deliver instructions, negatively influenced general education teachers' attitude about collaboration and inclusive classroom settings (Friend, 2008; Kern, 2006; Matthews,

2012; Schwarz, 2007). However, at the research site, teachers appreciated information from other teachers about how to teach, data related to this trend are mixed because teachers also reported relying on each other or asking each other for assistance when they needed it they received reluctant and resistance.

Based on the literature, teachers' negative attitudes and perceptions discourage inclusive education at the secondary level because of the need for general and special education teachers to work collaboratively as a team. But at the research site, attitudes were positive overall (Matthews, 2012). Also, according to research studies, the general education classroom is the right place to support students even when their behavior presents significant challenges (Givens, 2010; Kern, 2006; Schwarz, 2007). Therefore, secondary-level general educators' and special educators' inability to effectively collaborate decreases the possibility that students with disabilities will remain within an inclusive classroom setting (Friend, 2008; Givens, 2010; Matthews, 2012; Schwarz, 2007).

Supporting Research Question 3. What training in collaboration have the general education teachers and the special education teachers at the research site participated in, as measured by questionnaire data, focus-group data, and classroom observations? Based on the data collected and analyzed related to this research question, three trends were identified. First, the participants in this study learned informally to collaborate to meet the needs of all students, and, although they agreed on the importance of formal professional development, they believed informal training resulting from actually collaborating with each other at their work site to be more useful and directly related to their needs. Second, and related to the informal training, the participants believed a good working relationship constitutes the best training in collaboration

between general education teachers and special education teachers. Finally, the participants had mixed perceptions about whether they needed additional training, knowledge, or expertise on how to collaborate with other teachers. Each of these trends will be discussed below as related to the research literature.

Related to the first trend above, the finding that participants did not find formal professional development all that useful is consistent with the research literature. Although the participants in this dissertation study agreed on the importance of being trained formally through professional development, their views were consistent with prior research which showed veteran and most first year secondary general education and special education teachers agreed professional development does very little with helping to address the specific needs of general educators' ability to serve students with disabilities (Eggan & Kauchak, 2006; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009; Kutash, Duchnowski, & Lynn, 2009).

Additionally, as described earlier, no formal professional development occurred during the time of this study. When the researcher inquired about professional development provided for the general and special education teachers, she was told that formal professional development was provided only before the beginning of the school year. For example, the participants indicated that professional development had been offered to them through various universities regarding the new common core course of study and techniques that could be used to help general education teachers and special education teachers better serve all students, but the training was offered at the universities before the beginning of the school year instead of at their school. However, a participant explained that general education teachers have professional development or what is known as core teachers' common planning periods at the beginning of school when

special education teachers move around and attend all those meetings to see what is going on.

Also, the participant indicated special education teachers are given core subject syllabuses at the beginning of the first 9 weeks so that they can work directly with general education teachers throughout the school year. This is also consistent with the research literature. The results of a survey of elementary and high school teachers showed that many general education teachers received inservice training occasionally or not at all about collaborating with special education teachers. Moreover, the teachers' felt that inservice training was occasional to nonexistent after their first year of teaching experience (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Eggan & Kauchak, 2006; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009).

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2009), professional training to collaborate can have a significant positive impact on teachers' skills and knowledge and on students' learning at the secondary level if the professional training is continued over time and is consistent, and focused on the importance of it. Given the description above of the formal professional development provided to participants of this dissertation study, the Darling-Hammond et al. study may explain why the participants did not find it very useful. Also, the training must be embedded in the work that supports collaborative ongoing improvements in teacher practices such as the general and special education teachers working together on a daily basis to address students' needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Again, this may explain why formal professional development was viewed as not very useful by the participants of this study. At the research site, it was the informal training through collaboration, not the formal training that was embedded in the daily work of teachers and met their needs as well as those of their students.

Related to the above discussion, experimental research studies of inservice programs for secondary level general and special educators revealed that programs of greater intensity and duration and that offered teachers at least 30 to 100 professional learning contact hours over a period of 6 to 12 months, reported substantial student achievement gains (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Additionally, a study designed to support inquiry-based science instruction revealed that general and special education teachers who received 80 or more hours of professional learning time together practiced the recommended teaching strategies significantly more than the teachers who received fewer professional learning hours together (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Also, teachers who attended the extensive and active training to professionally collaborate reported having fewer student absences and dropouts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Therefore, secondary general education and special education teachers believed that the first step to the appropriate inservice training is to determine the specific needs of the teaching population (Blanton & Pugach, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Eggan & Kauchak, 2006; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009; Landever, 2010). According to the literature, researchers have discovered that secondary teachers used the classroom practices more often that had been modeled for them during the professional development training and the practices that equally provided hands-on opportunities for them to work and build together their knowledge and skills they needed in order to help teach their students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

The third trend was there were mixed perceptions among participants about whether they needed additional training, knowledge, or expertise on how to collaborate with other teachers. Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2014) suggested this is typical thinking for general and special educators at the secondary level and that much more additional

training to professionally collaborate is needed within school settings for general and special educators at secondary level. Therefore, it is crucial secondary level special and general education teachers receive consistent and ongoing support through inservice training regarding professionally collaborating. Based on the literature, the training is necessary in order for a partnership form a partnership between the two teachers which according to the literature, must be established in order to maintain effective collaborative practices (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Eggan & Kauchak, 2006; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009; Rae et al., 2010).

Based on the literature, to successfully include students with disabilities in general education classrooms at the secondary level, general education teachers must be trained to have the skills necessary to professionally collaborate. They also must be knowledgeable about special education requirements as well as the ability to collaborate with additional staff members such as administrators regarding the assessment and educational planning of students with special needs (Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009). Based on the literature, research studies indicated 90% of secondary general and special education teachers' negativities toward inclusion are due to the lack of training in collaborative instructional practices and how to support collaborative teaching effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Supporting Research Question 4. What are the barriers to and successes of collaboration at the research site, as measured by focus-group data and classroom observations? Based on the data collected and analyzed regarding this research question, three successes and three barriers were identified. First, an important area of success was that there is no stigma among the teachers associated with collaboration and no stigma among students receiving assistance from the special education teacher. The second area

of success is that the participants collaborated at the time various issues arose such as during parent-teacher conferences and when data were needed to determine the best way to adapt to students' needs. Third, and related to the second area of success, the participants believed informal collaboration is the key to successful collaboration between general and special education teachers more so than planned or formal collaboration because with informal collaboration, teachers could collaborate when and if they saw a need. The three barriers to collaboration at the research site identified by the participants were (a) not being able to plan together, (b) having a lot of students to service, and (c) not being able to talk with the students' previous elementary teachers. Each area of success and type of barrier will be discussed below as related to the research literature.

Regarding the first area of success, the findings that there is no stigma among teachers associated with the collaboration and no stigma among students about receiving assistance from the special education teacher is inconsistent with the literature. There is consistent evidence in the literature that general education teachers feel they are regarded by special educators as unprepared to teach students with disabilities and special education teachers to feel they are regarded by general educators as not equally capable of suggesting strategies that will benefit all students in general education classrooms (Kutash et al., 2009; Matthews, 2012; Nevin, Thousand, & Villa, 2009; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2007).

According to Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2014), secondary-level general and special educators do not view nor respect collaborating as a process of giving and taking each other's philosophical differences. These differences may consist of, but are not be limited to, any shared goals that may occur between them when they are collaborating

about students' needs. Based on the literature and related to the findings discussed above, general and special education teachers are not willing to respectfully accept or acknowledge that they both are professionals and that they both bring experiences in teaching techniques to the collaborative process (Smith et al., 2002; Villa, 2005). This is known to be especially true among general education teachers (Smith et al., 2002).

Research has shown that secondary-level general education teachers are known to stigmatize special education teachers by considering them as an aide or an assistant during the collaboration process. An example of this is when one special education teacher commented that the general education teacher handed her the lesson plan and told her this is the part of the lesson that the special education teacher would cover today (Pellegrino et al., 2015). Additionally, research studies have discovered that many secondary-level special education teachers have had humiliating experiences working and collaborating with general education teachers or heard about humiliating experiences with general education teachers from their colleagues. For example, a special education teacher commented to his special education teacher colleagues that one time a general education teacher told him in front of the students that he was helping to lower his voice because he was talking too loud. Therefore, he stopped helping them and went and sat in the back of the classroom (Pellegrino et al., 2015).

Related to the second area of success, participants collaborating at the time various issues arose such as during parent-teacher conferences and when data are needed to determine best ways to adapt to the needs of students, teachers used IEPs, data from student surveys, and prior grades of students. This is consistent with the literature. General educators' participation with students' IEP process, close monitoring of students by the special educator with a planned automatic response with general educators, and

steps students must take in order to improve their grades dropping below a C average were effective collaboration practices between general and special educators at the research site (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Haager & Klinger, 2005; Wallace et al., 2009). However, there were also practices for successful collaboration described in the literature that was not demonstrated at the research site. These practices were designated time for teachers to collaborate and instructional flexibility (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Haager & Klinger, 2005; Wallace et al., 2009).

The third area of success, according to the participants, is the informality of the collaboration because teachers can approach one another as needed. This approach is consistent with research studies. According to Wallace et al. (2009), a collaborative climate in which general and special education teachers freely share their knowledge and materials with each other as a way of increasing their instructional effectiveness in an informal approach is a noticeable positive collaborative environment. Also, researchers acknowledge that one of the major factors in accomplishing the goals of school reformation (i.e., decreasing high school students' dropout rates) at the secondary level are the informal collaborative networks general and special educators establish within their schools because this type of collaborative interaction will allow teachers to bring together their expertise promptly and as needed to address issues such as improving educational performance of all diverse learners (Carter et al., 2009; Tomlinson, 2004; Weiner & Murawski, 2005).

The participants in this study considered the lack of planning time together (i.e. one participant considered this irrelevant in a small school), a large number of students needing service, and not being able to talk with the students' previous teachers in their lower grades as barriers to collaboration. This is typical for secondary level schools

according to the literature. According to Friend (2008), at the secondary level, general and special education teachers expressed concerns about finding the time needed to form a collaborative working relationship with colleagues. Blanton and Pugach (2007) agreed, indicating there is a substantial amount of research evidence on the difficulties of collaborative teaching practices between secondary-level general and special education teachers, and one reason for the difficulties is the teachers do not have shared planning time to discuss issues related to students.

They also discovered additional difficulties including but not limited to: rigid school structures and practices, inadequate consultation skills, increased workload for both general and special educators, conflictual interpersonal relationships, lack of specific policy and institutional scheduling for conducting collaboration-related methods, lack of administration support, and the embedded perception that the education of students with disabilities is exclusively the responsibility of the special educator (Blanton & Pugach, 2007). These barriers were not observed at the research site by the researcher. However, the participants indicated during the focus group that the increased workload for special educators as well as the lack of common planning time are barriers, although one participant pointed out that, because their school is small, lack of common planning time is not considered a barrier.

Participants indicated that identified roles and relationships would be helpful and necessary when collaborative practices between secondary level general and special education teachers are not favorable. Based on the literature, this is highly recommended at the secondary level. Research-based evidence suggested that an effective collaboration plan exhibits a step-by-step process detailing each teacher's role during class instructional and activity time including who will lead the activities and each instructor's

specific placement in the room for best supporting all students' learning and engaging time (Pellegrion et al., 2015). Also, each teacher must participate in the aspect of role playing during the IEP meeting. For example, both teachers are given the opportunity to suggest accommodations (e.g., being permitted to practice a class presentation in the resource room and with only a few peers observing before presenting to the entire classroom of peers) that would be beneficial for the students to continue to be successful in the general education classroom (Reginelli, 2009).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, the researcher wished to determine how and to what extent collaboration practices occurred between general education teachers and special education teachers in a southern rural high school in southeastern Alabama. Second, the study was designed to develop an action plan based on data collected and the research literature for professional development focused on extending teachers' collaborative skills. Three major conclusions can be drawn from the findings. These are (a) collaboration between the general and special education teachers at the research site focused on communication regarding the sharing of information and resources, (b) there are several conditions in place conducive to collaboration and on which future collaborative efforts can be built, and (c) there are conditions that need to be put in place in order for effective, more comprehensive collaboration to occur. Each of these will be discussed below.

Communication. The general education teachers and special education teachers communicated frequently, efficiently and effectively, but collaboration rarely went beyond the sharing of information and resources. According to the literature and specifically related to education, collaboration between teachers is defined as an

educational approach in which general and special education teachers work in a coordinated and coactive manner to teach heterogeneous groups of students in educational integrated settings (Scruggs et al., 2007). The researcher did not see much evidence in the data collected and analyzed that the teachers worked in a coordinated and co-active manner. Rather, they communicated on the spot informally when an issue or problem arose. Although it should be noted that there was one general education teacher who spent a lot of time with one of the special education teachers on a daily basis discussing students' work, assignments, and accommodations (i.e., working in a coordinated and coactive manner), this was an exception.

With the exception of the one teacher noted above, the first conclusion is consistent with the research literature. According to Carter et al. (2009), Givens (2010), Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2014), and Sharpe and Hawes (2003), research studies revealed secondary schools' special education teachers reported that the majority of their collaboration focused on sharing information with general education teachers rather than on collaborative problem solving or planning. Additionally, there was no model of collaboration in place at the research site, and according to the research literature, unless there is a structured model for collaboration, teachers may only share information about students instead of planning instructional interventions for all students (Carter et al., 2009; Givens, 2010; Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014; Landever, 2010; Reginelli, 2009).

Conditions on which future collaboration can be built. The second major conclusion of the study is that there are several conditions in place conducive to collaboration and on which future collaborative efforts can be built. First, teachers agreed collaboration is a valued goal because it helps ensure that all students' performance will increase within general education classrooms. Valuing collaboration is important

because, as indicated by Reginelli (2009), collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers is essential to the success of learners with disabilities (Reginelli, 2009). It helps ensure the overall success of students not only in the school environment and general education classroom but beyond as well (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014; Reginelli, 2009).

Second, there is a school climate in which general and special education teachers can freely share their knowledge and materials with each other. This is important as a way of increasing each other's instructional effectiveness in order for an exemplary learning to occur among students with and without disabilities in general education classrooms. It also helps to build an inclusive and collaborative learning community (Wallace et al., 2009). Third, a strong IEP process is in place. This allows general and special education teachers to jointly participate in order to ensure all students' needs are being addressed including developing behavior management plans for students as needed (Blanton & Pugach, 2007; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009; Landever, 2010).

Fourth, teachers valued comprehensive lesson planning. They agreed a variety of things must be considered about students when planning lessons such as students learn differently and have different likes and dislikes, as suggested by Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2014) and Sharpe and Hawe (2003). Fifth, teachers perceived the administration to be positive toward collaboration. This is important. According to Givens (2010) and Matthews (2012), general and special education teachers have a successful collaborative partnership when administrators support the collaborative process. Sixth, the teachers reported good working relationships. General and special education teachers are perceived as equal partners in the collaborative process and they learned informally from one another because they are viewed as equal professionals. This is consistent with what

Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2014) said about equality among the teachers being needed for successful collaboration.

Finally, general education teachers and special education teachers respected one another. According to Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2014), both groups of teachers must be willing to acknowledge and respect that they both are professionals who ultimately want to create meaningful experiences for all students. At the research site, there was no stigma attached to special education teachers being in the general education classroom by either the general education teachers or general education students. This is important because it helps to continue to build a collaborative inclusive learning community. Both groups of teachers respectfully accepted and acknowledged that they both are professionals and that they both bring experiences in teaching techniques to the collaborative process. Also, when students see the acceptance and acknowledgment, they welcome having an additional teacher to ask for help (Smith et al., 2002; Villa, 2005).

Conditions needed for more effective collaboration. The third major conclusion of the study is that there are several conditions that need to be put in place in order for more effective collaboration to occur. First, there needs to be a structured model in place in order for teachers to plan instructional interventions. This is consistent with the literature. According to Carter et al. (2009) and Landever (2010), unless there is a structured model for collaboration between secondary-level general and special education teachers, teachers may only share information about students instead of planning instructional interventions for all students. Second, collaboration that is conducive to successful inclusion for all students requires role clarity and guidance. The guidance needs to come from the principal (Reginelli, 2009).

It is important for general and special education teachers to know their expected

role in the collaboration process and that administrators may allocate duties based on teachers' areas of expertise. There are some responsibilities that general education teachers and special education teachers share (Karten, 2007). However, there are some responsibilities that are specific to general education teachers and others that are specific to special education teachers; thus, there needs to be guidance from the principal about expected roles in collaboration (Reginelli, 2009).

Third, common planning times needs to be in place. According to Friend (2008), special education and general education teachers need adequate time to meet in order to focus on tasks and to discuss previous lessons that have been taught as well as plan future lessons and to assess students' progress. This may require systemic support, which was not a focus of this study, such as changes in district policies regarding teachers' schedules and amount of planning time. As noted previously, the teachers viewed the principal as supportive of collaboration. However, she may not have had the authority to make some of the changes needed at the research site for more comprehensive collaboration to occur.

Finally, there needs to be ongoing joint formal training in collaboration. This is important as a way for teachers to meet the criteria for effective collaboration. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2009), there is a recognition on the part of some teachers that additional training is needed in order to determine the specific needs of students and in order to improve the students' absence and dropout rates. Also, Pugach and Winn (2011) found that general and special education teachers working together were more successful when these teachers collaboratively worked together during ongoing professional development support. In summary, based on the findings of the study, although collaboration at the research site focused on communication, there were conditions in place on which more comprehensive collaboration could be built. Additionally, there

were some conditions that needed to be put in place in order for more comprehensive

collaboration to take place. Collaboration is a multidimensional process. The most

successful collaboration requires a maximum of the essential conditions to be in place.

Limitations

Both focus groups and observations involve limitations and constraints (Creswell,

2013; Oramas, 2012). For example, self-reports during conversations only reflect the

focus group participants' version or perspective of collaborative experiences, not that of

other general education and special education teachers. Participants' stories may be false

and answers may not be clear during the focus group, thus making data from the focus

group misleading or deceptive. Also, it may be difficult to develop empathy during focus

groups and observations, especially if participants are not used to formal research

(Creswell, 2013; Oramas, 2012).

Observations were limited to a specific site. In this case, the study took place in

one high school in Alabama, in one community and region in the state and country.

Therefore, results may not apply to other sites, settings, states, and regions. Observations

were also limited in that some relevant activities (i.e., professional-development sessions)

were not observed at all because none were scheduled during the time of this study. A

small sample size is another limitation of the present study as the arrangements identified

and the conclusions reached may not be transferrable to other general education and

special education teachers (Creswell, 2013; Oramas, 2012). Furthermore, there is also a

potential for the research study to be totally controlled by the researcher which can hinder

its trustworthiness (Oramas, 2012). Besides, conducting a case study means that the

findings can provide only one possible interpretation instead of the only interpretation

(Oramas, 2012; Yin, 2003).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations. Recommendations for practice will be presented first followed by recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for practice. As indicated earlier, the conceptual framework in which this applied dissertation study was grounded is Glasser's choice theory (Glasser, 1996). Based on this theory, successful collaboration involves individuals feeling competent in their quality (i.e., personal) world that they have created and recreated throughout lived experiences (Glasser, 1996). Given this perspective, individuals' behavior is an attempt to satisfy their feelings of competence in their personal world. Additionally, the purpose of the behavior is to send a message to the world proclaiming one's ability (Glasser, 1996; Parish et al., 2012; Wubbolding, 2007). Based on this conceptual framework, general education teachers and special education teachers would be motivated to collaborate if the collaborative behavior produced feelings of competence and allowed both groups of teachers to demonstrate their abilities.

Research (Allison, 2012; Givens, 2010; Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014) suggested that effective collaboration requires teachers to be not only self-sufficient individuals but also dependent upon the expertise of another teacher as well. Successful collaboration of general and special education teachers associated with the inclusion of students with disabilities being integrated into the general education classroom must be part of both groups of teachers' ideas and beliefs that will nurture their quality world without the feeling of being incompetent educators (Allison, 2012; Matthews, 2012; Reese, 2008). Based on Glasser's theory and the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for practice:

1. Provide general and special education teachers opportunities to plan together. For example, they should have designated planning periods together. Also, the agenda for faculty meetings could be altered once or twice a month so that meeting time is used for collaborative planning. This planning is essential for forming a collaborative working relationship between general and special education teachers at the secondary level. It is also essential for setting overall common goals, planning instruction and assessment, and discussing and resolving any issues related to students.

2. Train teachers in the various collaborative roles such as teaching the prescribed curriculum, monitoring and evaluating students' progress, maintaining cumulative records, developing and monitoring IEPs, and determining lesson adaptations. Well-defined roles are necessary for general and special education teachers to collaborate, especially when it is not their choice to work together in order to help all students be successful in general education classrooms. According to Reginelli (2009), a collaborative direction that is conducive to a successful inclusion classroom for all students, must have guidance.

3. Provide secondary-level general and special education teachers an opportunity to talk with previous teachers of students transitioning to classes in Grades 9 to 12.

4. Provide general and special education teachers need consistent and ongoing professional development training that is designed for both groups of teachers to be in attendance together and working together. This will ensure ongoing improvements in teacher practices necessary for establishing partnerships and maintaining effective collaborative practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Rae et al., 2010). Based on the literature, to successfully include students with disabilities in general education classrooms at the secondary level, teachers must be trained to have the skills necessary to

professionally collaborate (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009).

The professional development should focus on developing a shared vision and goals, hands-on strategies for understanding the need for collaboration, and developing the necessary skills for effective collaboration, as described by Reginelli (2009), Gurgur and Uzuner (2010), and Matthews (2012). Many researchers have discovered that collaboration must be embedded within the concept of people's ability to work together (Carter et al., 2009). Also, according to Friend (2008) and Sharpe and Hawes (2003), teachers who have not been trained with the necessary collaborative skills reported significant difficulties with the process.

5. Implement the coteaching model of collaboration. As mentioned earlier, since the 1980s, collaboration between general and special education teachers has been defined as an educational approach in which general and special educators work in a coordinated and coactive manner to teach heterogeneous groups of students in an educational integrated setting (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2010; Matthews, 2012; Scruggs et al., 2007). Moreover, collaborative coteaching is an opportunity for general and special educators to expand their knowledge and share ideas and strategies. The literature supports the collaborative coteaching model because both educators bring a variety of ideas, skills, and talents to the educational setting and share the aspects of instructions (Matthews, 2012).

Also, it is the most preferred collaborative teaching model acclaimed by secondary level general and special education teachers because both teachers are seen as equal professionals. The coteaching model requires the cooperation of general education and special education teachers working collaboratively together in the same classroom environment through the sharing of responsibilities for planning, instructing, and

evaluating instruction for a heterogeneous group of students (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2012; Matthews, 2012). According to Matthews (2012), no one teacher can meet the needs of numerous students from various diverse backgrounds and with different learning needs. Moreover, when teachers use a specific model and procedures to guide the collaboration process, students can improve academically.

Carter et al. (2009) and Landever (2010) stated that a structured model such as coteaching for collaboration help secondary level teachers moves from sharing information about students to planning instructional interventions for all students. The challenge for all secondary educators is to learn to collaborate so that they can teach students to collaborate in learning and the coteaching model is a way to permit educators to bring together their expertise. Lastly, an action plan for professional development is needed for secondary level general and special education teachers to effectively collaborate consistently and regularly.

Recommendations for future research. Several recommendations for future research are described below:

1. Conduct a case study of the one general education teacher at the research site who was a participant in this applied dissertation study and who talked and planned with the special education teacher on a daily basis. Questions to be explored would include the following: Why did these two teachers voluntarily choose to collaborate more extensively than others? How and why did they make sure there was time established to collaborate? What were the conditions that lead to this general education teacher wanting to work more closely with a special education teacher than the other general education teachers who participated in this applied research study? Such a study could be expanded to include multiple special education and general education teachers from multiple

secondary schools.

2. Conduct a study similar to this applied dissertation study that includes teachers in other core content areas courses that were not explored in this study and in elective courses as well, a larger number of teachers, and larger rural secondary schools as well as urban secondary schools.

3. Focus future studies on the impact of professional development both at the school and district levels. More specifically, the researcher recommends a study in which teachers are trained to use a particular model of collaboration and the impact of using that model is assessed. The study would measure what the teachers learned during the professional development training and how they applied what they learned in their classrooms.

4. Expand future studies to focus beyond teachers and the local school level. Future studies might focus on how school board policies and the actions of administrators positively and negatively impact collaboration between secondary general education and special education teachers. There may be policies that need to be changed in order for administrators to be most effective. For example, a principal may not be able to allocate additional time for teachers to plan together because school district policies may limit the amount of planning time provided.

Professional-Development Action Plan For Collaboration

Appendix D contains an action plan for professional development. This plan is based on the recommendations for practice of this applied dissertation study, effective teacher collaboration practices as described in the research literature, and the criteria for effective professional development as described in the research literature. Specifically, the effective teacher collaboration practices on which this plan is based are as follows:

1. Shared vision and shared goals.

2. High standards for all students.

3. Role clarity.

4. Communication and respect.

5. Leadership and systematic support.

The criteria for effective professional development on which it is based are as follows:

1. Intensive, ongoing and connected practices.

2. Student learning and addressing the teaching of specific curriculum content.

3. School improvement priority and goals, focusing on building strong working relationships among teachers.

4. Mentoring and induction programs for new teachers.

The overall purpose of the plan is to establish collaborative practices in which general and special education teachers embrace a common understanding of instructional goals, strategies, and problem-solving solutions. These collaborative practices will lead to evidence-based best practices for effective collaboration responsive for including secondary level special needs students in general education classes successfully. The plan was constructed so that special education teachers and general education teachers are given the opportunity to work together sharing their knowledge and skills. Through this plan, teachers will focus on student learning. They will be given an opportunity to address specific curriculum content aligned with school improvement goals and priorities.

This plan focuses on 10 objectives. Teachers will (a) appreciate the value of collaboration, (b) be able to distinguish between cooperation and collaboration, (c) be able to distinguish between communication and comprehensive collaboration, (d)

establish a shared vision and goals, (e) be able to implement the coteaching model, (f)

employ appropriate collaborative roles in their school and classroom setting, (g)

demonstrate appropriate collaboration with parents, (h) demonstrate effective

collaboration with related service personnel, (i) plan a lesson for instruction that includes

both general and special education teachers' roles, and (j) demonstrate practices offering

specialized instruction that will benefit students with disabilities in the general education

classroom. Action steps designed to help teachers achieve the objectives are described in

the plan as well as the evidence and outcomes that will be used to measure whether the

objectives are achieved.

　　　　The plan is not a specific one, but rather a general one, which will be customized

and further developed collaboratively with those who may participate in the training to

meet their specific needs. Also, the action plan is based on the assumption that the

general and special education teachers will be provided common planning time. Put

differently, common planning time cannot be addressed through the action plan; rather, it

is a prerequisite for implementation of the action plan and must be put in place by

principals or district-level administrators who have the authority to schedule the school

day.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Please respond to each item below to the best of your ability by placing an X in the space provided next to the most appropriate response for each item or writing comments in the space provided below each question (For this questionnaire, the two teachers in Questions 14, 15, and 16 are a general education teacher and a special education teacher).

Demographic Information
1. What is your gender?
___ Female
___ Male

2. What is the highest degree you have received?
___ Bachelors
___ Masters
___ Doctorate
___ Other (please specify) _____

3. What grade level(s) do you currently teach? (Mark all that apply.)
___ Grade 9
___ Grade 10
___ Grade 11
___ Grade 12
Other (please specify) _____

4. What subject(s) do you currently teach?
___ Social Studies/History/Geography
___ Science
___ English/Language Arts
___ Mathematics
___ Other (please specify) _____

5. How long have you been in your current position? _____

6. How long have you been a teacher/teaching? _____

Teacher Collaboration

7. At my school, I have participated in collaboration with the special education teacher.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

8. To the best of my knowledge, other teachers at my school are involved in collaboration with the special education teacher?
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

If you answered "No Opinion" to BOTH items 7 & 8, please skip to item 21.
9. At my school, the special education teachers and general education teachers are given opportunities to provide instruction in a collaborative model.

___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

10. Based on the collaborative model(s) used at my school, special education teachers and general education teachers are perceived as equal in the instructional process.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

11. At my school, teachers' collaborative planning time is scheduled every other week.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

12. At my school and in collaboration occurrences, special education teachers and general education teachers collaboratively work together to ensure students have a behavior management plan available.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

13. When evaluating and/or assessing students at my school, and in regard to a collaborative model, the special education teachers and general education teachers collaboratively work together.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

14. During my years as a teacher, the One Lead & One Support Collaborative Model has been used successfully at my school (One teacher is responsible for whole-class instruction while the other teacher monitors students and/or provide instructional support during class and independent work time).
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

15. During my years as a teacher, the Team Teaching Collaborative Model has been used successfully at my school (each teacher sharing responsibility in a classroom developing, implementing, and evaluating direct service in the form of instructional or behavioral intervention to students with diverse needs).
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree

___ Strongly Disagree

16. During my years as a teacher, the Station Teaching Collaborative Model has been used successfully at my school (each teacher leads instruction at a table, every student in the class has an opportunity to engage in small group instructions with a lead teacher).
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

17. During my years as a teacher, the Consultant Teaching Collaborative Model has been used successfully at my school (general education teacher consults regularly with special education; special education teacher is not present in the gen. ed. class).
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

18. During my years as a teacher, I have not participated in a Collaborative Teaching Model at my school.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

19. At my school, special education teachers are given chances to take part in staff development activities (i.e. school based content area, etc.)
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

20. At my school, ALL the instructional materials made available to general education teachers are equally made available to the special education teachers.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

21. Special education teachers are given the opportunity for training in the administration of state assessments (e.g. SAT, ACT, ABSAT, etc.)
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

22. At my school, general education teachers and special education teachers collaborate consistently when special education issues arise.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree

___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

23. At my school, during parent-teacher conferences, the general education(s) and the special education teacher are both present.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

24. Other than collaborating with the special education teacher, have you ever collaborated with others to provide special needs students with instructions (e.g. 504)?
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

25. My principal is available to talk about special education concerns.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

26. At my school, in regard to ALL students learning, the administration (i.e. principal and assistant principal) supports equal opportunity.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

27. At my school, the special education teacher understands the amount of non-instructional paperwork general education teachers have as a responsibility.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

28. I feel that I need more training on the statewide IEP.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

29. I need additional knowledge or expertise about how to collaborate with other teachers.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

30. At my school, general education teachers' and special education teachers' planning time is separate.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion   ___ Disagree   ___ Strongly Disagree

Self-Assessment (Attitudes and Knowledge)

31. I am known as a person who is not afraid to take risks.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

32. I can adapt to the needs of my students when necessary.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

33. I can assess/evaluate student understanding using a variety of techniques.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

34. I know how to influence my colleagues.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

35. I invest time in understanding my students' learning styles and interests.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

36. I can help other teachers with their teaching skills.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

37. I prefer to work alone.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

38. I am reluctant to rely on others.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

39. I value working collaboratively with other teachers.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

40. I cannot get through to the most difficult (i.e. at-risk, etc.) students.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

41. I believe that when teachers work together, they are able to influence practice in their schools.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

42. I believe that in order for change to be successful, teachers must work together.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

43. I know how to motivate my colleagues.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

44. If I feel it is necessary, I will speak out and express my views to my colleagues.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion
___ Disagree
___ Strongly Disagree

45. I am resistant to suggesting changes.
___ Strongly Agree
___ Agree
___ No Opinion   ___ Disagree   ___ Strongly Disagree

Appendix B

Observation Form

Observation Form

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
8:05 am 9:00 am	General ed teacher teaching fractions to entire class…sped teacher walking around classroom monitoring and helping students as needed...stopping occasionally to write down problems that a student has copied from smartboard. General and sped teacher are walking around classroom observing students.	Interesting Class and Lesson. No collaboration between the two teachers at this time. No collaboration between the two teachers at this time		**Observation 1** 9th Math 1st period 4/18/2016
9:05 am 9:10 am 9:15 am	Sped teacher writing problems down from individual students…gen teacher giving explanations as she writes problems/solutions on the smartboard. Gen ed teacher continues to explain problems that's on the board…sped teacher is interacting with students…what seems to be discussing problems/solutions they have copied from the board. Gen ed teacher is standing in front of class…instructing students to watch her as she explains a problem written on board…sped teacher is working with a student seated near the rear of the classroom.	No Collaboration between gen and spec teacher at this time		

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
9:20 am 9:25 am 9:30	Gen and sped teacher communicate about a student who is not in class…reasons as to why? Students are instructed by gen ed teacher to copy assignment from smartboard and began working on it quietly and independently…sped teacher is working with small group of students seated in the rear of the classroom…gen teacher is working at her desk. Activity continues as previously mention…sped teacher left classroom with small group…observation ends.			

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
10:05 a.m.	Gen. ed. teacher is explaining poems to students ("The Rocking Horse"). There is no sped. Teacher in classroom. Gen. teacher is asking students questions. about the poem (pg. 114).	Class is very well organized and mannerly. The atmosphere of the class is the kind that invite to asking questions if portions of the lecture were not clear.		**Observation 2** 12th English 3rd period 4/18/2016

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
10:10 a.m.	There is still no sped teacher in room. Gen. teacher is still explaining poem to students. Gen. teacher plays type of poem; students are reading along as recording is playing. Gen. teacher stands at podium at front of class as recording of poem plays and students are reading along in their textbooks.	Class is very well organized and mannerly. The atmosphere of the class is the type that invite asking questions if portions of the lecture were not clear.		
10:15 a.m.

10:20 a.m. | Recording of story as stopped. There is no sped teacher in classroom. Gen. teacher instructs students to discuss the portion of the poem with their neighboring classmate. They were to discuss what thoughts they had about the poem. Sped teacher entered the room. She talks to gen. teacher for a moment before going to back of classroom with students. Gen teacher continues to discuss lesson.

There is no collaboration between gen & sped teacher at this time. Gen teacher is standing front of class lecturing about content of story. Sped teacher is seated in the back of class writing notes as gen. teacher lectures. | Class is very well organized and mannerly. The atmosphere of the class is the type that invite asking questions if portions of the lecture were not clear. | | |
| 10:25 a.m. | Gen teacher cont. lecture in front of class. At times, she stops lecturing….type/discuss using smartboard and asking students questions such as: "What is the | | | |

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
10:30 a.m.	emotional state of the narrator?" Sped teacher cont. to remain seated in back of in same seat. Sped teacher appears to be taking notes pertaining to lesson/class discussion. Students are responding to gen ed teacher's questions. Gen teacher started typing again with comments and qts. related to lesson. Sped teacher remains in previous position. She appears to be reading along with students.	There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time. There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time.		**Observation 2 (Cont.)** 12th English 3rd period
10:35 a.m. 10:40 a.m. 10:45 a.m.	Gen ed teacher continues discussing portion of play with students. She is no longer typing/writing on smartboard. Sped teacher remains in previous location. Office phone rings….gen teacher instructs student to go to office….gen teacher goes as well. Student and gen teacher return from office. Gen teacher cont. with lesson and sped teacher remain sitting in previous location writing. Gen. ed teacher passes out previous writing assignment to students and directing them to answer the questions on pg. 69 in	There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time.		
10:50 am	their textbook. Gen. teacher passes out prompts for students to use as a writing topic. Sped teacher is talking to a student sitting near her in the back of the classroom. Gen teacher instructs students to continue complete assignment. Sped teacher is standing in back of class near a female student. Gen ed teacher passes out previous graded assignments and discuss content with students. Sped teacher is talking with female students. Sped teacher leaves but stops to talk to gen ed teacher about lesson. Sped teacher left class to check on another student. Bell rings signaling end of class.	There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time. One teacher seemed directive and one teacher seemed laissez-faire		

Time	Field Notes	Reflection		Events
11:00 am 11:05 am	Gen ed teacher calls roll. Sped teacher is sitting in back section of classroom among students. Gen teacher give assignment to students. They are reading a play. Sped teacher is sitting back section of classroom among students.	Class is semi-well organized Same gen. teacher but different Sped teacher. Mood of class is not as relaxing. There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time.		**Observation 3** 12th English 3rd period 4/18/2016
11:10 am 11:15 am	Sped teacher is sitting in back section of classroom talking with students sitting near her. Gen teacher is explaining characters as each student reads. Sped teacher is reading in her book. The reading of the story continues. Gen. & Sped teacher follows along. Gen teacher is standing in front of room at podium. Sped teacher is seated in back section of room among students.	There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time. Organization improves. There seems to be a more relaxing mood. There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time.		

Time	Field Notes	Reflection		Events
11:20 am	Gen teacher discuss scenes from the story with students. Sped teacher is seated in previous position. Sped teacher intervenes and rephrased what gen teacher wants students to understand about a character from the story.	Organization improves. There seems to be a more relaxing mood. There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time.		**Observation 3 (cont.)**
11:25 am		There is no collaboration between teachers.		
11:30 am	Reading of story continues. Gen teacher remains standing in front of class and sped teacher remains seated. Gen teacher walks among students seated near front of class. Sped teacher remains seated among students. Story reading continues; gen teacher stands in front of class; sped teacher remains seated.	No collaboration between teachers.		

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
11:35 am 11:40 am	Story reading continues; gen teacher stands in front of class; sped teacher remains seated; office phone connection rings; general teacher answers; sped teacher was asked to step out to the door of class; sped teacher left class; gen teacher resume story reading with students. Story reading continues; sped teacher has not returned; gen teacher standing in front of class at podium as students take turns reading. Story reading ceases; gen teacher discusses/explains scenes from story; sped teacher returns with a brown colored envelope in her hand and returns to her previous seat.	The researcher does not know why but she is not able to focus as much during this class as previous class. There is no collaboration between teachers.at this time.		**Observation 3 (Cont.)**
     11:45 am	Story reading ceases; gen teacher discusses/explains scenes from story; sped teacher returns with a brown colored envelope in her hand and returns to her previous seat. Story reading continues; gen and sped teacher is following along; Story reading ends; discussion of story begins between gen ed teacher and students; End of class bell rings; students leave; gen and spec teacher collaborate about part of story about how the character of the boy in the story spent all the family's money at one time. The titled of the story was "A Raisin in the Sun."	There is no collaboration between teachers.at this time.		

12:10 pm	Gen. Ed. Teacher is explaining Radius Squares to students. Sped Teacher is working with one student seated at a table in the classroom.	The researcher feels more focused during this observation session. Session more organized. No collaboration between the two teachers. I really like this class!	**Observation 4** 10th Geometry 4th period 4/18/2016
12:15 pm	Gen. Ed. Teacher walks around classroom helping students. Sped Teacher assist student seated at table.	This seems to be the One Lead and One Support Collaborative Teaching Model.	
12:20 pm	Sped Teacher walks around class assisting students….Gen Ed teacher is explain a circumference problem on the board…asking the students questions as she explains the rules for solving…Sped teacher returns to assist students seated at table.	No collaboration between the two teachers. No collaboration between the two teachers.	
12:25 pm	Sped teacher walks around room assisting students…gen ed teacher is explaining problems as she stands in front of class…sped teacher is assisting student seated at table.	Great Class! Great Lesson! No collaboration between the two teachers.	
12:30 pm	Activity changes…students work in pairs of two…instructed to do so by gen ed teacher…sped teacher continues work with student seated at table.		
12:35 pm	Students continue to work in groups of two…gen ed teacher is assisting students individually…sped teacher is assisting students as well. Both teachers continue to assist students…sped teacher and gen ed teacher begin to discuss students' progress especially the student seated at the table…teachers discuss a student who was absent…getting his or her work completed…Class period ends.		

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
7:50 am	Sped teacher monitors students…gen ed teacher is lecturing…sped teacher makes notes in her notebook as she monitors students.	Interesting Class! No collaboration between the two teachers.		**Observation 5 History 11th**
7:55 am	Gen ed teacher explains points of lecture…notes related to map…gen ed teacher walks up and down each aisle…discussing lesson…pointing out specific points to students…sped teacher monitors students.	No collaboration between the two teachers. This seems to be the One Lead and One Support Collaborative Teaching Model.		
8:00 am 8:05 am	Sped teacher continue to monitor students…gen ed teacher is sitting in front of class on a stool…gen ed teacher gets up…walks up and down aisle…calls on several students…sped teacher continues to monitor students. Sped teacher monitors students…gen ed teacher walking up and down aisles lecturing…asking questions…calling on individual students to answer questions…about Winston Church Hill…Battle of Britain…gen ed teacher…sits in front of class on stool…lecturing…sped teacher…monitors students.	No collaboration between the two teachers. No collaboration between the two teachers.		

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
8:10 am	Gen ed teacher shows movie clip related to lesson…sped teacher monitors students.	Interesting Class! No collaboration between the two teachers.		**Observation 5 History (Cont**.)
8:15 am	Gen ed teacher discuss content of lesson related movie clip…sped teacher monitors students…stopping occasionally to talk to some of the students…No collaboration between the two teachers…sped teacher was called out of the classroom…gen teacher continues class discussion of lesson.			
8:20 am 8:25 am 8:30 am	Sped teacher returns…gen ed teacher lecturing at front of class…sped teacher monitors students…talking with some of the students occasionally. Gen ed teacher directs students to take notes related to lesson discussion…sped teacher walks around classroom…monitoring students…stopping occasionally to collaborate with students. Gen ed teacher shows movie clip related to lesson (President FDR)…sped teacher monitors students…	No collaboration between the two teachers. No collaboration between the two teachers.		

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
8:35 am 8:40 am	Gen ed teacher discuss movie clip…relate it to specific points on map…sped teacher monitors students…gen ed and sped teacher collaborate about the students who were not taking notes as instructed. Sped teacher monitors students…gen ed teacher discuss lesson…Class Ends…sped and gen ed teacher continued discussion about students not taking notes during class…how should it be addressed…study guide…was suggested by both teachers…sped teacher leaves classroom…collaborates in hallway about students' progress with general ed teacher who teaches electives.	No collaboration between the two teachers. Very impressive to researcher!		

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
10:05 am 10:10 am	Sped & Gen education teacher discuss a student wanting air conditioner turn off because of his/her sore throat…students was instructed by sped teacher to move…sped teacher leaves classroom…was called out into to the hallway because a gen ed teacher needed to discuss an issue concerning a student in her class…a class the sped teacher is assigned to enter. The hallway collaboration was observed by the researcher. Sped teacher returns…monitors and talks to various students…gen ed teacher is lecturing…discussing the lesson with students…asking questions…commenting on students' responses…no collaboration occurred	Researcher cannot seem to totally focus on content of lesson. Researcher found this hallway observation to be very interesting.		**Observation 6 History (10th)**

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
	between the two teachers.			
10:15 am	Sped teacher is discussing lesson with students…gen ed teacher monitors class…gen ed teacher is standing in front of class…gen ed teacher begins to lecture again …sped teacher is working with two students seated in the far right back corner of the classroom.	This is seems to be the Collaborative Team Teaching Model.		
10:20 am				
	Gen ed teacher shows documentary video related to reconstruction…sped teacher sits and watch video.			
10:25 am	Gen ed teacher continues to play documentary video…sped teacher remained seated watching documentary video…sped teacher appears to be writing notes from video documentary.	No collaboration between the two teachers.		
10:30 am				
	Video documentary continues…sped teacher remains seated…appears to be writing in notebook…taking notes related to documentary…gen ed teacher standing in front of classroom…near smartboard.			

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
10:35 am 10:40 am	Video documentary continues…gen ed teacher stops video…ask students definition of "scalawag"…students answers as a group…gen ed teacher returns to previous standing place near smartboard…sped teacher continues to remain seated writing. Gen ed teacher moves to front of class to drink of class to drink from bottle of water…sped teacher remains seated…looking nails…documentary video continues			**Observation 6 (cont.)**
10:45 am	to play…sped teacher writes in notebook…appears to be taking notes from documentary video. Students ask gen ed teacher a question related to documentary video…sped teacher to remain seated watching documentary video…gen ed teacher stops doc video…ask students questions about it…instruct students to take notes during discuss…sped teacher assist students with taking notes.	No collaboration between the two teachers.		
10:50 am	Gen ed teacher walks up & down aisle lecturing…asking students questions related to documentary video…sped teacher remains seated in back of class…class ends.			

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
11:00 am	Researcher collaborated with gen & sped teacher about how this class is a group of unmotivated seniors…course is Algebra Connections…lesson is career & taxes…gen ed teacher uses this lesson to try and get students motivated…sped teacher…goes to her teacher's desk located in back of classroom…sped teacher writes in what appears to be a notebook.	Love this class…able to focus…impressed with the students' ability to stay engaged.		**Observation 7 12th Math**
11:05 am

11:10 am

11:15 am | Gen ed teacher lectures standing in front of class…sped teacher monitors students by walking around…then standing in back of classroom.

Sped teacher continues to monitor students moving to different areas in the classroom…gen ed teacher reads speech about changing the world (by making your bed).

Gen ed teacher shows video about setting goals…gen and sped teacher monitors students at this time… | Motivating Lesson!

No collaboration between the two teachers. | | |
| 11:20 am

11:25 am | Sped and gen ed teacher continue to monitor students as they watch lesson related video titled: Setting Goals and Achieving Them.

Gen ed teacher pass out survey to students…discussing it in the process…sped teacher and gen ed teacher discuss going and getting IPads for students…sped teacher leaves classroom to get IPads for students…teacher returns with IPads…passes them out to the students. | | | |

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
11:30 am 11:35 am	Gen ed and sped teacher collaborate about a student using an IPad alone…student's ability to use IPad is accomplished once sped teacher accommodated student by helping him/her get to the correct website designated by gen ed teacher. Sped and gen teacher collaborate…sped teacher helps a student reload his/her survey…student is using her phone for the process.	Interesting Class (e.g. lesson, accommodating students)! Impressive scene!		**Observation 7 (cont.)**
11:40 am 11:45 am	Gen and sped teacher are walking around the classroom monitoring students…helping students individually to complete survey located on their IPad or phone…gen ed and sped teacher collaborate about how well a student did the survey without further assistance…gen and sped teacher collaborate about how well a student took the survey…student did not need any assistant from the teachers. Gen teacher plays another educational video for students…gen and sped teacher monitor students from different sections of classroom during video playing…video was about "Being responsible as an adult." …class ends.	Inspiring for researcher! No collaboration between the two teachers.		

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
1:20 pm 1:25 pm	Students are in the library with School Counselor discussing a read aloud assignment "Memories or Predictions"…both teachers are there as well. Students are still in the library…there is no collaboration between the two teachers…gen ed teacher is walking around monitoring students…gen teacher is sitting at table with students.	No special impression during this class time. No collaboration between the two teachers.		**Observation 8** **12th Gov./Eco.**
1:30 pm 1:35 pm 1:40 pm	Students are still in library completing assign. For library and counselor…sped teacher is sitting at the table helping students complete assignment given by librarian…sped teacher is sitting at a table with students…gen teacher is not in library at this time. Sped teacher continues to help individual students complete assignments assigned by librarian…gen ed teacher is not in library. Students are in computer lab…students are working on an assignment…sped teacher collaborates with gen ed teacher…sped teacher…leaves computer lab to go to ladies' room…sped teacher returns.			

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
1:45 pm	Sped teacher is assisting students with computer assignments designed by gen ed teacher…gen ed teacher is walking around...assisting various students with assignment.	There is no collaboration between the two teachers.		
1:50 pm	Students are in computer lab…both teachers are assisting students…students are assigned to research on the computer whether or not the drug "marijuana" should be legalized.	There is no collaboration between the two teachers.		

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
1:55pm	Continue to remain in computer lab…students continue to research legalization of the drug "marijuana"…sped teacher and gen ed teacher are assisting individual students.	There no collaboration between the two teachers at this time.		**Observation 8 (cont.)**
2:00 pm	Students are continuing to research legalization of "marijuana"…gen and sped teacher continues to assist individual students until the class ends.	There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time.		

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
11:00 am 11:05 am 11:10 am	Sped teacher is assisting students…gen ed teacher is talking to students about assignment (review). Discussion/Review continues. General ed teacher is standing at front of class monitoring students…gen ed teacher gives an assignment…sped teacher is working with a small group near the back of the classroom…students are seated around a table as they work…sped teacher is standing near them…gen ed teacher is lecturing at front class.	There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time. There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time.		**Observation 9** **11th English** **4/28/16**
11:15 am 11:20 am 11:25 am	Gen ed teacher continues to lecture…walking among students assisting them while lecturing…sped teacher is assisting various students as well. Gen and sped teacher discuss lesson…assignment given…discussion involves student timeline for completing lesson….. Gen ed teacher is seat at teacher desk located in front of classroom…sped teacher is assisting students.	No collaboration between the two teachers at this time. No collaboration between the two teachers at this time.		

Time	Field Notes	Reflections	Events
11:30 am 11:35 am	Gen ed teacher is positioned in front of class monitoring students the as the complete class assignment…highlights of the assignment…autobiography project…resume, biography and college career choices…sped teacher is assisting students. Students are working on class assignment…sped and gen ed teacher are assisting students as needed…gen ed teacher discusses/explains portion of the assignment…as students work…sped	No collaboration between the two teachers. No collaboration between the two teachers.	
11:45 am	Teacher continues to assist students individually and small group seated at table near the back of classroom. Students has been instructed by gen ed teacher to continue working until class period ends…students are instructed to ask for help if needed…sped teacher continues to assist various students…bell rings…class ends.	No collaboration between the two teachers.	
12:25 pm 12:30 pm	"Blues Ain't No Marking Bird" is the subject of the lesson...sped teacher is sitting between two students working with them…gen ed teacher is standing at front of class lecturing from podium. Gen ed teacher is lecturing…sped teacher continues to work with the two students.	No collaboration between the two teachers. No collaboration between the two teachers.	**Observation 10 9th English 4/28/16**

Time	Field Notes	Reflections	Events
12:35 pm 12:40 pm 12:45 pm	There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time…sped teacher continues to work with the two students...assisting them with an assignment…sped teacher sits between the two student…gen ed teacher is lecturing at podium at front of class. Previous mention activity continues. Students are listening to the story, "Blues Ain't No Marking Bird."…gen ed teachers is seated at teacher's desk located in front of class listening to story…sped teacher is seated between two students…reading along with the students as story plays.	No collaboration between the two teachers at any of these times.	
12:50 pm 12:55 pm	Students continue to listen to story…both teachers are reading along…sped teacher continues to sit between the two students reading along…listening to story…gen ed teacher is seated at teacher's desk reading along…listening to story. Both teachers are in there previously mention places…both continues to read along…listen to story.	No collaboration between the two teachers. No collaboration between the two teachers.	

Time	Field Notes	Reflections	Events
1:00 pm 1:05 pm	Gen ed teacher is seated at teacher's desk at front of class…gen ed teacher instruct students about how to complete an assignment…sped teacher remains seated between the same two previous mention students assisting them with the assignment. Sped teacher works with small group of students…gen ed teacher is sitting a teacher's desk lecturing to students…students are working on assignment…sped teacher is assisting students with assignment…gen ed teacher monitors students from his/her desk...class ends	No collaboration between the two teachers.	

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
8:00 am 8:05 am 8:10 am	Gen ed teacher is lecturing to students from page 514 of the History book…sped teacher standing at back of classroom writing in notebook. Gen ed teacher continues to lecture from History book…sped teacher monitors students. Gen ed teacher is shows educational video clip of "Ishma" bombing…sped teacher continues to monitor students.	This class lesson for today is very interesting and educational. No collaboration between the two teachers.		**Observation 11 11th History 4/29/16** ****Before class started, gen ed & sped teacher collaborated about test scheduled…gen ed teacher ask sped teacher students taking test during her absence…how**

Time	Field Notes	Reflections		Events
8:15 am 8:20 am	Gen ed teacher is sitting at front of class lecturing about the content of the video…sped teacher is monitoring students from back of classroom. Classroom intercom phone rings…gen ed teacher answers…instructs sped teacher he/she is needed…Sped teacher leaves classroom…gen ed teachers resumes lecturing…sped teacher returns with tickets for awards…sped teacher hands out tickets to students…gen ed teacher…continues to lecture to students.	There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time. There is no collaboration between the two teachers at this time		****would this be accommodated… handled…**
8:25 am 8:30 am	Gen ed teacher continues to lecture…writing notes on white board in the process…explaining as well…sped teacher is monitoring students while walking through the rows of desks…she begins to work with a small group students seated near the back of the class. Gen ed teacher is showing an educational video clip of 'Historical Events…sped teacher is monitoring students…student spills coffee on floor…sped teacher left classroom to get paper towels to help clean up spill…gen teacher also help clean it up while continuing to discuss lesson.	This an example of the Team Teaching Collaborative Model.		

Appendix C

Focus-Group Protocol

Focus-Group Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for being a participant in this study. I have asked you to come and talk with me because first, I want to determine how and to what extent collaboration practices occur between general and special education teachers in a rural southern high school in Alabama and second, develop an action plan based on data collected and previous literature for professional development focused on extending teachers' collaborative skills.

1. How would you define collaboration?

2. What do you think is important for you to know about students when planning lessons?

3. How would you describe collaboration as it occurs at your school between the general education and special education teacher?

   Probe 1: How, if at all, do you and the special education teacher collaborate to assess students' readiness levels?

   Probe 2: How, if at all, do you and the special education teacher collaborate to use student data that you gained prior to instruction, during instruction, and/or from culminating assessments? Please give an example of times you have done this.

   Probe 3: How, if at all, do you and the special education teacher collaborate in using the data in a student's learning profile to plan instruction? How do you gain access to the information? Please give examples of a time you have done this.

   Probe 4: How do you and the special education teacher collaborate to use data to meet the needs of varying interest levels of students with disabilities during instruction: Please give examples of a time you have done this?

4. What, if any, are the successes you can describe as related to collaboration between the general education teachers and the special education teacher at your school?
   Probe 1: To what extent, if at all, do you believe collaboration is working for the academic achievement of special education students in the general education inclusion classroom?

   Probe 2: To what extent, if at all, do you believe collaboration is working for the academic achievement of regular education students in the general education classroom?

   Probe 3: What, if any, are the barriers to collaboration between the general education teachers and special education teacher at your school?

5. To what extent, do you believe collaboration between the general education and special education teacher at this school is working for students' academic achievement in general education classrooms?

6. Have you attended professional development on teacher collaboration? If so, please describe it.

   Probe 1: How, if at all, did it influence your teaching?

   Probe 2: How, if at all, did it influence communication between the general education teachers and special education teacher?

   Probe 3: Has there been any on-the-job training or learning that has helped you to

collaborate effectively? If so, please describe it

7. Is there additional professional development that you feel you need to improve your collaborative skills?

8. Is there anything else about collaboration between general education teachers and the special education teacher at your school that would be important to know about?

Transcriptions from Focus Group Interview
Qt.1
Participant number 1 "collaboration is working together in a variety of different ways um…..different ways… um….different classroom settings, working together as teachers."
Participant Number 4 "Um like she said collaboration is working together to get to a common goal if the goal is to help that child um if that child is on a low level we just gotta get that child to a level um if they are on a low level you have get that level the child is on and talk about it, research or find resources that will help that child."
Participant Number 7 "Working together to achieve success."
Participant number 6 "Where teachers join together and discuss their students…..ways they can improve their performance."
Participant Number 2 "Working with other teachers in order to find creative solutions to complex problems."
Participant Number 9 "Working together to help the students."
Participant Number 1 "I say collaboration is not formal or informal when you know I mean it can take place in a variety of ways."
Participant Number 2 "In any setting."
Researcher "That's how you would define collaboration, in any setting?"
Participant number 1 "Yea."
Participant Number 2 "collaboration can take place in any setting."
Participant Number 5 "Not only just to ensure success, but to avoid problems."
Participant number 8 "Sharing responsibility for student learning."
Participant number 3 "working with teachers."
Qt2
Participant Number 3 "I think it is important to know how they learn best, because not all students learn in the exact same way so…"
Participant Number 2 "strengths and weaknesses"
Participant number 6 "work ethics of the students."
Participant number 4 "even though their functioning level, what level they're on or cause it might be low and you know you just can't just plan."

Participant number 9 "the background of the student, previous grades, um advices of anybody that has had them before me."

Participant Number 5 "their reading level."

Participant Number 7 "their learning styles."

Participant Number 1 "um their interests their likes and dislikes um aside from academic curriculum so you know about the motivators and different things."

Participant number 8 "uh prior performance."

Qt3
Participant Number 9 "Um, the special education teachers and the general education teachers will talk about the different assignments, we talk about…we discuss the needs….we discuss the IEPs…..we discuss everything that we need to know to work together for the benefit of the child and what accommodations we need have for them."

Participant Number 4 I agree with number 9 we discuss the students' needs in various ways.

Participant Number 3 As we stated in a previous question….it doesn't only happen that one particular time…like collaborative planning or anything like that… it can happen in the hall way or in the cafeteria or in the classrooms.

Participant Number 1 Um at a small school collaboration is a little bit different here. It can take place at all different times and in different places…. if we see the need or general education teachers see the need they can stop and address that individual student's needs and collaborate right then for whatever we need to do.

Participant Number 8 that is one of the best things about being right across the hall from the resource teacher anytime something comes up…..I can shoot right out that door to across the hall to the door and knock on the door and ask for help with a student.

Participant Number 6   um having a lot of regular ed kids in my room in most of my classes, I spend a lot of time with the sped teacher and we usually on a regular daily basis we are discussing the students work um accommodations, assignments, um whether we need to shorten the assignment or whatever objective um seeing if they need to cover more or things like that.

Participant number 1 we also have common, we have professional development days and or core teachers have common planning periods where special education teachers….resource teachers move around and attend all of those meetings to see what is going on. They um also resource teachers and special education teachers also have syllabuses at the beginning of the nine weeks so they can work directly with the general education teacher.

Participant number 2 "Collaboration is not always in class. We uh myself for number 1 just recently worked on a collaborative project in which we were involved in a field trip and which a couple of our special education students would be able to attend and we had to collaborate in getting all the necessary paperwork and the forms filled out for that trip.

Participant number 5 "I agree with everything the previous participants said uh collaboration happens in room, it happens in the hallways, in the cafeteria, in the teachers work room this actual been the most contact I have had with any special education teacher than any school I have been too which is a really good thing because that can be challenging if that isn't attained.
Probe qt. **1**
Participant Number 9 one thing that we do is we both consider the data from our bench mark testing and Grover scholars

Participant Number 7 We also look at their grades to see how they are doing are they mastering their skills and goals and objectives.

Participant Number 6 when we go over our IEPs at the beginning of the year…. we look at the goals
Probe qt. **2**
Number 6 when I talk with number 1 we um look at the assignments or the work that I am going to give them and add to…take away you know shorten lessons usually.

Participant Number 3 when we have projects due um I will go over them with one of the sped teachers and sometimes if it is like a PowerPoint presentation we will reduce the number of slides or something like that or time of the actual presentation.

Participant Number 4 I have worked the general education teachers (3,7,5) and we've had assignments where the special needs kids can easily make….. you know grade that was something on their level that everybody had to do that was real simple that you had to work on it and I found that even though the project or assignment was very simple and easy we had some kids that still did not put forth the effort or the waited to the last minute but what the general ed teachers would do um would find something real easy

for the sped student to find some success in that they could do on their own with any assistant um they have all the semester so…. The kids had to put forth the effort to do it.

Participant Number 7 I think we have to be flexible to see what works or not working and adjust our instructions from that point forward.

Participant Number 8 one of the easiest ways that I can think of that I collaborate is for me a lot of the times I just can go to the special education teacher and ask her to explain some of the data recorded in the IEP or testing that psychologist come with….sometimes times the best form of collaboration for me is to go to them and ask them to explain what does this mean about this specific student.

Researcher: How do you gain access to the information?

Number 1 as previously stated by number 6 at the beginning of the year number 6 stated that we have meetings with all the general education teachers where we sit down individually and discuss students individually that are coming into the classroom….about their coming in the classroom and we provide IEPs with documentations of any accommodations that are needed throughout the year and we also meet as groups and discuss about those students with those teachers with information prior to those students entering their classroom.

Probe qt 4
Participant Number 8 I can start exactly to what she was talking about. She doesn't just bring material to the meetings at the beginning of the year, but she also help develop the IEP for the students for the next year that includes their outside interest their subject matter and things like that. They do a really good job here collecting data like surveys that is needed to help the special education students; like outside additional data. That way you can go to each individual student and look at entrance level data inside and outside. The special education teacher does the surveys toward the beginning of the school year and it helps build their IEPs for the next school year. She goes over it with parents and teachers at the beginning of each school year.

Researcher number 8 when you say surveys……..

Participant number 8 she takes surveys on how the perform in different subjects matter and she ask the kids sometimes….which classes do you like…..which classes do you not like….what do you like to do on your own time….she asks a broad variety of questions in order to take different ways in finding out what that student on how they will perform in the classroom.

Researcher ….and the surveys are given to the students?

Number 8 yes

Number 1 just with the IEP planning most students are overlapping…..they are going from one general education teacher to another so most of the general education teachers already know our students and teachers are given teacher surveys, parents are given parents surveys…..students are given learning style surveys…. and they are given student interviews…um you know….. on future plans of what they like or what they don't like on a school wide basis……and we do that toward the beginning of the school year and quarterly we're…..we do a grade quarterly when report card come out….and we go back and re-visit that….and see if things changed or not.

Qt. 4
Participant 9 I think that the students feel comfortable going either way….You know a general education teacher or a special education teacher and that they know that they will receive help and ah um ultimately success in the class.

Participant 6 I think ah they have confident…self-confident has grown in those special ed students because they have grown to be successful because we meet together.

Participant 5 ah kinda goes with what she said….that I know ah we are doing projects right now and….you know back in September I don't think any of my special education kids would be as comfortable in those classes has they are right now….so I think collaboration and you know talking about their interest and kinda knowing who our students are….as for as has helped that.

Participant number 9 I think that number 4 has had a big influence on a couple of the students…. Especially just talking to them um helping them gain confidence kinda goes with what number 5 as to what he's saying um I think that I've seen a difference in some of them and how they are acting in school and how they are growing up some because they're….they're um…there are a few of them are working students.

Participant 3 I know in the past we ah….anytime I have a presentation…..I had two students last year who were petrified to get up and speak in front of the class and so number 1 would let them practice in her classroom in front of a few students um before they actually had to come do it in front of their big class and that helped so much with their confidence and everything.

Participant 7 one more specific exactly is to be a project earlier in the year number 4 and the class had to do PowerPoint presentations with career goals oriented and some were able to be successful to get up to give their presentation because they had collaborated and worked so hard.

Participant 4 I've notice that the kids like their core teachers…..they'll talk about I just like her….especially number 9….they will run you over to get to her class…yes they will….. and I have never heard them talk negative about anybody or their teacher…..it's something about Sweetwater environment that makes you……it's not the environment is different from other schools that I have been working at….it's just a totally different atmosphere….it was like a breath of fresh air for me…..when I first got here…I had to get used to it because…I was like…okay….I didn't have time to eat…I lost weight….I got sick…..but then…..I had to prioritize different things so it's like now…okay I got it…..the kids were like not rude to me…they were respectful…..and I just like the working environment…and I think that the adults around here is a good working environment and the kids see that the adults getting along……and everybody is happy….and everybody is getting along……the kids are going to fall in line too. I think the whole nature of the environment falls on the kids and they're picking up on it.

Participant 2 There is a couple of things popped in my mind are…. Once again just the field trips that some of our students have went on they were able to get along…..and number 1 directly signed those to on those field trips and the joy the students get from those trips ah and it is very satisfying to the teachers also special projects that has been mention before all those special projects the kids are involve in and they get a chance to work on those….and having the teachers and the special ed teachers help them with on the projects and it causes self -confidence as well as ah good working habits.

Researcher "number 8 do you have anything to add?"

Number 8 yes we're on students' specific successes right? I'm a general education teacher and a special education parent. I have two children here in special education and I can tell you specifically one of the things that leads to academic success is there students are given freedom in some cases…they talked about special assignments, test….and so forth and things like that…. but they are given the freedom if they want to stay in that classroom setting and they are not afraid to tell the teachers I can do this….and they also not afraid to advocate for themselves if they are starting to fall behind and I've notice certain children from the beginning of the year who just automatically get up and go to the resource room to the end of the year….picking and choosing when they might need that help. I think that's a success when 13 to 17 year old kids know when to ask for help and know when to go out on their own….. I think that is really a specific success.

Probe 1
Participant 8 ah I think having that collaborative with the special education teacher in the classroom to assist some the kids that may have a difficult time moving at a regular or normal pace allows us to keep

pushing the curriculum forward and being more rigors for the general education students.

Participant 7 and those regular education students know that those special education teachers are there and that they can use them and go to them…. if they have a question and think they do so if they need em.

Participant 1 I think that with the uhm having the special education teachers in and out of the classes it kind of takes the stigma away from special education and so most of the students here….I mean they know who the special education teachers are…..I mean we're small school…all the kids know who get help and who doesn't but it to that other general education kids if they need something just as basic as….like pencils or calculators or some other assistant… I mean they know that they can it and so we have a lot of kids that are special ed and general ed come in and out and I think that it sort of takes the stigma away in classes so that general education kids no matter who you know they are comfortable that there are two teachers in the classroom and if they've got a question, they know that they can ask whoever they need to and I think that's just because there is a high present of in and out and um it kinda of takes away and they are more comfortable with the entire student body.

Researcher: Do any of the general education students go to the resource room?

Number 9 yes….they do…I know that…there have been times that…..number 1 has helped core students that may be struggling long with her special students and I think that's very helpful with the whole atmosphere.

Number 7 I had one today that asked to go.

Number 4 I have on that's in my language arts class…..every time I pull my small group…she'll come along as well…she just get and say hey…I need to go…I need your help and just come along with us.

Number 2 I think looking back….for years ago….that might have been a negative uhm confrontation that some the general ed students had toward the special ed students….when they get up and go toward the resource room…but I don't really see that anymore…that means that's a change for definitely positive.

Probe 3(qt4)
Number 9 The only thing that I would say is negative is special education teachers have a lot of students to service and a lot of times they are expected to be in two places at one time and think that……I don't know whether to call it a barrier are a hardship…on them you know….that they can't get to where they need to be all the times because they have so many to service.

Researcher: How's that accommodated when that happens?

Number 9 they have a calendar…and they go to certain classes at certain times…um and regularly…during the same week….and the teachers try to adjust…you know for test….or for daily work….or something like that…..so that they can be accommodated…you know at that particular time…or sometimes if they may be in another classroom and if they are not doing a grade or something in the that classroom… they are happy to go and service that student or students in another classroom…they float well.

Researcher: I hear you….but I may have missed asked the question….if the special education teacher needs to be in another classroom the general education teacher will do well with the student or students without her…..you guys seem to do well with that…how would the general education accommodate the special education teacher not being there?

Number 1 um we are a small school and we only have just the two core in each subject but I know that if I am with another group or I have students…..and sometimes in our groups…especially 9-12 some of the groups are larger….I can really count on my general education teachers to just make changes……and just adapt and go…..you know they will even change their plans…..from like it was supposed to be….um like test or things……my general education teachers will…..hold those students in there and they will come to

me afterwards….and I can get those students the next day…..by you know working with elective teachers….and pull them and my general education teachers…..if they were going to do something individually or however they might change their whole plan….especially if they know if I'm in meeting….you know they may say…well we will work in pairs…my general education teachers….especially if not in there or they may….all my teachers are good about pairing one of those higher students….with some of mine….so they just make those adjustments in the general education classrooms…..and then they are great about…..I mean I have test from today….that I have not finished…..all of teachers are really good about….you know we can….accommodate individually…but you know….just about rearranging the schedule or you just making changes…we adapt a lot of that in their classroom because they know there are only two of us…you know just make it…you know…as long it is to benefit…you know my students….and the other students they just…..make that work for those students.

Researcher: Okay, number 9 basically said that but you made it more extensive.

Qt.5
Participant Number 3 I feel like the general education teachers and the special education teachers work very well together and very frequently together.

Number 7 I think work to very extent to the fullest of our ability together.

Qt.6
Number 8 Yes, and its collaboration between general education teachers…..special education teachers… and its collaboration across curriculums….other general education teachers where we have talked about how special education teachers being in the classrooms….uh….just about how its working and it's not working…so…. We've talked about it…and professional development from just about every angle… I think.

Researcher: does number 8 speaks for everyone about how we've previously discussed collaboration and professional development from every angle?

Probe 1& 2
Number 8 I think primarily we just mention that the general education teachers are more aware of the resources that we have to take advantage of is one way it has influence our teaching or how it affects……..when I'm planning for something that has special education students in it….the training that I received makes me more aware of what tools I can go to the resource teacher and get….you know it helps me with my lesson planning because I can go to them and find out…what I need to do for these students.

Researcher: does anyone have anything to add to that? ....What number 8 answered? ....so does anyone else has anything to say or add differently?

Probe 3
Number 2 we've had some professional development uhm…..recently with the new common core course of study outsides the school….we've had to go to University of Alabama and the University of South Alabama and we talked about cross cutting techniques for professional development between general ed teachers and general teachers and special ed teachers.

Research: Does number two speaks for everyone?

All other participants: Yes

Qt.7
Number 3 The only thing I could think of is something…you know as far as professional development is getting….I guess together to talk about individual students at maybe at the beginning of the school year….you before…especially with students we've never had before and it's our first time to teach them…..so if we could meet with the elementary special education teachers and you know possibly…..you know learn more about that student…of course I wouldn't qualify that as professional development.

Researcher: number 5 do you have any additional professional development that you feel you need to improve your collaboration skills?

Number 5 uhmmm….none that I can really think of….no.

Number 2 I think… you know…we can over kill on professional development sometimes….so…?

Number 1 I was going to say I think professional development…you know officially…..go with collaboration you know I guess we can all…..you can always benefit from something….but I think a lot of that….if we talk about it in a different way….is on the job….right then….because students have different needs…so we can sit in professional development and we can lie about collaboration and different things but when it comes right down to it our on the job and here and what we do here on one of one is sometimes….you know collaboration can yes sure help us and benefit us but most of what we do is just in a small school and small setting is here on a one on one basis and what we need to do you know and so that's been the most beneficial here in the classroom and you know for our students.

Researcher: so professional development is really like a trial and error…professional development is like a trial and error…. You have to see what will work.

Qt.8
No responses

Researcher: My chair and I are hoping to develop an action plan that will help high school teachers collaborate more efficiently for the benefits of all student success and you guys are going to be a part of helping develop such a plan.

Number 6 teachers have to have good relationships….bottom line…..they have to like each other.

Number 5 absolutely!

Number 8 if you can go to anyone else on the faculty and just tell them where your issues are….what going on…..ask them for help with something…that's the best thing you can do and learn

Number 9

Researcher: okay let me ask you this then….because that what the literature states….you have to have a good relationship…..it's best to work with someone you are comfortable with…but what if you are paired with someone you are not comfortable or you can't get with someone you are comfortable with or like working with….you think having roles…I know my roles you know your roles….you think that would work?

Number 2 absolutely.

Number 4 it's not about us….it the kids….we're supposed to help…so we got to put aside each other's attitudes and do what we gotta do…

Researcher: exactly! So…so…so...roles would help…right? I may not like you but I know what to do.

Number 4 we hear to do a job.
Number 1 I think necessarily even on roles of not liking….a lot of that is that I'm not taking on the role as number 2….you know special education teachers are not core teachers….so when we're in a classroom we know what role….you know what role we can play so sometimes that's more and sometimes that's less.

Researcher: but what I'm saying is if you…if you are in a general education teacher's classroom and that teacher may not want you in there…but if you knew your role…don't you think that would work?

Number 1 I have been collaborating for nine years and I have not encountered a single problem….but yea where that's ever been a problem.

Number 9 I would say yes that would be true but I can't imagine any general ed classroom not wanting help.

Number 8 I've been in great big giant schools where as soon as that lady walks in the general teacher starts rolling their eyes….and walking away…and why are you in my way?....why are you in my classroom? I have seen this I know why she's asking…because other schools need help with this because they do despise having another teacher in their classroom.

Number 9 I will go on record and say I love having help in my classroom!.....

Number 3 I would say amen

Researcher: but guys do say roles would help if you don't like a person

All participants: Yes ma'am

Researcher: Thank you so much for your time…I really do appreciate you guys! Love your school!

Appendix D

Action Plan

Action Plan

I. Introduction

1. Objective: Teachers will appreciate the value of collaboration.
Action steps:
a. The facilitator will ask question, "How do you respond when some students do not learn?" Teachers will be asked to talk about examples of how they respond when a student is not meeting learning objectives.
b. Teachers will work in small groups, which include general education teachers and at least one special education teacher, to discuss how they might better respond if they worked together. Small groups will be grouped same subject and/or specific to certain age group.
c. The facilitator will provide a different scenario to each small group describing a student who is not meeting a particular learning objective. Teachers will be given time to discuss appropriate strategies, based on input from both general and special education teachers, to help the student make progress. Each group will report back to the large group and the facilitator and other teachers in the session will provide feedback.
Evidence/Outcome: The facilitator will describe new scenarios to each group about a student who is not learning. Teachers will role play appropriate strategies both general and special education teachers could implement collaboratively to help the student learn. Feedback will be provided by the facilitator and other teachers in the session.

2. Objective: Teachers will be able to distinguish between cooperation and collaboration.
Action steps:
a. The facilitator will provide a definition and the importance of cooperation and of collaboration and several examples of each.
b. Teachers will be asked to provide examples of cooperation between general and special education teachers as well as examples of collaboration between each; the facilitator will provide feedback.
c. Teachers will be provided written scenarios and asked to classify which exemplify cooperation between general and special education teachers and which exemplify collaboration. There will be a discussion and feedback based on their responses.
Evidence/Outcome: The facilitator will provide a scenario of a student who is not learning. Teachers will work in small groups to first discuss how they could cooperate to help the student and second to describe how they could collaborate to help the student. Teachers will role play the cooperation and collaboration strategies they discussed. Feedback will be provided by the facilitator and other teachers in the session.

3. Objective: Teachers will be able to distinguish between communication and comprehensive collaboration
Action steps:
a. The facilitator will provide a definition and the importance of communication between general and special education teachers and a definition and the importance of comprehensive collaboration between each as well as several examples of each.
b. Teachers will be asked to provide examples of each; the facilitator will provide feedback.
c. Teachers will be provided written scenarios and asked to classify which exemplify communication between general and special education teachers and which exemplify comprehensive collaboration. There will be a discussion and feedback based on their responses.
Evidence/Outcome: The facilitator will provide a scenario of a student who is not learning. Teachers will work in small groups to first discuss how they could communicate to help the student and second to describe how they could comprehensively collaborate to help the student. Teachers will role play the communication and comprehensive collaboration strategies they discussed. Feedback will be provided by the facilitator and other teachers in the session.

4. **Objective:** Teachers will establish a shared vision and goals
Action steps:
a. The facilitator will explain the importance of why teachers should establish a common vision and goals based on the literature and on the priorities of their school and school district and give examples of each.
b. Teachers will be placed into small groups and asked to work together and provide responses to the question: "When considering vision, what must we become in order to accomplish our fundamental purpose?" Teachers will be given ample time to discuss. Teachers will write their small group responses on chart paper and present them to the entire group. Over the next several sessions, teachers will revisit these responses and come to consensus regarding their shared vision.
c. Teachers will work in small groups to answer the question, "What goals align with our common vision? Teachers will write their small group responses on chart paper and present them to the entire group. The group will decide on 4 or 5 major goals that align with their common vision and are also based on school and district priorities.
d. Teachers will work in small groups to answer two questions, "What instructional strategies should be implemented to help us reach our goals?" and "How should we collaborate to best implement those instructional strategies?" Teachers will write their small group responses on chart paper and present them to the entire group. There will be a discussion of each group's response. The discussion will be led by the facilitator and the facilitator and other teachers will provide feedback regarding each group's written response.
e. Teachers will be placed into small groups and asked to provide written responses to the question: "When considering our goals and instructional strategies, how will we know if all of this is making a difference?" There will be discussion of each group's response. The discussion will be led by the facilitator and the facilitator and other teachers will provide feedback regarding each group's written response.

Evidence/Outcome: Every 3 months, teachers will use student data to assess how well they are meeting their established goals and how, if at all, instructional strategies and collaboration strategies need to be modified to meet the goals. Teachers will share their results with feedback from a facilitator and other teachers in the session.

II. Teachers/Teacher Collaboration: Roles, Role Clarity, Coteaching Model

1. **Objective**: Teachers will be able to implement the coteaching model by demonstrating their respective roles.
Action steps:
a. Facilitator will provide an overview of the coteaching model.
b. Teachers will be asked to discuss roles they perceive the general and special education teacher should employ when the model is implemented.
c. There will be a discussion led by the facilitator of any additional roles each teacher should play based on literature. Examples of each role will be provided by the facilitator.
d. Each small group will be provided three scenarios and asked to classify the roles evident in the scenarios. Small groups will report back to the large group. The facilitator and other teachers in the session will provide feedback.

Evidence/Outcome: Each small group will be provided a classroom scenario that focuses on a diverse group of learners. Teachers will work in small groups to plan how they would employ various roles to implement the coteaching model to address the situation described in the scenario. Each group will role play the plan they developed. Feedback will be provided by the facilitator and other teachers in the session about the appropriateness of the roles demonstrated.

2. **Objective:** Teachers will employ appropriate collaborative roles in their school and classroom setting.
Action step:
a. Each small group will be provided a new classroom scenario that focuses on a diverse group of learners and a student learning objective from their content area.
b. Teachers will work in small groups to plan how they would employ various roles to

implement the coteaching model to address the situation described in the scenario.

c.   Each group will role play the plan they developed. Feedback will be provided by the facilitator and other teachers in the session about appropriateness of the roles demonstrated.

Evidence/Outcome: Teachers will demonstrate working collaboratively in the same classroom employing appropriate roles for sharing responsibilities for planning, instructing, and evaluating instruction for a diverse group of students. Teachers will share in small groups some examples of where they recently in sharing responsibilities, etc. and received feedback from a facilitator and other teachers.

III.   Teacher/Parent Collaboration

1.   Objective: Teachers will demonstrate appropriate collaboration with parents.
Action step:

a.   There will be a discussion led by the facilitator of how to appropriately collaborate with parents.

b.   The facilitator will provide examples based on the literature (such as equality, listening, flexibility, honesty, respectful, commitment, trustworthy, frequent communication, sharing, advocating, etc.).

c.   Teachers will be provided scenarios which focuses on collaborating with parents about concerns regarding their child. Each teacher will explain/discuss how he or she would collaborate with the concerned parent. Feedback will be provided by the facilitator and other teachers in the session.

Evidence/Outcome: Teachers will be provided a different scenario and will role-play how they would collaborate with the parent in the situation described in the scenario. There will be feedback from facilitator and other teachers in the session.

IV.   Collaboration with Related Service Personnel

1.   Objective: Teachers will demonstrate effective collaboration with related service personnel. (Communication and respect)
Action step:

a.   There will be a discussion and explanation of how to appropriately collaborate with various other personnel. The discussion and explanation will be led by the facilitator.

b.   The facilitator will give examples based on the literature (e.g. strategies such as spending time at faculty meetings discussing the contributions of each group and the advantages of shared decision-making or experimenting with various job sharing, which will help the collaboration between general education teachers and paraprofessionals or posting on the school website, an Interactive Collaboration Plan Form (ICPF) used for facilitating communication between the classroom teacher(s), paraprofessional and related service personnel (designed for assisting teacher(s) with planning an inclusive lesson for all students with special needs). The proposed ICPF would enhance effective collaboration, communication and respect with related services personnel and others involved in inclusive practices).

c.   Teachers will work in groups and be provided scenarios of students needing services of related service personnel and others (e.g. school counselor, nurse, paraprofessional, etc.) as well as the need for assigning responsibilities for and supervising paraprofessional educators and be asked to provide written responses regarding how they would collaborate in the situation described. Teachers will discuss their responses and feedback will be provided by the facilitator and other teachers.

Evidence/Outcome: Teachers will be provided a scenario of students needing the services of related service personnel and will role play how they would collaborate with the related service personnel while being observed by facilitator. The facilitator and other teachers in the session will provide feedback.

V.   Collaboration in the Classroom
1.   Objective: Plan a lesson(s) for instruction that include both general and special education

teachers' roles.

Action step:

a. The facilitator will provide a description of the students in a class including the number of general education students, the number of students with disabilities, and a description of what the students' disabilities are.

b. Teachers will select an objective from their content area on which to focus the lesson and will work in teams in which there is a general education teacher and a special education teacher to plan appropriate instructional strategies that will lead all students to achieve the objective.

c. Each team will come back in front of the entire group and role play the lesson that they have planned. The other teachers in the session will observe their role playing and will be asked to identify the roles they see the teachers playing. Also, the facilitator will ask the teachers to discuss the appropriateness of the instructional strategies.

Evidence/Outcome: Teachers will plan a different lesson to teach to their actual class focused on a different lesson and objective that will meet the needs of the students that are in their actual class. Teachers will be observed by the facilitator who will provide feedback and there will be feedback from other teachers in the session.

2. **Objective:** Teachers will demonstrate practices offering specialized instruction that will benefit students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Action steps:

a. The facilitator will provide different written scenarios to each team. The scenarios will consist of students with various disabilities in an inclusion setting.

b. Teachers will work in teams demonstrating practices offering specialized instruction that will benefit students with special needs. Each team will include a general education teacher and special education teacher.

c. Teachers will be asked to describe orally effective and appropriate approaches.

Evidence/Outcome: Teachers will role play freely sharing their knowledge and materials with each other that promote offering specialized instruction as a way of increasing each other's instructional effectiveness. Feedback will be provided by the facilitator and other teachers in the session.