A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF A CO-TEACHING RELATIONSHIP AT A RURAL
HIGH SCHOOL

A Dissertation by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is first and foremost dedicated to my husband, Brad, whose acceptance and support of my constant desire to challenge myself makes everything possible.

It is also dedicated to my three sons Justin, Matthew, and Jarrod for their unconditional love and understanding that "Mom does college."

Lastly, I dedicate this culmination of my educational journey to my parents, Bill and Barbara Ford, for teaching me to believe that anything is possible.

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ABSTRACT

No Child Left Behind and The Education for All Handicapped Children Acts have required schools to educate students with disabilities in new ways. Co-teaching is one model with the potential to unite the traditionally parallel systems of special education and regular education as well as effectively increase outcomes for all students within the general education classroom. This case study specifically examined a co-teaching relationship between a general education and a special education teacher at rural secondary school where students with disabilities were served through traditional pullout and inclusion models.

One special education teacher, one general education English teacher, and the principal of the school provided data that told the story of how a co-teaching relationship developed and of its impact on the teachers and students involved. Research data for this qualitative study were collected through individual and focus group interviews, observations, and a review of pertinent documents. Data analysis consisted of open and axial coding and applying the constant comparative method to determine connections between and among the data collected.

Findings from this study revealed that the teachers grounded the co-teaching relationship in a common belief system and set of experiences. Both teachers experienced an increase in their sense of self and collective efficacy as a result of the growth and development of the relationship. Students with disabilities in their co-taught classroom experienced higher levels achievement as well. Secondary school organizational structures were identified as an important factor when designing and implementing co-teaching relationship.

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CHAPTER 1

In 1968, L. M. Dunn (1968) wrote a now famous article questioning the legitimacy of educating mildly retarded children in separate classrooms. In his article, Dunn called for the abandonment of the special class based on a lack of evidence of the efficacy of such classes. Written within the context of the anti-segregation movement of the 1960's, Dunn's article reflected the desire to end the segregated nature of separate classes for students with disabilities (Semmel, Gerber, & MacMillan, 1994). Though criticized for lacking scholarly rigor, the article served as a catalyst resulting in an ideological emphasis on special education students' access to general education (Kavale & Forness, 2000).

Seven years after the Dunn article, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed ("Education For All Handicapped Children Act," 1975). The fundamental mandates of the law were a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and least restrictive environment (LRE) (Kavale, 2002). LRE is a legal principle requiring students with disabilities to be educated as closely as possible to the regular education environment provided to their non-disabled peers (Osborne & Dimattia, 1994). It was included in the law to prohibit the practice of segregating special education students by placing them in special facilities or in classes that were located in isolated areas of the school building (Osborne & Dimattia, 1994). While the intent of the law was to provide the opportunity for special education students to be integrated with their regular education peers, many students with disabilities remain segregated through the use of pullout and categorical placements. The current authorization of the law is known today as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act ("Individuals With Disabilities Improvement Act," 2004). Through its many revisions, the requirement to provide the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities remains a cornerstone of this law (Smith, 2005).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act provided opportunity under the law for students with disabilities to be educated with their non-disabled peers, but the definition and implementation of LRE has continued to evolve. In 1996 Lipsky and Gartner reported the pattern of placing students in the least restrictive environment showed about one-third of special education students served in the regular classroom, about one-third served in special education resource rooms, and about one-third educated in more restrictive categorical classrooms. In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education reported almost 47% of students with disabilities spent less than 21% of their time outside of the general education classroom (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2000). By 2007, the number of students with disabilities spending less than 21% of their time outside the general education classroom had risen to almost 50% (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2007).

Increasing opportunities for students with disabilities to be included in the educational settings of their non-disabled peers has resulted in the restructuring of service delivery models in many schools (Thousand & Villa, 1989). From the most restrictive categorical placement of special education students in special day schools to the recent debates on total integration within the regular education classroom, the discussion of the most effective means to educate children with disabilities continues (Zigmond, 2003).

While the Education for All Handicapped Children Act emphasizes that LRE is a set of services and supports and not a particular place, the emphasis by special education advocates on gaining access to general education has resulted in a focus on setting (Kavale, 2002). Equally important are the changing roles of special and regular education teachers that accompany inclusive education. In 2004, Congress reauthorized IDEA to align with the NCLB requirement that teachers promote success for all students. The laws call for the inclusion of all students in

the assessment and accountability systems used to measure student progress. They also require that all students have access to the regular education curriculum and are included in testing mandated by state and federal policy ("Individuals With Disabilities Improvement Act," 2004; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001," 2002). Inclusive education can provide positive outcomes for students with and without disabilities but it requires significant changes in how classrooms are structured, new understandings of professional roles, and an ongoing need for collaborative teaming (Hunt, Soto, Maier, & Doering, 2003). The existing culture in many schools encourages the individualistic nature of teaching where general education and special education teachers are used to working alone (Janney, Snell, Beers, & Raynes, 1995). Janney (1995) and her colleagues stated inclusive education requires teachers to look at their work in new ways that redefines its purpose, how it can be accomplished, and how the work they do connects with other professionals.

Background to the Proposed Study

The publication of Dunn's article spurred advocacy efforts for special education students to be removed from categorical placements to more inclusive educational environments (Kavale & Forness, 2000). The Education for all Handicapped Children Act, now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, required disabled students be provided a free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment ("Individuals With Disabilities Improvement Act," 2004). It also required disabled students to be educated to the maximum amount appropriate with their non-disabled peers. This concept of least restrictive environment for students with disabilities has evolved through three major initiatives: 1) mainstreaming, 2) the regular education initiative, and 3) the inclusive schools movement (Kavale, 2002). Each

initiative has implications for the roles of special education and general education teachers as key factors in its success.

Mainstreaming

The passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act ("Education For All Handicapped Children Act," 1975) resulted in the mandate that students with disabilities be provided a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Mainstreaming became one placement in the "cascade of services" (Deno, 1970) model that resulted from the law. This model included a continuum of services representing a variety of placements from special education to regular education. The mainstream was a setting that guaranteed students were within at least physical proximity to their regular education peers (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Fernstrom, 1993). Some commonly accepted placements for students with disabilities within the cascade model included the regular classroom, the regular classroom with services from special educators as consultants, and the regular classroom with a portion of the school day spent in a resource room or special class (Fuchs, et al., 1993).

The concept of mainstreaming provided the impetus to make the resource room the primary placement option for students with mild to moderate disabilities (Kavale & Forness, 2000). Kavale and Forness (2000) defined the resource room as a place where special education teachers instruct special education students in academics for explicit time periods. Because these students spend at least half of their school day in the regular education classroom, they are considered mainstreamed. While mainstreaming redefined the physical location within which students with disabilities would receive services, the roles of special educators within the resource room placement and general educators remained separated by traditionally accepted responsibilities (Welch, 1998). According to Welch (1998), mainstreaming efforts typically

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resulted in special and general education teachers working toward related, but separate, goals. Rather than collaborating, these teachers more often accommodated each other through unspoken agreements to allow each to do what they deemed best for the students in their separate spheres.

Mainstreaming addressed the concerns of special education advocates regarding access to regular education environments, but questions remained about how these students should be taught (Kavale & Forness, 2000). A discussion of how to enact higher standards of learning and performance of students with disabilities led to attempts to provide more effective instructional practices and professional development for teachers. Paired with the impetus for more inclusive practices, this became known as the Regular Education Initiative (REI) (Kavale & Forness, 2000).

Regular Education Initiative

In 1985, Madeline Will, then assistant secretary of education, coined the term Regular Education Initiative. It was used to introduce the idea that students with mild disabilities could be served within the general education classroom. The REI called for the unification of special education and general education services for students with disabilities. It posited that general education should assume primary responsibility for all students regardless of their disability because of the following assumptions: 1) students likenesses outweigh their differences, 2) a good teacher can teach all students, 3) general education classrooms can serve all students without segregating them into special education classrooms, and 4) physically separating students with disabilities is discriminatory and inequitable (Davis, 1989; Kavale & Forness, 2000). Proponents of the REI referred to services to special education students at the time as a "second system" that resulted in fragmentation and loss of local control (Wang & Walberg, 1988).

A primary premise of the REI was schools should restructure to accommodate students with mild and moderate disabilities by removing them from special classes and schools and integrating them into general education classrooms on a full-time basis (Wang & Reynolds, 1996). This was to be accomplished by fundamentally restructuring special and general education systems so they became virtually one system (Wang & Walberg, 1988). Another goal of REI advocates was to launch a full-scale effort to mandate that all students would be fully mainstreamed, while the existing system determined the extent of inclusion on a case-by-case basis (Fuchs, et al., 1993).

While advocates of REI argued the structure of special education at the time was flawed, some believed that so was the structure of general education (Davis, 1989). Davis contended that both general and special education teachers had to believe there was a real need to change the current system as well as value the expectations that accompanied the REI. Teacher roles in the REI would have to be redefined to include special education teachers moving into the mainstream and co-teaching with general education teachers (Reynolds, 1989) and the teachers would need to believe it was possible. In 1990, Jenkins, Pious, and Jewell (1990) summarized the REI debate by asking whether the educational system was ready for the structural changes required by the Regular Education Initiative.

Inclusive Schools Movement

The Regular Education Initiative sought to provide more inclusive opportunities for students with mild to moderate disabilities. Advocates of students with more severe disabilities were seeking a transformation within the current system. This transformation would decentralize the separate power structures of special and general education and reorganize the two systems to provide full inclusion for all (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2004). A primary goal of the movement was to

dismantle the previously accepted continuum of services model in favor of full inclusion for all students with disabilities (Lipsky & Gartner, 1991).

Full inclusion advocates believed special education was the cause of many, if not all, of the problems of general education (Skrtic, Sailor, & Gee, 1996). Stainback and Stainback (1992) charged special education had allowed general education to place students not deemed teachable in its setting. They also stated this practice had allowed general education to remain uneducated in how to modify and adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of diverse students. By eliminating special education, general educators would have to transform the existing system to meet the needs of disabled students returning to its classrooms.

During the inclusive schools debates, the changing roles of general and special education teachers were largely ignored (Davis, 1989). Teachers on both fronts were faced with changing philosophical and educational beliefs and practices without participating in the dialogue in meaningful ways. While little literature has described teachers' specific roles, there is emerging research showing that general and special education teachers can co-teach successfully in an inclusive setting (Fennick, 2001; Mickelson, 2008). Much of this research has been conducted at the elementary level. Research on-co-teaching at the secondary level is in shorter supply. This study will add to the research base by describing a co-teaching relationship that has resulted in high achievement for all students and to suggest reasons for their success.

Research Problem

Researchers, policymakers, and educators have long advocated for including special education students within the regular education environment (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996; Stainback & Stainback, 1992; Wang & Reynolds, 1996). However, achieving the goal of full inclusion for all students has proved difficult, as special and general education have not yet developed an

integrated system where they collaborate to strengthen both entities (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989). Co-teaching is one model with the potential to unite the traditionally parallel systems of special education and regular education as well as effectively increase outcomes for all students within the general education classroom (Hunt, et al., 2003). Bauwens and Hourcade (1991) used the term cooperative teaching to describe the relationship between special and general educators where direct programming is provided to all students within the general education classroom.

Although co-teaching is not a widespread practice, there have been pockets of success. For example, a 3-year study by Walther-Thomas (1997) reported that teachers and administrators identified many benefits from the co-teaching model. Benefits for students with disabilities included more positive feelings of their abilities as learners, improved academic performance, better peer relationships, and heightened social skills. General education students were reported to benefit in the areas of improved academic performance, more interaction with teachers, increased exposure to cognitive strategies, and improved classroom communities. The study identified benefits for special and general education teachers as well. These included higher levels of professional satisfaction and more opportunities for professional growth and collaboration.

Despite the evidence of the effectiveness of the co-teaching model, it has not become widespread or common practice in schools. One explanation offered for this is the role that development of collective efficacy among a faculty plays in promoting or prohibiting the development of co-teaching relationships. Collective efficacy is defined as the shared belief among people working toward like goals that they can use their collective strengths to achieve those goals (Bandura, 2000). Studies have authenticated the relationship between teachers'

perceived collective efficacy and its effect on student achievement (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, 2001). Public schools, however, are organized in ways that resist the opportunity to develop collective efficacy by supporting teachers' differentiated roles and the unequal status between classroom teachers and specialists (Kugelmass, 2001). This limits the adoption of collaborative teaching arrangements that can support the needs of special education students in the general education classroom.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the development of a co-teaching relationship in a school setting organized to serve special education students through traditional pullout and inclusion models. The objectives of this study were:

1.   To describe how a co-teaching relationship develops between a regular education and a special education teacher in a high school where special education students are traditionally served through pullout and inclusion models.

2.   To describe how a high school special education teacher and a high school regular education teacher construct collective efficacy beliefs that affect the development, implementation, and sustainment of a successful co-teaching relationship.

Research Questions

1.   How do general and special education teachers in a rural high school perceive a successful co-teaching relationship?

2.   What do general and special education teachers believe facilitates successful co-teaching relationships?

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3. How do general and special education teachers' construct collective efficacy beliefs that affect the development, implementation, and sustainment of a successful co-teaching relationship?

Significance of the Study

Federal and state mandates have called for special education students to be included in regular education classrooms and achieve high academic standards (McLaughlin & Thurlow, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Combining the content knowledge of general education teachers with the adaptive techniques of special education teachers changes the way classes are taught for all students and can increase student learning (Fennick & Liddy, 2001). General education and special education teachers working within a co-teaching classroom can develop a relationship resulting in the belief that they can work together to create an environment where all students achieve. This study will provide additional empirical research on the ways general and special education teachers can create co-teaching relationships within the traditional organizational structures present in most secondary schools today.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 included background of the proposed study, the problem to be studied, purpose of the study, significance of the study, and organization of the proposal. Chapter 2 includes the theoretical framework that informed the study. It provides a review of the empirical and related literature as it relates to co-teaching. Chapter 3 provides information related to the methodology used in the study. It also includes research design, research perspective and purpose, research questions, context, role of researcher, and study participants. Chapter 4 presents a full description of the findings. Chapter 5 provides the conclusions drawn from the findings and implications for further research and practice.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature relative to the study. The first section

discusses social cognitive theory as the overarching framework of this study. The next section

provides details of collective efficacy theory, a micro theory embedded within social cognitive

theory, as the micro theoretical framework within which this study was viewed. A review of the

empirical and related literature provides insight into the existing research on collaboration and

the co-teaching relationships between general and special education teachers. A historical

perspective of the organizational structures of secondary schools and their impact on co-teaching

relationships is presented followed by a discussion of the co-teaching model most prevalent in

the research literature.

Theoretical Framework: Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's social cognitive theory states human functioning is explained by the way

behavior, cognition, and other personal factors interact with environmental events (1986). This

interaction is known as triadic reciprocal causation. Consistent with a constructionist

epistemology, social cognitive theory posits people are not driven by inner forces or shaped by

external stimuli alone. Rather, it is the interaction between the world and the person interpreting

it that shapes behavior and cognition. Social cognitive theory as applied to schools supports the

assertion the perceptions teachers have of themselves and the organization within which they

work influence the actions they take as teachers (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

Agency and efficacy are two specific and intertwined constructs within social cognitive

theory relevant to the study of collaborative co-teaching relationships (Goddard, 2001). Agency

is the ability to intentionally influence one's own life circumstances and the way one functions

within those circumstances (Bandura, 2006). One property of agency is intentionality. Intentionality is the process that occurs when people create action plans and strategies for achieving them. Collective intentionality occurs when there is a commitment to an intention that is shared by a group and action plans are coordinated to realize the intention (Bandura, 2006). Collective agency and intentionality may be affected by the structures existing within an organization. These structures can take the form of people, events, schedules, and expected outcomes. To share a sense of collective agency and intentionality participants must share the same intention and coordinate their actions to successfully realize the intention. Structural barriers can interfere with the smooth coordination of these actions (Bandura, 2001)

Efficacy is the second important construct when applying social cognitive theory to the development of collaborative co-teaching relationships. Self-efficacy refers to the belief of individuals they have the ability to devise and perform the tasks required to attain a specific goal (Bandura, 1997). The role of perceived efficacy has an impact on whether people think as optimists or pessimists, or in an erratic or strategic fashion. It influences the goals people set for themselves and how much effort they put forth to achieve those goals. Perceived efficacy affects how long people will persevere toward the realization of their goals and how much stress they will experience as they cope with the demands of their environment (Bandura, 2000).

Because people do not live as isolated individuals with total autonomy, social cognitive theory expands the idea of self-efficacy to include the concept of collective efficacy (Bandura, 2000). Collective efficacy represents the perception of group members regarding their performance capability as a whole (Bandura, 1997). The shared belief of people they can utilize their collective power to produce the desired results is the essence of collective efficacy (Bandura, 2000). When applying the concept of collective efficacy to the school setting, it can be

described as the belief among teachers that they, as a whole, can plan and perform the actions required to positively affect student achievement (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004). Or in the case of this study, the collective efficacy of special education and general education teachers engaged in a co-teaching relationship.

Collective Efficacy

Bandura (1997) identified collective efficacy as a form of self-efficacy. Collective efficacy is different from self-efficacy in that it is an attribute of a group rather than an individual teacher's self-efficacy beliefs. Collective efficacy beliefs are based on a faculty's perceptions of the group's abilities. Collective efficacy in education has been defined as the collective belief by teachers in a given school in their ability to improve student achievement, regardless of the influences of home, environment, or perceived student abilities (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) emphasized the perceptions and beliefs of teachers in a school determine the effect they will have on student achievement. These efficacy beliefs influence the ways people feel, think, act, and motivate themselves (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Bandura (2000) cited the efficacy beliefs that manifest themselves collectively through group interactions influence participants' feelings of well-being and what they believe they can accomplish as a group.

Bandura (1993) found a faculty's collective sense of efficacy can affect the level at which students achieve academically. His study reported students in schools with a high degree of teacher collective efficacy achieved at high levels on national or state tests of reading and mathematics. He showed the effect of perceived collective efficacy on achievement was actually greater than the link between socio-economic status and achievement. Studies by Goddard et al.

(2000) also showed that collective efficacy beliefs have stronger effects on student achievement than students' prior achievement, race/ethnicity, SES, or gender.

The collective efficacy of a school influences how its teachers deliver instruction, manage student behavior, and inspire and motivate students. Thus, collective teacher efficacy affects student achievement in that higher levels of efficacy lead to more effort and persistence. This effort then leads to higher achievement by students (Allinder, 1994; Ashton & Webb, 1986). The opposite appears to be true, however. Certain student populations are often viewed as underachievers and this view undermines collective efficacy beliefs in the ability to perform at high levels. When a school culture of collective efficacy is established, whether positive or negative, it requires significant effort to change it (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

Schools with high collective teacher efficacy have common characteristics. Bandura (1997) stated schools function based on the academic and social norms established by staff and students. Schools effective in raising student achievement and have high levels of collective efficacy are characterized by challenging benchmarks for student achievement, delivery of instruction for mastery learning, and the belief that all students can reach academic goals set forth. Teachers in schools with a high degree of collective efficacy do not believe low achievement is a result of socioeconomic status, lack of ability, or home environment (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

Four types of information that develop from the interpretation of past experience form collective efficacy beliefs. They are mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and affective states (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) described mastery experience as those times in which individuals experience success and can refer to that success to enable their future endeavors. He identified them as the most influential source of efficacy because they give

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genuine evidence one can achieve goals by learning what it takes to succeed. Goddard and his colleagues (2000) detailed the effects of success on a faculty's sense of collective efficacy by stating successes experienced by a faculty enhance its belief that it can achieve future success. They further state if success is too easy and occurs too frequently, any failures may produce high levels of discouragement. In other words, it requires sustained effort over time to develop a resilient sense of collective efficacy.

Vicarious experience is the second type of information cognitively processed to produce a sense of collective efficacy. This type of experience allows people to assess their abilities in relationship to the success of others (Bandura, 1997). Teachers encounter vicarious experiences through stories of successful colleagues and schools and from observing other organizations. One example of vicarious experience is programs that have proved successful at other schools are replicated to aspire to achieve similar results (Goddard, 2001).

The third type of information influencing the development of collective efficacy is social persuasion. Bandura (1997) frames social persuasion within the idea if influential people within the organization express a belief an individual can achieve a task it becomes more likely they will do so. Social persuasion alone cannot significantly affect collective efficacy, but paired with successful models and positive mastery experiences, it can influence the degree of collective efficacy present within a staff (Goddard, et al., 2000).

Affective states is the fourth type of information influencing collective efficacy. Organizations display affective states and react differently to stressors according to their level of collective efficacy (Goddard, et al., 2000). Schools with high degrees of collective efficacy are more tolerant of outside pressures and crises. They remain able to function in spite of myriad expectations, both reasonable and unreasonable, that often assault schools.

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Collective efficacy can be a predictor of student achievement as well as impact how teachers collaborate to teach all students (Allinder, 1994; Ashton & Webb, 1986). In this study, collective efficacy is the lens through which the ability of general and special education teachers to form co-teaching relationships resulting in achievement for all students was viewed.

Review of the Research and Related Literature

The review of the research and related literature pertinent to this study discusses the evolution of co-teaching, both as a philosophical concept and within the empirical studies related to its implementation. The review includes the benefits and necessary conditions of co-teaching as defined by the empirical research base. An explanation of the research on the relationship between co-teaching and achievement for special and general education students is presented. The review culminates with a discussion of the historical foundation of secondary schooling and the influence of their organizational structures on contemporary co-teaching efforts.

Co-Teaching

As a result of the debates over mainstreaming and the regular education initiative, a national trend developed to attempt to place special education students in general education classrooms (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Suggestions for new special education service delivery models began to emerge to accommodate the trend (Creasey & Walther-Thomas, 1996). Collaborative consultation (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1994), mainstream assistance teams (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bahr, 1990) and cooperative teaching (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989) were well-known examples. A common characteristic of these models is their emphasis on assisting students with academic and behavioral needs by providing supports within the general education classroom. The philosophical underpinnings of cooperative teaching began with Bauewens, Hourcade, and Friend's (1989) definition of it as an educational approach used by

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general and special education teachers and includes joint planning and teaching of heterogeneous learners within an integrated setting. In this model both general and special education teachers are present at the same time and are simultaneously responsible for specific classroom instruction.

Bauwens et al (1989) described three primary components of cooperative teaching: 1) complementary instruction, 2) team teaching, and 3) supportive learning activities. The complementary instruction component occurs when general education teachers maintain primary responsibility for specific subject matter and special education teachers concentrate on helping students learn the survival skills necessary to master the subject matter. Team teaching is described as general and special education teachers jointly planning and teaching the academic content to all the students. The supportive learning activities approach is defined as general educators teaching content and special educators implementing activities that supplement and support the general education content.

In the 1990's, Cook and Friend (1995) shortened the term cooperative teaching to co-teaching. They believed co-teaching was an approach with the potential to help all teachers meet the growing demands of students with disabilities as they became integrated into the regular classroom. Basing their recommendations on the mostly anecdotal records of successful co-teaching partnerships (Adams & Cessna, 1991; White & White, 1992), Cook and Friend also expanded the co-teaching concept by developing a more specific definition and delineation of components. In their definition, co-teaching consists of two or more educators, one of whom is the general education teacher, and one or more educators who could be a special education teacher or a related service provider. General educators have expertise in the curriculum taught

in the classroom and special educators can identify specific needs of individual students and enhance the curriculum to meet these needs.

An important aspect of Cook and Friend's definition is each educator is responsible for delivering substantive instruction. Both teachers are actively involved with the students and neither is serving as a monitor. The third part of their definition states co-teachers work together in a general education classroom that consists of a diverse group of students. Members of the classroom include general education students, students identified for special education services, and students who may benefit from the co-teaching model, but are not served through an individual education plan.

When the co-teaching concept was in its early stages, Cook and Friend described five variations of the model (1996). These were 1) one teach-one assist where one teacher takes the role of instructional leader and the other assists students as needed, 2) station teaching, where the room is divided into areas that each student travels to in order to receive segments of the curriculum from the teachers, 3) parallel teaching where teachers plan together but each takes responsibility for half of the class, 4) alternative teaching in which students are organized into a large group and a small group and the teachers assign who will work with each group, and 5) team teaching where both teachers take turns in leading instruction.

Researchers have pointed to the team teaching model as the variation of co-teaching that provides optimum benefit to students and teachers (Dieker, 2001; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & Mcduffie, 2007). Over time, however, the one teach-one assist model emerged in the research literature as the prevalent model in the co-taught classrooms studied (Scruggs, et al., 2007). There are a variety of reasons why this has occurred that are discussed later in this chapter.

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Cook and Friend (1995) developed a rationale for implementing the co-teaching model as a way to successfully include special education students in the general education classroom. First, co-teaching is a means to increase instructional opportunities for all students. It has been suggested merging the strengths of two professionals with different areas of emphasis allows them to meet the diverse needs within the classroom (Bauwens, et al., 1989). Second, the intensity and integrity of students' instructional programs can be improved. Special education students do not have to lose instructional time due to transitions to pullout settings and they can generalize their learning to the regular education curriculum more effectively. Third, the stigma experienced by special education students can be reduced or eliminated. In order for this to occur however, the students are taught the regular education curriculum with modifications and supports and are not pulled to a side of the room to receive instruction. Fourth, teachers can experience higher levels of professional support and efficacy, which leads to improved teaching performance and better opportunities for student achievement.

Co-Teaching Benefits

Co-teaching, with its roots in active and ongoing collaboration between general and special educators, promises benefits for students with and without disabilities as well as for general and special education teachers (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Participants in empirical studies have reported benefits for students with disabilities included increased self-confidence, higher academic performance, and improved social skills and peer relationships (Austin, 2001; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Pugach and Wesson (1995) reported students in the classrooms they studied believed they had immediate access to their teachers, which allowed them to be more successful. General education students in the classroom did not readily identify students with learning

disabilities. This finding indicates co-teaching classrooms may be able to transcend barriers that create permanent classes of higher- and lower-achieving students.

Benefits also exist for general education students and students who struggle academically but do not qualify for special education services. The study by Pugach and Wesson (1995) described co-teaching environments that allowed teachers to create flexible groups to provide improved instruction for general education as well as special education students. Teachers in the study were able to model cooperation and conflict resolution, which fostered better peer relationships among students in the classrooms. In Walther-Thomas' (1997) study of 23 co-teaching teams, participants reported low-achieving students in co-taught classrooms achieving better than those in traditional classrooms. They concluded an additional teacher in the classroom was able to increase the individual attention and monitoring low-achieving students received. Additional benefits for general education students were improved knowledge of strategies and study skills, better social skills development, and creation of classroom communities where students felt a sense of belonging.

Research has shown general and special educators benefit from co-teaching classrooms as well (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Co-teachers reported a greater level of teacher efficacy and professional satisfaction they are reaching all students. Co-teachers also believed the experience of working closely with a colleague, though requiring hard work, allowed them to expand their knowledge of and skill in new teaching strategies. In addition, the teachers in Walther-Thomas' study acknowledged that collaboration across professionals engaged in co-teaching was increasing in their school.

Co-teaching and Student Achievement

Philosophical and empirical literature exists to support the use of co-teaching as a model for increasing students' self-confidence and social skills development (Austin, 2001; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Alternatively, the research base supporting its impact on student achievement is limited. Welch, Brownell, and Sheridan (1999) reviewed 23 qualitative and quantitative studies of co-teaching and school-based problem-solving teams. They concluded the literature supports teaming, or co-teaching, in terms of teachers' receptivity toward sharing responsibility for special education students. However, their comprehensive review of the literature also supported suggestions from other researchers (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1996; Reinhiller, 1996) that the existing research base was limited and did not reflect positive student academic outcomes.

While early studies of co-teaching and its effect on student achievement are few, more recent research has provided evidence that co-teaching can result in increased student achievement (Mickelson, 2008; Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002). In their study of learning disabled students in a co-teaching classroom, Rea and her colleagues concluded students with disabilities who were included in general education classrooms showed higher achievement than students in pullout programs (2002). Mickelson's (2008) study of a co-teaching relationship in an elementary school determined students taught in a co-teaching classroom successfully met outcomes in the reading and language arts curriculum for three consecutive years.

Successful Co-Teaching Conditions

Co-teaching can benefit students and teachers, and specific conditions facilitate its implementation. A study by Vaughn, Schumm, and Arguelles (1997) found shared beliefs is a fundamental condition for successful co-teaching. Successful co-teachers shared the overriding philosophy of teaching and learning including the belief in the ability of all children to learn.

Friend and Pope (2005) also stated a condition for successful co-teaching is educators who embrace the belief system that all students, regardless of ability, are members of the school community. They stressed successful co-teaching occurs when all the professionals within a school share responsibility for all students. Successful co-teachers believe in their ability to help every student.

Interpersonal communication is also a key to effective co-teaching relationships (Gately & Gately, 2001). In a study of resource programs for 6th through 8th grade students, Karge, McClure, and Patton (1995) concluded teachers in a co-teaching relationship need to have strong communication skills. In the early stages of co-teaching, communication may be guarded as teachers learn to interpret each other's verbal and non-verbal messages. At the second stage, teachers begin to give and receive ideas and develop respect for differences. At the collaboration stage, teachers have developed their interpersonal communication skills so they can serve as models for their students (Gately & Gately, 2001). These skills include the ability to listen, be open to new ideas, and to compromise when necessary.

Based on their research, Cook and Friend (1995) identified several recommendations for creating conditions to ensure successful co-teaching relationships. Special and general education teachers working together in co-teaching relationships collaborate in all areas of the education process (Lynne Cook & Friend, 1995). When studying a collaborative relationship between 8th grade special and regular education teachers, Bouck (2007) concluded partners in the co-teaching relationship determined how they can assume interchangeable roles within the classroom. They collectively assessed student strengths and weaknesses, established learning goals, designed teaching strategies and interventions, and agreed on assessment of student progress. All these

occurred within an environment of parity, where the general and special education teacher are

held in equal status and esteem (Lynne Cook & Friend, 1995).

In addition to the philosophical and relational aspects of co-teaching, systemic conditions

within schools can be designed to maximize success. A common concept throughout the research

literature is scheduled planning time (Lynne Cook & Friend, 1995; Walther-Thomas, 1997;

Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996). Teachers in Walther-Thomas' (1997) study stated they

needed at least one hour per week in which to plan. This can be problematic at the elementary

level due to the fragmented schedules in place at many schools. Middle school teachers in the

study reported fewer planning problems, as their schedules accommodated two planning periods

per day. Other studies of co-teaching at the secondary school level indicate that finding common

planning time can be challenging and time allotted for co-teaching planning gets pushed aside for

other issues (Keefe & Moore, 2004; Mastropieri et al., 2005).

Dieker's (2001) study of middle and high school teams identified planning time as a

critical component of effective co-teaching. Teachers in the study felt that two, rather than one

hour of planning time would provide more opportunity for them to adequately address the needs

of their students. They also cited frequent interruptions to scheduled planning time interfered

with their ability to be effective co-teachers. In a study of 69 elementary and secondary schools,

Vaughn, Schumm, and Arguelles (1997) found having a daily scheduled planning time was

necessary for teachers to discuss ways to meet the needs of all children and give definition to

their specific roles and responsibilities before, during, and after the lesson.

Another area found to be essential to success for co-teaching classrooms was professional

development. Cook and Friend (1995) cited professional development as a critical component of

preparing teachers for a co-teaching relationship. They stated successful co-teachers are prepared

and trained in the areas of communication and collaboration, including how to jointly deliver instruction to students. Co-teachers would benefit from gaining knowledge in specific curricular areas if needed. Cook and Friend (1995) also stated professional development is crucial when teachers are in actual co-teaching situations. A study by Walther-Thomas (1997) affirmed these findings when teachers in her study requested staff development in the areas of scheduling, developing co-planning and co-teaching skills, and enhancing interpersonal communication skills.

Administrative support plays a key role in the success of educational initiatives (Fullan, 1991) and also appears to be important to the success of the co-teaching relationship (Lynne Cook & Friend, 1995; Walther-Thomas, 1997). According to Cook and Friend (1995), administrators can support co-teaching relationships by providing planning time and staff development. They can also help co-teachers in planning programs and supplying them with resources that allow them to design and reflect on instructional strategies. In Walther-Thomas' (1997) study, participants stated the principal's interest and support for their efforts was instrumental in developing and sustaining their co-teaching relationships.

Organizational Influences on Co-teaching at the Secondary Level

While a significant amount of research exists about co-teaching at the elementary level, there is a scarcity of such research at the secondary level (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). Co-teaching at the secondary level presents unique challenges. In order to fully understand the scope of these challenges it is helpful to have a historical perspective of how secondary schools evolved. Included in this perspective is how the organizational structures present in most

secondary schools today came about and their continued influence on the development of a co-teaching relationship.

Secondary Schools and Industrial Age Institutions

In order to understand the influence that secondary school organizational structures have on the effectiveness of co-teaching, it is first important to understand how schools were originally organized around industrial age assumptions and why that model was chosen. Doing so illuminates why secondary schools are often so resistant to implementing organizational changes that could improve student learning. This includes a brief history of why most attempts at organizational reform for secondary schools have not been long lasting.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the nation was fully immersed in the industrial age where factory-made products were improving the lives of its citizens in dramatic ways. The education system of that time viewed these products and the manner in which they were produced as the ideal paradigm on which to build their public education model. Senge and his associates (Senge et al., 2000) contended this model was the most striking example of a complete institution modeled after the assembly line present in the factories of the time. As in an assembly line, students were sorted according to age and departments and were expected to move to the next stage of assembly after they had completed the required modifications, i.e. skills. Each group of students was supervised by a teacher who was responsible for ensuring all students gained the required skills. The teachers had to know what each student needed in order to be polished enough to move to the next stage of the assembly line (Tyack & Tobin, 1994).

From this industrial model of schooling came the testing procedures still in use today. Influential people of the times implemented standardized testing to illustrate the poor performance of students, even though the tests did not adequately measure what the students

were taught. Instead it became a call for all schools to produce a standardized product, which the public believed was needed to provide the labor required for industry. This model and its emphasis on the belief that students could be taught in ways that mirrored factory products did create more laborers (Tyack & Tobin, 1994). But it also created many of the problems that schools still face today.

The industrial model of schooling sorted students into groups of those who could learn in the approved way and those who could not. Those who could not dropped out (fell off the assembly line) or continually struggled to keep up. This model also created what was the accepted norm for learning and valued uniformity above creativity. Teaching became the focus for schools and the responsibility for learning was dropped onto the backs of the students (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

In the early 1900s, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching was poised to receive a gift of $10 million to be distributed among deserving retired college professors. The trustees of the foundation looked upon this as an opportunity to unify and standardize secondary and higher education, thus raising standards for each institution. The trustees eventually designed criteria that each institution must meet in order to be considered a school of high quality. These criteria included a standard unit of measure of the time students spent in school and the credits they would receive for that time. This measure was, and is still known today as, the Carnegie unit (Tyack & Tobin, 1994). The Carnegie unit ultimately resulted in state standardizations of departments taught by specialized teachers, courses that were required for completion of secondary schools, and the amount of time students were required to spend in each class. Although this model was created over a century ago, it is still the overwhelming one in use in secondary schools today.

When examining the way 21st century secondary schools are structured it might be surprising to see how closely they remain tied to the industrial age model. Students are still sorted by age (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) and thrust into classes that teach content separate from any other subject. Teachers in many secondary schools retain the role of supervisor and are responsible for covering curriculum and maintaining order. Assessment is used to determine success, and it is often in the form of one high-stakes test. Schools also run on a rigid schedule of daily time allotments and bells to insure uniformity (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Secondary Schools as Bureaucratic Institutions Resistant to Change

Secondary schools may remain tied to the industrial model of schooling, but they are also heavily influenced by bureaucratic systems that imposed bonds that are hard to break. Darling-Hammond (1997) discussed four symptoms of the excessive influence of bureaucracy on schools. They are 1) the lack of flexibility for individual schools to allocate resources to meet student needs, 2) the lack of flexibility at the classroom level to determine the content, teaching materials, and strategies most effective for that group of students, 3) creation of content-area specific and specialized teachers that limit the scope of learning and the types of relationships they can develop with students and 4) the increased paperwork required by mandates and reporting systems.

Darling-Hammond believes these bureaucratic influences prohibit true school reform (1997). Instead of allowing schools to create systems where learning is designed around students' unique learning styles, they must follow prescriptive practices that actually impede learning. When teachers believe students need specialized instruction the paper trail they must follow often takes months to complete. Darling-Hammond cited the top-down decision-making

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processes required in a school bureaucracy prohibit schools from being truly responsive to student needs. For many secondary schools, these bureaucratic impediments become insurmountable when attempting to create new ways of teaching and learning.

In the face of this adherence to a decades-old model and the bureaucratic restrictions in place, schools have been questioned about their effectiveness. Schools are challenged by international comparisons as to whether they are producing students who can compete on a worldwide level. While a public outcry about failing public schools has resulted in a plethora of reform initiatives, most of these efforts to reform the industrial age structure of secondary schools have failed. The reason for the failure of so many reforms is tied directly back to the very systems that support school organization.

Tyack and Tobin (1994) analyzed three major reform efforts from the 1920s to the 1960s and compared them to late 19th and early 20th century efforts to standardize public schooling. They found early reforms were designed and implemented by officials who had authority positions and were considered experts in scientific management. They used their political influence to garner support for their cause and were able to enact legislation that further supported the design they wished to impose. Over time, educators have learned to work within the parameters set forth by these early reformers. This model of schooling has become familiar for generations of teachers, parents, and students. The predictable nature of public schooling today allows teachers to perform the tasks required of them: managing student behavior, providing instruction to a heterogeneous group of students, and sorting students to allow them to assume specific roles in school and in life. It also allows educational leaders to assure parents that their children are attending an institution that is standardized to provide the right education for their child.

Efforts to change this embedded nature of schooling have been, and continue to be, met with resistance. Tyack and Tobin (1994) cited two reasons for this. First, initiators of these reforms are often disassociated from the political aspects of challenging the status quo. While they may gain the support of some of their professional peers, they fail to take into account the opinions of school boards and parents. These groups often look at reforms as interfering with what schools should look like. They fear changing the structure of their schools will result in failure for their students.

Another reason that reforms often fail is the amount of energy required to make real changes. Significant change requires significant alterations to existing organizational structures. Teachers who are asked to make these changes are required to not only add new ways of doing things to their teaching repertoire, but also to replace existing behaviors and practices with new ones. Unless they are convinced that the new way of doing things is a benefit to them and their students, they are not likely to completely embrace the change.

Secondary Schools' Impetus For Change

Experts on change and school reform believe that the time is ripe for a dramatic shift from the industrialized and bureaucratic model to a more student-centered model. Senge et al (2000) cite several reasons for this belief. First, the assembly line process of schooling is showing significant signs of breaking down. External stressors such as high stakes testing are pushing the limits of what the traditional school structure can accommodate. There is a constant bombardment from both government and the private sector to improve schools and insure that graduates are ready for a world economy.

Secondly, the need for a diverse work force has changed the focus of the type of graduates required. The industrial model prepared students for jobs that were primarily blue

collar. Women were expected to be homemakers and not enter the work force with the exception of the traditional jobs filled by women. Students who dropped out of school found jobs in labor. Today's job market is heavily dependent on skilled workers who have post-secondary training. There is no longer a place for large numbers of unskilled labor. Many secondary schools are revising their curriculum offerings to provide this specialized training so that their graduates can enter the workforce immediately upon leaving high school.

Lastly, schools no longer hold a monopoly on how students gain information. Growth in technology and the immediate access by students to a wealth of information could make traditional schooling obsolete. Today's teenagers have the world at their fingertips and can get instant answers to questions, find research to complete assignments, and communicate with teachers and peers that completely breaks down the physical walls of a traditional high school. When they enter the doors of the traditional high school, their real world is left behind. It is when they leave school at the end of the day that their real world returns.

The structure of most secondary schools is deeply embedded with generations of traditions that are difficult to change. The organizational structures in place can create barriers to innovative practices such as co-teaching. An understanding of these structures and their impact on reform efforts can help clarify how to develop a co-teaching relationship within the walls of a traditional high school.

Organizational Impediments to Co-teaching at the Secondary Level

Secondary schools are often organized substantially different than elementary schools. This organizational structure can create impediments to effective co-teaching that are unique to the secondary school setting. One issue for secondary schools is the need to cover a large amount of curriculum within a defined amount of time. Related to that issue is the link between

curriculum mastery and high stakes testing. In order to meet the achievement requirements of No Child Left Behind secondary schools may choose to provide timelines and content scope and sequence outlines for teachers to follow. These documents assume if teachers cover the entire curriculum indicated then all students will be ready for state-mandated end-of-year tests.

High stakes testing has been identified as a key factor for how instruction takes place in secondary schools (Mastropieri, et al., 2005). Teachers in the Mastropieri study believed they were under pressure to cover required course content rapidly in order to prepare their students for the end-of-year assessments. This quick instructional pace left minimal amount of time to do review activities or to modify the curriculum. In these cases, the general education teacher maintained control of teaching the course content and the special education teacher had less time to implement modifications for students to use during the co-taught class.

A rapidly-paced curriculum can lead to conflict between the general education and the special education teacher in the co-taught classroom because they each might have different goals (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). The general education teacher feels the need to cover all curriculum in preparation for the end-of-year assessment while the special education teacher may be trying to determine how best to meet the individual learning needs of students with disabilities. Meeting these needs does not always include being able to master all curriculum content in time for the test.

Block scheduling is a factor directly related to how curriculum is delivered in co-taught classrooms and is unique to secondary schools. Block scheduling was popularized in the 1990s in an effort to provide more time for secondary students daily rather than split the time between a five-day week (Retting & Santos, 1999). The advantages of block scheduling for co-taught classrooms are increased flexibility, more hands-on instruction, and additional instruction time.

In contrast, if teachers do not change their instructional practices to accommodate this increased time, students with disabilities can find themselves in a classroom for a substantially longer period of time with less support (Dieker & Murawski, 2003).

Another scheduling issue that can arise in secondary schools revolves around the creation of the master schedule. In a typical high school, the master schedule attempts to match students with courses that reflect their abilities and career paths (Oakes & Guiton, 1995). The master schedule may interfere with, not only the equitable distribution of students among classes, but how students are placed in co-taught classrooms.

Gerber and Popp's (2000) study of elementary, middle, and high schools engaged in co-teaching showed that scheduling strategically was a key to the success of the co-teaching partnerships. Participants in the study stated scheduling should be done after all students needs and interests were examined. They should then be assigned to co-teaching teams based on that information. For secondary schools this becomes problematic due to the large number of students and courses that must be scheduled.

Organizational structures leading to mastery of curriculum, high-stakes testing, and scheduling of students to match classes offered can affect the development of a co-teaching relationship at the secondary level. All of these factors have been identified as important to consider when establishing a co-teaching relationship at the secondary level. In addition to these factors, the research literature reveals that the development of co-teaching relationships at the secondary level is heavily influenced by teachers' educational backgrounds and their knowledge of course content.

Teachers entering into a co-teaching relationship have a variety of models from which to choose (L. Cook & Friend, 1996). When reviewing the research literature there is evidence that

the one teach-one assist model is found most often in secondary school co-teaching relationships (Scruggs, et al., 2007). The prevalence of this model is linked to the influence of organizational structures present in many of today's secondary schools.

One Teach-One Assist: Pros and Cons of a Common Co-teaching Model

Organizational structures play a role in how co-teachers at the secondary select the co-teaching model they wish to use. As they maneuver through this process, two areas particular to co-teaching at the secondary school level emerge. They are teacher preparation and content area specialization. It has been found that teacher beliefs about these two elements affect model they select and the roles that co-teachers assume. These can both influence the success or failure of the co-teaching experience (Dieker & Murawski, 2003).

In a metasynthesis of co-teaching research, Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007) found that the most prominent co-teaching model used in secondary co-taught classrooms was that of one teach-one assist. In this model the general education teacher assumes the lead teacher role and is responsible for most all instruction. The role of the special education teacher is to provide support as needed. In a review of 23 studies by Weiss and Brigham (2000) they found the special education teacher in both elementary and secondary classrooms was most often responsible for making modifications to instruction and assignments, managing student behavior, and tracking student progress. Additional case studies confirm that in the one teach-one assist model the general education teacher most often assumes the role of curriculum expert and assumed the dominant role of teacher in almost all cases (Mastropieri, et al., 2005).

Rice and Zigmond (2000) established a set of criteria for a co-taught classroom and then conducted a study of 17 secondary teachers involved in co-teaching to see if they met the established criteria. The criteria they looked for in co-taught classrooms were sharing one

teaching space with a heterogeneous group of students, sharing responsibility for planning and instruction, and substantial teaching by both general and special education teachers in the classroom. None of the co-teaching classrooms they observed met all established criteria.

When delving for a reason that explained the prevalence of the one teach-one assist model, studies revealed that teachers had a perception that each teacher had a specific skill set that should be drawn upon (Scruggs, et al., 2007). In many of the studies cited the general education teacher was viewed as having content area knowledge and the special education teacher was believed to have specific skills in adapting instruction, managing behavior, and teaching study skills. These skill sets could then be used to create roles for each teacher.

For many, a perceived lack of knowledge in the secondary school content areas affected the role the special education teacher assumed in the co-teaching relationship. For example, Rice and Zigmond (2000) found teachers in a secondary co-taught class believed the special education teacher did not have the content knowledge necessary to teach the English class. General education teachers in a study by Keefe and Moore (2004) also believed their co-teaching counterparts did not have adequate content knowledge to transition beyond a supervisory role for discipline and assistance to students. A special education teacher in the same study believed general education teachers in co-taught classrooms did not trust the special education teacher to deliver the curriculum as effectively as they themselves could.

In many states, teachers are licensed at the secondary level according to content area endorsement. Dieker and Murawski (2003) found general education teachers in secondary teacher preparation programs are routinely accountable for more content area knowledge than their special education teacher counterparts. In the state in which this study took place special education licensure at the secondary level required a bachelor's degree and a valid license to

teach. In addition, it required the appropriate special education content endorsement and grade level endorsement. This means special education teachers at the secondary level have a content area endorsement as a secondary teacher and then add a special education endorsement following the required coursework (Kansas Department of Education, 2008). In this state, that may mean special education teachers have content area knowledge in only one curricular area among the many available at the high school level.

For special education teachers in a co-teaching relationship, the one teach-one assist model found throughout the literature can lead them to assume a subordinate role. In some studies this occurred because it was presumed that the general education teacher had more content knowledge. But in others the issue of invading another teacher's "turf" became a contributing factor (Scruggs, et al., 2007). Studies of both elementary and secondary teachers have found it can be difficult for special education co-teachers to fit into the general education teacher's classroom. Buckley's study of middle school co-teachers revealed that, while the general education teachers valued their special education partners, they preferred to decide how things were going to be done and wanted to maintain control of their own classroom (2005). Morroco and Aguilar (2002) also found this to be true when researching co-teachers. Special education teachers commented they were entering another teacher's territory and felt they needed to go beyond what the general education partner had to do in order to establish a place for themselves.

Content area knowledge, teacher preparation, and overcoming teachers' feelings their classroom cannot be shared with others are barriers found to have interfered with the development of co-teaching relationships in secondary schools. In addition to these obstacles, the

organizational structures and traditions found in secondary schools can affect how co-teaching teams operate and evolve.

Summary

Chapter 2 included a review of the literature relative to my study. The first section discussed the theoretical framework supporting my study, including the overarching theory of social cognitive theory and the details of collective efficacy theory. The chapter included a review of the empirical and related literature on collaboration and co-teaching relationships between general and special education teachers. It also included a history of secondary school organizational structures and its impact on the development of a co-teaching relationship.

The literature on co-teaching revealed it originated as a service delivery model that would allow special education students to be integrated within the general education classroom on a full-time basis. This early literature focused on definitions and a rationale for adopting the co-teaching model. It also included strategies and approaches teachers could include as they moved into co-teaching classrooms.

Subsequent empirical research concluded that co-teaching could provide benefits for special and general education students and teachers. These included increased self-confidence, higher academic performance, and improved social skills and peer relationships for students and higher levels of efficacy and professionalism for teachers. Although limited in number, studies indicated that students in co-teaching classrooms attained higher achievement levels as well. The literature suggested that additional studies that focused on the effect of co-teaching on student achievement were needed.

Examining the historical traditions associated with most secondary schools revealed they are structured to meet the needs of the general population by categorizing students and placing

them in classes designed to prepare them for future endeavors. The deeply embedded

organizational structures influence how co-teaching relationships are formed, developed and

sustained.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter I explain the research design and methodology of my study. I discuss the context within which my research was conducted. My position as a researcher is defined and the research participants are described. The next items addressed in this chapter are the data collection and analysis methods as well as research quality. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Research Design

A qualitative, single-case study research design was used to describe and interpret how a co-teaching relationship develops between a regular education and a special education teacher in a rural high school. A case study uses empirical inquiry to study a modern-day phenomenon in the context of real life where boundaries between the phenomenon and the real life context are unclear (Yin, 2003). Merriam (2001) describes a case study as a means to deeply understand a situation and its meaning to those involved. In Merriam's view, case studies describe and analyze a single, bounded system where there is a finite amount of data to be collected.

Using a qualitative case study research design for this proposal allowed for the conduct of research within the real-life context in order to describe the experiences of high school general and special education teachers in a co-teaching relationship. Their rich descriptions and my observations of these experiences provided a way to develop a deep understanding of the characteristics that have allowed the co-teaching relationship to develop. Narrowing the study to include only teachers at the research site provided a single, bounded system with a finite amount of data collected.

Emergent design flexibility was embedded within the research design of my study. Patton (2002) described emergent design flexibility as a willingness by the researcher to be open to adaptation as deeper understandings emerge from the research. The researcher is prepared to conform to the fieldwork proposal, but can follow new discoveries as they emerge during the research process. In this study, the researcher began data collection through individual interviews. As each interview was conducted the data was analyzed individually and as it compared to responses from the other participant. During this process questions beyond those prepared on the original interview protocols emerged. The researcher was able to use an emergent design to return to the participants and ask new and provocative questions relating to the emerging findings. Applying the characteristics of emergent design to the qualitative inquiry of this study allowed the researcher to search for the deeper meaning of the influence of relationships on successful co-teaching.

Researcher's Position

Qualitative inquiry is influenced by the belief system from which a researcher approaches the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Stainback & Stainback, 1988). My position as researcher in this study is grounded in the belief system I have constructed during the 26 years of my career in public education. This belief system aligns itself with how information is gathered and interpreted by the researcher. Three philosophical beliefs have guided the construction of this study. First, it is my belief that teachers are the most critical element when planning for student achievement. Second, I believe all teachers can be empowered to teach all students. And third, teachers working together can increase student achievement more effectively than teachers working alone.

My belief system has been influenced not only by my 16 years as a classroom teacher, but also by my 10 years as an elementary school administrator. During my administrative tenure I have been involved in working with general and special education teachers attempting to build bridges allowing them to work together for student achievement. My early efforts to encourage relationship building resulted in a collaborative partnership between regular and special educators where they planned lessons together, delivered instruction in inclusive environments, and used achievement data to drive instruction. However, within three years, the relationship deteriorated to such an extent that personal friendships were sacrificed.

Throughout this process I have retained my core belief that all teachers can be empowered to teach all students. I also still believe that regular and special education teachers working together can have a powerful influence on student learning. I sustain this belief because I witnessed first-hand the process in which it happened. My intense experiences and beliefs about co-teaching have driven my desire to hear the stories of others who have been involved in the co-teaching experience.

Patton stated the instrument of qualitative research is a human being (2002). As such, the perspective of the researcher is unavoidably embedded within the context of the research. Reality in qualitative research is dependent on multiple interpretations by researchers and participants (Merriam, 2001). Coming to the study with experiences that have profoundly shaped my beliefs about the subject of the study brought challenges that I had to overcome. It was imperative during all phases of the study to separate these experiences from the stories participants told and the observations I made.

While my beliefs have structured and informed the study, as researcher I had to apply the concept of empathic neutrality and mindfulness as detailed by Patton (2002). In the context of

qualitative research, empathy can be linked to the phenomenological doctrine of *Verstehen* (Patton, 2002). *Verstehen* equates with understanding and the necessity of the researcher to realize that studies of humans differ from studies of other nonhuman phenomena. As researcher, I must understand participants inhabit a world they have constructed based on their beliefs, values, and cultural influences. During the course of my study it was imperative to follow the *Verstehen* tradition that emphasizes the ability to seek to understand research participants' stories by directly observing and interacting with them. This observation and interaction was followed by the application of empathic introspection and reflection on the data retrieved through these interactions (Patton, 2002).

Research Site and Participants

The research site for my study was Riverview High School in Riverview Unified School District 005 in a Midwestern state. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the superintendent of USD 005 and the principal of Riverview High School prior to commencement of the research. To ensure anonymity for the community, school district, and participants, pseudonyms have been used throughout this document. USD 005 is comprised of five schools. The 2008-2009 enrollment for USD 005 was 1,347 students. Riverview is primarily a Caucasian community with less than 10% of its student population consisting of Hispanics, African-American, or other minorities (Kansas Department of Education, 2009). Riverview is situated in a rural area, approximately 15 miles from a metropolitan city (IDcide, 2009).

Riverview High School is a 9-12 facility serving 563 students. RHS has a principal, one assistant principal, and 2 counselors. There are 35 certified employees on staff at Riverview High School. Among these are teachers in the areas of language arts, science, math and social studies. RHS also has teachers for health and physical education, business and computers, foreign

language, vocational, and the arts classes. Additional certified staff members include special education teachers and related service providers.

Students at Riverview High School are primarily Caucasian (90%) and 12% qualify for free or reduced lunches. 100% of the teachers are highly qualified, as defined by the Kansas State Department of Education (2008). As a group, students at RHS perform at or above state and national averages on state assessments and ACT exams.

The teachers at Riverview High School are organized into departments. There are three to four teachers in the core departments of language arts, math, science, and social studies. Other curricular departments have between one and four members. Special education staff members at Riverview High School are employed by a special education cooperative that coordinates services to nine area districts.

In 2008 two teachers at Riverview High School began an initiative to improve achievement for students with disabilities. The principal at RHS endorsed a request to construct a co-teaching classroom where a special education and regular education teacher shared responsibility for teaching all students within a language arts classroom. This initiative has resulted in a change in the perception of how students with disabilities can be served at Riverview High School. Riverview High School, as the research site for this study, provided rich data to understand how successful co-teaching relationships develop and can lead to positive achievement for all students.

Study participants included one regular education teacher from the RHS language arts department and one special education teacher who worked with students in grades 9-12 in all academic areas. The principal of Riverview High School also participated in the study. Four additional teachers from the English department were invited, but declined, to participate in the

study. Participants attended a meeting with me to talk about the study and expressed their

willingness to participate. Participation in the study by the teachers and principal was voluntary.

Protection of Human Subjects

To insure the protection of human subjects in this study, this proposal was submitted for

approval through Wichita State's Institutional Review Board. All participants were informed of

the purpose of the study and signed a consent form prior to data collection. The consent form

included the purpose of the study, a statement of voluntary participation, information about the

confidentiality of the study, and the option to withdraw from the study at any time. Permission

was sought to audio record interviews.

Data Collection Methods

A qualitative case study design was used to select data collection methods that

would allow participants to share their stories of how their co-teaching relationship developed

and its impact on themselves and their students. The use of multiple data sources allowed the

researcher to triangulate the data collected as well as validate the findings related to the co-

teaching relationship (Patton, 2002). Due to the limited number of research participants,

additional data was collected throughout the study by utilizing an emergent design. This allowed

the researcher to revisit the participants and site multiple times to gather additional data. It also

allowed for member checking assuring accurate interpretation of responses.

Interviews

For this study I conducted one semi-structured individual interview with each of the

study participants in Riverview High School. These interviews occurred over a six-week period

during the spring semester of the 2009-10 school year. Each interview lasted from 45 to 60

minutes, depending on participant responses. An interview protocol was established that

included questions designed to allow people to respond in their own words and to minimize the opportunity for predetermined responses (Patton, 2002). Interview questions can be found in Appendix B. Due to the emergent design of the study, the researcher returned to the research site multiple times to ask for additional information from the participants.

Interviews provided the researcher with the opportunity to see the world from another person's perspective (Patton, 2002). A semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to be free to explore beyond the questions and to guide the conversation spontaneously with the focus on a particular predetermined subject (Patton, 2002). This interview style allowed the researcher to respond to participants' stories as they emerged during the interview (Merriam, 2001). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher engages in a successful co-teaching relationship.

The data collected during the interviews was recorded using a digital voice recorder from which the data was transcribed verbatim using. Notes were also taken to allow for member checking and to facilitate data analysis (Patton, 2002).

Focus Groups

Focus groups can be considered interviews on a specific topic with a small group of individuals (Patton, 2002). A focus group allows participants to hear each other's responses to carefully prepared questions and construct their own response as they synthesize other participants' comments. This allows the researcher to obtain high-quality data in a social context (Patton, 2002). Due to the small number of participants, this data collection method was limited to one focus group. It included the two teacher participants in the study in a group setting. The purpose of the focus group interview was to gather data that allowed me to learn the extent to which the group shared or had diverse views on co-teaching relationships. Questions also allowed the teachers to reflect on how collective efficacy may or may not play a part in

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developing successful relationships (Patton, 2002). The focus group in this study was conducted in a non-threatening environment where participants had a degree of trust in the researcher and each other. Focus group questions can be found in Appendix C. As with the interviews, a digital voice recorder was used to obtain a verbatim transcript of the interview for later analysis.

Observations

Observations as a tool for collecting data in a qualitative case study were used. Direct observation allowed me to approach data collection in an open-ended manner and to discourage any preconceptions I may have had about the research site and/or participants (Patton, 2002).

During this study I used observation to help me understand the context of the co-teaching relationships in place at the research site (Patton, 2002). The observations took place 1 time per week over a period of 4 weeks during the spring semester of the 2009 school year. Observations took take place in the classroom and during teachers' team planning time. Conducting classroom observations allowed me to note teacher engagement with each other and students as well as gain an understanding of the context within which the co-teaching relationship occurred. Observing teachers during planning time gave me the opportunity to understand how teacher interaction impacts the co-teaching relationship. The observations were 1-2 hours in length.

Observation data was recorded using field notes. These notes included but were not limited to written descriptions of the setting, people, and activities using my own words; direct quotations when applicable; and my own comments about the observations (Merriam, 2001).

Documents

Documents relevant and applicable to understanding the development of co-teaching relationships at RHS were reviewed during this study. Such documents provided information about what took place before the study began that might influence the current context (Patton,

2002). Documents reviewed included the school improvement plan, teacher lesson plans, and student achievement data. These documents helped to provide a history of the development of the co-teaching relationship at Riverview High School and helped to inform the researcher of the values and beliefs held by teachers at the research site. They provided insight into what the teachers deemed important and what organizational structures were in place that affected the co-teaching relationship.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was ongoing in nature, as data were collected and analyzed simultaneously (Merriam, 2001). This process allowed the researcher to uncover important information through data collection that at times illuminated a need to revisit the field and collect further data to answer emerging questions. Data collected in this study were analyzed using the constant comparative method. In the constant comparative method, the researcher examined a particular bit of information from an interview, focus group, observation, or document and compared it with another incident. The comparisons led to possible categories that were compared with other emerging categories (Merriam, 2001). Open coding, a method of analysis that creates labels and categories within the data, was applied to the data. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined open coding as studying the data in order to compare, conceptualize, and place the data into categories. Open coding also allowed the researcher to identify patterns that formed categories.

Axial coding was also used to analyze the data. Axial coding enabled the researcher to reconstruct the data and make connections between the categories. By allowing the data to emerge according to the concepts it reveals, the researcher was able to see beyond what their preconceived conceptual plan might have been (Kendall, 1999). The open and axial coding

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methods used in this study were examined in relationship to the theoretical framework of the study to determine proper placement into categories. After a careful analysis of the data and the themes that emerged, a summary of the findings was written.

Research Quality

My observations of the participants in this qualitative single-case study were filtered through my own work with teachers and their efforts to work together to provide quality instruction to all students. I have constructed my own reality of what possibilities and obstacles can occur when attempting such a task. While it is not possible to be completely bias-free, it was important to maintain researcher neutrality throughout the study (Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002). Some ways to assist me in observing teachers through a researcher lens were to cross check and cross validate sources during the interviews and focus groups, ensure my data collection methods were rigorous and systematic, and establish validity and reliability during analysis (Patton, 2002).

An additional way to balance the researcher's assumptions with participants' perspectives during the study was to use a peer debriefer. A peer debriefer is a person who can review the data collected and ask questions about the study that may strike a chord with people other than the researcher (Creswell, 2003). The peer debriefer for my study was a professional who was removed from the study but had an understanding of it. This person supplied me with feedback in order to refine, and possibly redirect, the study as it emerged (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

Practitioners use the results of qualitative research in education to act on the lives of people with whom they work. Because this is so, researchers and consumers of research must have confidence the research has been conducted in a trustworthy and credible manner (Merriam,

2001; Patton, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1986) consider trustworthiness as the degree to which the researcher is able to present a balanced and fair account of the multiple perspectives of the participants. The trustworthiness of this study was ensured through being consistent in the requirements of credibility, transferability, and confirmabilty.

Credibility requires the researcher to apply rigorous methods that produce high quality data. The researcher must have credibility in terms of experience and how they present themselves to the participants. Credibility also requires the researcher to value qualitative inquiry as a philosophical belief (Patton, 2002). My experience as a field study researcher who has conducted qualitative research under the guidance of graduate faculty allowed me to apply credibility to this study.

Transferability occurs when there are enough similarities between two bodies of research that an inference can be made that the results of the research would be the same or similar in their own situation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain transferability as the degree to which two research contexts allow the hypotheses from one context to be applied to the other. Analysis and review of similar research (Mickelson, 2008) was necessary to establish transferability of the findings of this study.

Confirmability establishes that the findings of the data are clearly derived from that data and not merely from the researcher's perspective (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Triangulation of data can provide confirmability of the research findings. Patton (2002) noted researchers can use triangulation of methods and sources to analyze consistency among findings. This study used methods and sources that provided opportunities for triangulation.

Summary

Chapter 3 explained the research design and methodology used for this study. A qualitative single-case study design was employed to describe the development of a co-teaching relationship in a school setting organized to serve special education students through traditional pullout and inclusion models. Voluntary participants in the study engaged in interviews and focus groups in order to discover perceptions of co-teaching relationships. Observations and document reviews provided relevant descriptions of the context within which the study was situated. Data from the research methods were analyzed using the constant comparative method with findings extracted from the resulting themes. Trustworthiness was established by insuring credibility, transferability, and confirmabilty.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Chapter 4 describes the findings as revealed through the analysis of the data collected.

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews with the teachers and

principal involved in the study, a focus group interview with the teachers, and observations of

the co-teaching relationship during teaching and planning. The data were first analyzed using

open coding. Open coding is "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing,

conceptualizing, and categorizing data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher then used axial

coding to reconstruct the data in new ways by making connections between the categories. The

categories emerging from open and axial coding were Foundations of a Successful Co-Teaching

Relationship, Establishing Common Understandings, Building Stronger Teachers, Co-Teaching

and Student Achievement, and High School Culture and Organization.

The constant comparative method of qualitative research analysis provided the way to

construct meaning between and among the categories found through open and axial coding. The

categories that emerged from open and axial coding were integrated by comparing the properties

of the categories. Several themes emerged that revealed the co-teaching stories of participants.

The emergent themes emphasized the complexities existing in a co-teaching relationship that are

influenced by the theoretical underpinnings of this study. This chapter begins with a description

of the research site, Riverview USD 005.

Riverview USD 005

Riverview USD 005 is a rural school district in a Midwestern community. Known as a

bedroom community of a metropolitan city, most of its citizens work outside the city limits.

Riverview has a median household income of $58, 415 per year and 96% of the population is

white (Citydata, 2010). Riverview has a number of amenities not always found in small towns in the area. These include a public library; a community water park, and a health and wellness center. Riverview's reputation as a family-centered community is evident when viewing the fishing ponds, parks, and large outdoor sports facilities. Patrons of the Riverview school district show their support through membership in the local Parent Teacher Organization and the Booster Club. Parents of Riverview students attend parent/teacher conferences, arts and music activities, and sporting events in large numbers.

Riverview USD 005 houses five individual buildings serving students in preschool through kindergarten, first through third grade, fourth through sixth grade, middle school, and high school. The total school population is 1347 students with 20% of its students qualifying for free or reduced lunches. This number compares with a statewide percentage of about 43% qualifying for free or reduced lunches. 92% of students attending school in Riverview USD 005 are white, 3% are Hispanic, 3% are Native American, 1% is African American, and 1% is Asian. 13% of students in the district are classified as a student with a disability (Kansas Department of Education, 2009).

Since 1983, the patrons of Riverview USD 005 have supported the growth of the district in terms of both structural and curricular improvements. During this time period the district has constructed a new elementary school and added on to both the middle school and what was the high school at that time. In 2005 a new high school was built and students were redistributed throughout the district.

Beginning in the early 1990's, the demands of the state's Quality Performance Accreditation and then in 2001, the federal No Child Left Behind Act, were enacted and Kansas public schools were expected to comply. Riverview USD 005 responded by embracing the new

requirements and continues to meet the standards of adequate yearly progress. Recent initiatives the district has implemented include mapping the curriculum to ensure all students have access to a seamless curriculum and a response to intervention system (RTI) at the elementary and intermediate schools. RTI provides an intentional, systematic approach to meeting the needs of students who are not performing to the expected standard. Plans are in place to extend RTI to the middle and high schools in the near future. Riverview USD 005 has a reputation among school district patrons as a successful and innovative district. Each year families relocate to Riverview with a desire to provide a safe, small-town experience for their children. Small class sizes, access to technology, and low incidence of violence in the schools have been cited by patrons as reasons they choose Riverview schools.

Riverview High School

Riverview High (RHS) is dedicated to preparing students to be successful in whatever endeavor they choose to pursue after high school. Its mission statement posted at the main entry is:

> To provide a safe, comfortable environment in which students can develop a positive self-image and learn to be productive members of society. In addition to promoting mastery of the content areas, the administrators, faculty and staff will encourage in students an understanding and respect for life, a refinement of critical thinking skills, an appreciation of culture and the arts, and the ability to communicate confidently and effectively. The faculty and staff will challenge students to seek their potential and assist them in developing the academic and decision-making skills necessary for lifelong learning.

First established in the early 1900s, Riverview High School was housed in a building built during that time period until a new school was built in 1960 and added on to in 1983. In 2001, Riverview USD 005 passed a bond election to build a new high school. The new school was completed in 2005. The current high school is a 65,000 square foot building with an upper and lower level. Each entrance provides a floor to second-story-ceiling view of the school. The building is clean and brightly lit with a combination of natural and man-made lighting. During the 2008-2009 school year the student council led an initiative with a goal of insuring all students at RHS believed it was a school where they felt valued. The student council also wanted to give the school an obvious identity so visitors knew the mission and values of the students immediately upon entering. The school is adorned with many symbols that reflect pride and a desire to create a student-friendly environment. Most of the symbols, including the mascot and quotations reflecting the beliefs of the students and staff, were designed and painted by students.

Students at RHS can commonly be seen wearing school colors in the form of t-shirts and sweatshirts. The various athletic, activity, and academic teams designed their own apparel to reflect the pride they feel for participation in the activity. When visiting the school during passing period students are observed to be friendly and interact with the teachers on hall duty. During lunch period the administration and other supervisors interact with students by engaging them in casual conversations. The overall impression upon entering the school is a place with a positive, student-centered culture.

Riverview High School has an enrollment of 563 students. 51% are male and 49% are female. 90% of students at RHS are white, 3% are Hispanic, and 2% are African American. The remaining 5% are classified within the Native American and Asian categories. Riverview High School has no students classified as English Language Learners or migrant students. Twelve

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percent of students at Riverview High School are classified as being economically disadvantaged and 8% are students with disabilities.

<p align="center">*Organization of Riverview High School*</p>

The organizational structure of Riverview High School is centered on the traditional U.S. comprehensive high school elements of staff, curriculum, and scheduling. These elements drive the educational experience of students at Riverview High School. Each element plays a role in how instruction is designed and delivered.

Staff

The staff at Riverview High School consists of 35 highly qualified teachers with a range of experience. RHS has one principal, one assistant principal who also serves as activities director, and two counselors. There are four math teachers, four language arts teachers, three science teachers, and three social studies teachers. An additional 21 teachers serve in the areas of health and physical education, business and computer science, art, foreign language, family and consumer science, library, and drama. Teacher tenure ranges from non-tenured with less than three years of experience to more than 25 years of experience. The average experience of teachers at RHS is 15 years. Special education providers at Riverview High School include two interrelated teachers and a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing. Special education related service providers include a speech/language pathologist, a physical therapist, and an occupational therapist. The school psychologist serving Riverview USD 005 is also housed at RHS.

Teachers at Riverview High School are structured into teams based on the content they teach. These teams are often referred to as departments and the terms are used interchangeably. Core teaching teams in the areas of language arts, math, history, and science consist of three to

four teachers. Other departments at RHS include business, health and physical education, arts and drama, and industrial arts. Some teachers are in a stand-alone program and are not affiliated with a specific team. Each teacher at Riverview High School is responsible for delivering the curriculum, instruction, and assessment for their content area. Teachers in the core areas of language arts, math, social studies, and science follow a state-standards-based curriculum. Teachers in other departments also follow a state-standards-based curriculum when that curriculum is available. The administration at Riverview High School provides direction for teacher departments as determined by assessment scores. For example, when assessment data indicates student performance is below standards, administration works with that team to identify root causes and to implement changes in curriculum and teaching strategies to address the root cause.

With the exception of the co-teaching classroom described in this study, special education teachers and related service providers follow the traditional combination of inclusion and pullout services found in most high schools. Special educators provide support to students within the regular classroom for most of the day. They pull students from language arts, math, social studies, and science classes to the special education classroom for support as needed. Related service providers pull students out of their classes for speech, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.

Scheduling

Riverview High School follows a traditional high school structure where subject areas are compartmentalized into the core subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies. The school also provides a wide variety of elective classes in technology, business, health and physical education, and the arts. RHS utilizes a block schedule where students attend eight

different classes each semester - four on blue days and four on white days. These days alternate each week so students attend one set of classes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and the other set on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This schedule allows them to attend each class seven times over a two-week period.

Classes at Riverview High School are scheduled on either a one- or a two-semester basis. Classes that take an entire school year to complete are scheduled over two semesters. Most of these classes are in the core subjects of math, language arts, science, and social studies. Students may have a core class scheduled with one teacher the first semester, then change to a different teacher with different classmates the second semester. Teachers in each core subject align their instruction so students who move to a different teacher for the second semester are ready for the same scope and sequence of instruction no matter which teacher they had first semester.

Teachers at Riverview High School follow a schedule in which they teach three 90-minute classes per day. They also supervise a study hall for 45 minutes each day and are provided one 90-minute planning period per day. Their planning periods do not always coincide with other teachers in their department so they are not routinely used for collaboration time. Instead, teachers within each department collaborate and plan on an as-needed basis determined by that department and the administration. Interdepartmental collaboration is reserved for professional development days where teachers are assigned specific times and tasks by the principal and district curriculum director for collaborative activities.

Curriculum

Riverview High School offers a curriculum based on state standards in all areas for which the state provides such curriculum. The core subject areas of language arts, math, social studies, and science are tested annually at the state level. Students tested must demonstrate individually

and as a group adequate yearly progress on the assessments. This progress is measured by a percentage correct for individual students. For groups, a specific percentage of students must score proficient for the standard of adequate yearly progress to be met. These assessments drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the core subject areas at Riverview High School.

The mission of Riverview High School is to provide students with a well-rounded education that will prepare them for the next phase of their lives. To the staff this means not only doing well on state assessments, but also learning content beyond what is expected on the assessment. They believe educating students in the arts, business, health and physical education, foreign language and other electives at RHS is also important. It has been a challenge for teachers and administrators at Riverview High School to balance the need to perform well on state assessments with their overriding philosophy of what constitutes a complete education.

Another challenge for RHS has been to address curriculum needs presented by state assessment data for subgroups within the school. While the percentage of economically disadvantaged students meeting or exceeding proficiency levels over the last two years matches that of non-disadvantaged students, the numbers are not as encouraging for students with disabilities (Kansas Department of Education, 2009). Teachers and administrators at Riverview High School acknowledge the deficiencies for this group of students. They have conducted research into why this occurs and have made some changes in the reading and math curriculum and delivery methods to address this issue.

Inclusive Practices

Riverview High School provides services to the majority of their students with disabilities within an inclusive setting. The school is part of a special education cooperative that serves nine districts in the Riverview area. The cooperative functions as an organization

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accredited by the state to provide special education services for students throughout the nine districts. All special education personnel working at Riverview High School are employed by the cooperative rather than the school district. They are, however, directly under the supervision of administration at RHS. Member districts fund the cooperative. Each district receives funding from the state and then channels funding into the cooperative based on the number of students and teachers in the district.

Students struggling in academics at Riverview High School can be referred to the Student Intervention Team. This team completes a process known as General Education Interventions to design and implement strategies to help those students be successful. If that process fails, a student may be referred for testing by the cooperative's school psychologist working in the Riverview district. Testing may result in placing a student on an individual education plan (IEP) to address a specific learning need. Special education services are then provided to students by cooperative personnel based on their needs as documented in the IEP. Most students attending Riverview High School with an individual education plan are identified as a student with a learning disability. This identification is most often made before they reach high school. As such, they are served in an inclusion, pullout, or combination of inclusion and pullout setting. No students at Riverview High School are served in a self-contained, categorical classroom.

Two full-time special education teachers serve the students with disabilities at RHS. They are assisted by three para-educators. The primary function of the special education teacher is to assist identified special education students by providing them with the support they need to be successful in school. The special education teachers at Riverview High School communicate with the general education teachers of each of their students to insure students are making adequate progress in that class. They coordinate para-educator support as needed for each student

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so he or she has the assistance needed during their time in the general education classroom. The special education teachers pull their students into a resource room for additional instruction as needed, but their goal is for students to be in the general education classroom as much as possible.

In 2007, during the course work for her master's program, one special education teacher at Riverview High School learned about the co-teaching strategy as a means to better serve special education students. She developed an interest in implementing this strategy to see if it could increase the achievement of her students. The teacher approached a regular education teacher whom she felt would be receptive to her idea and they began co-teaching a freshman English class the next year. This relationship continued through the 2009 school year and is expected to be extended into the 2010 school year.

Building the co-teaching relationship and making it work for teachers and students has evolved over the past two years. Many factors have impacted this co-teaching relationship and influenced the ideas and perceptions of the teachers involved. Some have facilitated the hopes and expectations of the teachers, and some have inhibited them. The following sections will illustrate what has enhanced their co-teaching relationship and what they have found puts barriers in the way of what they hope to accomplish.

Creating a Blueprint for Co-Teaching within the Walls of a Traditional High School

Riverview High School prides itself on a long history of academic success based on traditional measures. With a graduation rate of 89%, 92% of graduates responding to a post-graduate survey reported satisfaction with the education provided at RHS one year after graduation. Ninety-four percent of respondents reported satisfaction six years after graduation (Kansas Department of Education, 2009). Over the last three years, 25% of RHS students have

enrolled in advanced classes in math, science, and language arts. The five-year average ACT score for Riverview High School seniors is 21.9 with 76% of eligible students taking the test. Nationally, the average ACT score is 21.1 with 45% of seniors taking the ACT.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 required Riverview High School to begin measuring academic success in new ways. In compliance with No Child Left Behind, RHS has made adequate yearly progress according to state requirements each year in all tested subject areas (Kansas Department of Education, 2009). Riverview students showed moderate growth above the cut scores of 51% and 38% in reading and math in 2003 by scoring 57% and 40% respectively. Each year students made more dramatic gains as teachers aligned their curriculum and instruction with state standards. By 2009, 89% of all students scored proficient or above on the state reading assessment compared to the state's adequate yearly progress (AYP) target of 81%. In Math, 92% of all students scored proficient or above compared to the AYP target of 69%. In 2008, 93% of all students taking the state science and state history assessments scored proficient or above (Kansas Department of Education, 2009).

Analysis of student performance on non-traditional measures of academic success required Riverview High School to make a commitment to continuous improvement. To illustrate, in 2006, 68% of RHS students scored proficient or above on the state math assessment. The state goal was 56%. While the school appeared to be on the right track for math achievement, it was discovered many students graduating from RHS needed to take remedial math classes during their freshman year of college. A new principal hired in 2007 believed students were not advancing towards proficiency fast enough and what was assumed to be an adequate math curriculum was not preparing all students for college-level math. Understanding that maintaining RHS' tradition as a high achieving school under new criteria would require

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significant changes, he began an initiative to remedy the situation by hiring highly qualified math teachers who collaborated on curriculum alignment, assessment, and instructional delivery methods. Within three years, math scores rose significantly and more students were enrolled in Algebra I, Algebra II, and advanced math classes. As noted earlier, improved assessment scores were the result.

The principal of RHS believes today's students must be prepared to compete with people all over the world and schools must provide a broad education base with an emphasis on math and science. He also looks upon strong teachers as the foundation of a successful school. According to the principal, these teachers must have certain characteristics to meet the needs of today's students. He articulated this when he said,

> When I hire a teacher I want a person who is going to have high energy. I want a person who is going to have great knowledge. I want a person who is going to work well with other people in the building. And I want somebody who is going to make a long-term dedication to students, not just education as a whole but for students in my building.

The principal has used this philosophy to hire new teachers during his three-year tenure at RHS. Citing a goal to improve math achievement, he hired three teachers in that department and required each one to have the qualities of high energy, great knowledge, a collaborative nature, and a dedication to all students. He then led this team of math teachers to set specific goals based on current performance and student demographics. The principal and the teachers believe the evidence of their success can be found in state assessment and student performance data.

The principal at Riverview High School also considers teaching teams who work together effectively to be an important part of a successful school. The professional characteristics of team members play an important role in the success of each team; therefore the principal

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believes some teams at RHS are more effective than others. The principal illustrated this belief when he stated,

> We pretty much have an organization by department. And there are stronger departments than others simply because of the personalities of the people teaching. Definitely some teams are more effective than others. Typically the teams that are most effective are those who have good knowledge. You also have the ones who are looking at different ways of teaching besides just sit in rows and get type of stuff. You will find teachers who will think outside the box and teach outside the box and look at different ways to reach kids. And that's what we have.

In order to support the growth and effectiveness of teaching teams at Riverview High School, the principal attempts to provide appropriate resources for team members. He supports professional development in the areas of content area knowledge and new teaching strategies. He has also been involved in encouraging teachers to access new technology to engage students in learning.

While the traditional measures of student achievement at Riverview High School supported beliefs of administrators, teachers, and community members that RHS is meeting the needs of all students, newer ways of assessing students painted a different picture. When more rigorous review of state assessment data revealed weaknesses within RHS curriculum, the steps taken by administration and teachers to address the weaknesses resulted in higher achievement in that area. Riverview High School's initiatives to address specific weaknesses in student learning have revealed teaching teams can dramatically affect student learning as is apparent in improved math performance. A core group of teachers at RHS have come to believe teachers and administrators have the ability to make changes to help all students learn what they need to know. On a smaller scale, this belief has been replicated as a team of one special education

teacher and one regular education teacher began to examine and address the academic performance of students with disabilities at Riverview High School.

While Riverview High School has earned its reputation for academic success for the majority of students, a gap exists between the achievement of students without disabilities and students with disabilities. In 2008, 80% of students without disabilities performed at the proficient or above level on state reading assessments (Kansas Department of Education, 2009). Sixty-seven percent of students without disabilities performed at the proficient or above level on the state math assessment. Comparatively, only 50% of students with disabilities performed at acceptable levels on the state reading assessment and no students met standards on the state math assessment. The gap is not isolated to Riverview High School. In Riverview's home state, 80% of general education students taking the state reading assessment performed at or above proficiency while only 57% of students with disabilities performed at those same levels. Math assessments showed that 75% of general education students score at or above proficiency compared to 53% of students with disabilities (Kansas Department of Education, 2009).

The discrepancy between achievement of disabled and non-disabled students at Riverview High School led two teachers to begin looking at different instructional models for students with disabilities. Together they have attempted to draw a plan that breaks down the walls of traditional instructional for students with disabilities and builds a co-teaching framework that brings those students into the general education classroom.

Co-Teaching at Riverview High School

Co-teaching at Riverview High School began in 2008, when Janice, one of two special education teachers, and Ellen, a language arts teacher, agreed there were a number of special education students enrolled in freshman English who could benefit from a different teaching

model. Janice had learned about co-teaching as part of her master's program and was eager to

find a colleague who would be willing to participate in a new way to teach special education

students. She approached Ellen and found a willing partner. Ellen explained how her co-teaching

relationship with Janice formed,

> My first year here Janice and I discussed that there were a lot of students, especially at
>
> the freshman level, who could be mainstreamed into a regular classroom. They just
>
> needed a little extra support or a teacher who was willing to work with them a little bit
>
> more. I had never tried it before, but I think it is always a good idea to try new things and
>
> I thought it sounded like a good idea.

Both teachers were aware that entering into a co-teaching relationship would require some

significant changes to how each of them currently engaged in teaching. They also realized

changing to the co-teaching model would require some support from administration and fellow

teachers.

For the last two years, Ellen and Janice have co-taught a freshman English class. Each

semester there is an average of 22 to 24 students in the class and typically six to eight are

students with disabilities. Another four or five students are those who have not met reading

standards as an eighth grader. Freshman English is designed to provide students with the

necessary skills for speaking and writing in Standard English. There are also various literary

units worked in throughout the course to provide demonstration of the skills learned. Literary

units include the short story, poetry, drama, and a novel. The grammar aspect of freshman

English covers the eight parts of speech, usage, and punctuation. Composition entails the

development of complete sentences, paragraphs, and essays. The course content follows state

standards and is a precursor to the knowledge and skills presented in sophomore English.

Ellen is currently in her third year of teaching. After completing her first year at a mid-size parochial high school she took a job at RHS. She is currently in her second year at Riverview High School. This year she teaches 3 sections of freshman English each semester. Each section meets every other day for 90 minutes according to a block schedule. Janice co-teaches with Ellen during one of those sections. They attempt to enroll all students with disabilities in that section, but occasionally a student is placed in another section due to scheduling conflicts. Janice adopts Ellen's classroom as her own during the co-teaching block, but maintains her own classroom to support her other students from grades nine through twelve in all the subject areas in which they are enrolled.

Ellen is a young teacher with a quick smile and a sense of humor that appeals to her students. Her classroom is a bright and open space filled with books and papers. On the walls are artifacts from previous semesters including posters students have created for her. These posters include messages of thanks to Ellen for helping them succeed. Ellen has many favorite quotations posted throughout the room that encourage students to achieve their dreams. One bookcase is lined with science fiction-her favorite genre-and a note inviting students to borrow them whenever they like.

When entering Ellen's room one finds that the desks are often rearranged. Sometimes they are arranged in groups of four or five. Other times they may be in slanted rows with the desks touching each other. Some single desks are lined up facing the back wall and hold papers and other supplies. Ellen also teaches journalism and sponsors the school paper and yearbook. Five computers are located behind a wall of windows at the back of her room. This area functions as the newspaper and yearbook nerve center where students use a variety of technology tools to create these documents. There is always an air of the unfinished and the unexpected in

Ellen's room with evidence of many projects in progress. It is space filled with energy and a deep dedication to students.

Ellen's desk is a busy place as well. She has her computer and her phone along with a variety of papers in stacks. She likes her system, even though it can seem disorderly to others. Her work area reflects her personality, which she describes as tolerant and positive. Ellen smiles and says, "I try to smile and keep a positive attitude about [school]. I enjoy my job!"

Janice is a fourth-year teacher who has been at Riverview High School for all of those years. She is also a young teacher. When first meeting Janice it appears that she is very serious, but one quickly discovers that she has a spark of humor and can laugh easily at herself and the situations she finds herself in. Janice does not have a desk in Ellen's room. Instead, she maintains her own classroom so that she can use it to work with the students at Riverview High School who are on her caseload. On occasion she will pull students, both special and regular education students, from the co-taught classroom to work on assignments or take tests. Janice's room is neat and orderly and she jokes that she really has to have things straight. Her desk also holds her phone and computer, but papers are held in baskets and sorted to keep them in order. She feels that her room is essential for those students who need a quiet environment with few distractions. This applies to many of her students with disabilities.

Janice's room is arranged with the desks in rows. She has a student desk close to hers so she can work with a student one-on-one if she needs to. Like Ellen's room, her walls are posted with signs encouraging students to be learners. Just as Ellen's room reflects her personality, Janice's room shows hers. It is quiet and soothing with a feeling of structure and support for students. Students know when they enter this room that serious work goes on and she is there to support them in any way she can. Janice illustrates this when she stated, "I think the expectations

you set for the students, they achieve. In here, I expect the students to be especially observant of the other students. You have to respect the person sitting next to you."

Janice and Ellen have adopted the one teach-one assist co-teaching model where one teacher, in this case the general education teacher, assumes the primary teaching responsibilities for the classroom. On occasion they will use the alternative teaching model where one teacher, Janice, takes a smaller group of students to her room for a finite amount of time for specialized instruction. While the research literature does not highly recommend either of these models as optimal, at this point in their relationship it seems to work best for them (Scruggs, et al., 2007).

A typical day in Janice and Ellen's co-taught classroom begins with students entering with characteristic teenage exuberance. They come into the room, chat with friends, and eventually find their way to their seats. As noted earlier, student desks are arranged in groups or rows with desks touching. This facilitates the discussions and group responses woven throughout the teaching process. It takes a few reminders from both Ellen and Janice to quiet down so work can begin.

Some days Ellen begins the class with a review of the previous day's lesson. Other days the students complete a journal response and Ellen gives students opportunities to share if they so desire. Time is allotted to answer questions and remind students about assignments. During this time Janice circulates throughout the room answering individual questions from students. Occasionally Janice will field comments from reluctant students who offer excuses for not having work finished or who do not appear interested in getting it done. She handles these quietly and effectively.

One observation period found students completing a journal response on the things that are most important to them. Ellen called on volunteers who wanted to share their responses. One

student shared that he had three most important things: his mom, his iPod, and his dog. After this response, both Ellen and Janice gave feedback in the form of affirmation and humor. Janice replied with a smile, "I am glad your mom was first!" The student who responded laughed, as did the other students in the room. There was a balance of serious study and fun on the part of both teachers that seemed to appeal to the students.

During another observation, the students were given an assignment by Ellen to write a thank you letter. While the other students began working, one student sat passively and was not engaging in the task. Janice moved to that student's desk and quietly conversed with her. She told the student, "I need you to get to work. Do you need some help?" The student appeared to be resistant to doing the assignment. Janice knelt down and continued to talk to her quietly. "I don't want to do it," the student whispered to Janice. "You can do it here or we can go to my room if you like," Janice answered. The student then took out paper and began the assignment. As the observation continued and Janice initiated more student interactions it was never apparent whether the students she was helping were those with disabilities or not.

Subsequent observations validated the initial impression that students in the co-taught class could not be easily identified as students with or without disabilities. Freshman English at Riverview High School is largely literature based. As such, there is an established reading list that Janice and Ellen follow with all students. One of the books students read in the class is Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. This is a complicated story for freshman students and requires a lot of support to learn the vocabulary and the vernacular in which it is written. During one class period Ellen introduced new vocabulary and modeled Shakespeare's writing style by reading aloud to students. Students then took turns reading from the story. Both teachers often use this read-aloud strategy as an opportunity to show that all students can struggle with something new.

They both assisted students as they read aloud, helping them with pronunciations and pacing. All students in the class, not just students with disabilities, tend to struggle with this oral reading. Ellen and Janice used it as a way to show students they all have skills on which they need to work.

During another observation towards the end of the unit on *Romeo and Juliet* Ellen gave the students instructions on a culminating project. Students were to work individually or with a self-chosen partner. They were given an outline to complete to help them structure their project. After instructions students either paired up with a partner or chose to work alone. As students began to work, Janice circulated throughout the room helping students and redirecting them to the task. Ellen worked from her desk, assisting students as they approached her with questions.

Discussion was lively among some pairs or groups as students discussed their ideas. Janice asked questions and requested clarification from them as a means to keeping them on track. She traveled continuously around the room, looking for students who may need help but would not ask. She often sat next to students and helped them. It was not apparent to the observer that any particular student was one with special needs. Janice and Ellen both treated all students equally in terms of how they interacted with them.

When observing another class period also devoted to the study of *Romeo and Juliet* students were seated in slanted rows in assigned seats. Ellen reported the seating arrangement was designed to optimize student engagement and students with disabilities were not seated in any particular position relevant to their disability other than those who have preferential seating as an accommodation on their individual education plan. The class activity consisted of oral reading of the text from *Romeo and Juliet.* Ellen and various student volunteers read selections from the text of the play. Students then raised their hands and asked questions or voiced opinions

about the content after short readings. Ellen and Janice both answered questions and interjected information. The students were particularly interested in how Juliet was able to induce a death-like trance and a fascinating discussion of medieval herbs ensued.

As students transitioned to a follow-up reading assignment they were all engaged in the same activity. The teachers provided support to all students as needed without any evidence to suggest any student was one with a disability. Over the course of several observations, it was noticed that some students required more assistance than others. It was not noted that this assistance was provided more often by Ellen or Janice. They appeared to assume equal roles in helping students.

During one observation the students were discussing the concept of foreshadowing in relationship to their novel study of *Romeo and Juliet*. Students were arranged in groups of four or five. After a discussion of the meaning of foreshadowing and several representative examples, students worked in small groups to identify occasions of foreshadowing that were evident in the text of *Romeo and Juliet*. During this group work Janice and Ellen assumed the role of facilitators, which was evident in all observations. They circulated throughout the room during the activity and offered assistance as needed. They also redirected groups to return to the task when they got off topic. There was no evidence that students responded differently to the directions given by either teacher. At the end of the activity, Ellen began the next portion of the lesson by assuming the lead teacher role at the front of the classroom. This procedure of Ellen starting the lesson, Janice and Ellen both supporting students during group and individual work, and Ellen resuming responsibility for instruction after group work was repeated during each observation.

Most class periods in the co-taught classroom provided time for students to work on assigned tasks or reading during the latter part of the period. Students were usually asked to work silently so all could concentrate on the task at hand. Both Ellen and Janice made themselves available during this time to answer questions. They were sometimes required to keep students on task. It was important to Janice and Ellen to have the same behavior expectations for students during this time so students knew what rules to follow. At times during this period Janice might take students to her room when they expressed a need for a different environment, but their goal was to keep all students together as much as possible.

When observing the co-taught classroom, instruction and management appeared seamless and easy. All lessons were prepared in advance and materials the students needed were readily available. Early in the semester Ellen and Janice established the management routines important to creating an optimum learning environment. Procedures for completing and handing in work, making corrections, and test preparation were well known by students. Ellen used her whiteboard for daily assignments. Students checked the board when they came into the room to see what the assignments were for the day. She also posted test dates. Students were frequently observed completing assignments and handing them in to an assigned tray on Ellen's desk.

Expectations for behavior were explicitly stated and reinforced by both Janice and Ellen. Routines were in place for working in both small and large groups. The time students were in the room was focused on learning and staying on task was a priority for both Ellen and Janice. Both teachers reminded students when needed.

A primary reason that lessons were well organized and management systems were firmly in place is the planning that Ellen and Janice have done to make it successful. The first year they co-taught, Janice and Ellen met weekly to talk about curriculum and what topics were coming up

the following week. They also talked about the performance of individual students in the class and how they could support students who were having difficulty. They both reported that planning time has been reduced this year due to scheduling and they rely on much of what they did last year. The lack of adequate planning time on effective co-teaching is a factor that will be discussed later in this chapter.

To the casual observer, the co-taught classroom Janice and Ellen have created works with a minimum of difficulty. As revealed through the research a number of factors have influenced the development of their co-teaching relationship. Some have allowed the relationship to grow and become more effective. Some have prohibited them from building the co-teaching relationship they each desire. The following sections will reveal the stories that Ellen and Janice have shared on their journey to building a co-teaching relationship.

<div align="center">Co-Teaching: Laying the Foundation</div>

Janice and Ellen entered into their co-teaching relationship based on their shared belief that students with disabilities at Riverview High School could benefit from a new design of teaching and learning. They brought their shared ideas together and began to draw a blueprint for what would become an evolving relationship influenced by their visions of co-teaching and the existing structure within which it must be built. Ellen and Janice began constructing their co-teaching classroom by identifying the core beliefs that would provide the foundation for their work.

Core Beliefs

Achievement for All. As Janice and Ellen reflected on the development of their co-teaching relationship, they agreed that common beliefs and philosophies have contributed to its success. The overriding condition that has helped them to develop a successful relationship is

they share the philosophy that all children can learn if given the opportunity. Ellen's belief about serving special education students in her classroom was evident when she said, "I think it's a good mentality to have to try to reach every student. I think that the way we try to break down things that all students that we have are capable of achieving at the highest level." Throughout the research process Janice also stated her belief that all children can learn. For example, she made the statement, "As long as we give students the opportunity, there's really no reason why the student shouldn't succeed in the class."

For Janice and Ellen, creating opportunities for students with disabilities included modifications and differentiated instruction. While Janice and Ellen communicated the foundational philosophy that all students can be successful if given the appropriate opportunity, they have observed not all teachers at RHS share the same belief. Ellen described her experience in this comment, "Sometimes I've heard other teachers say, 'I can't just let that student use their notes on a quiz when I don't let the others.' And I say, 'Yes you can. That's what special education and modifications are about.'"

Inclusion. In addition to believing that no student should be limited by a disability, the belief that all students should have the opportunity to participate in the general education classroom is a cornerstone of Janice and Ellen's co-teaching relationship at RHS. Students with disabilities at Riverview High School are routinely included in general education classrooms with the support of a para-educator when needed. This occurs with differing degrees of support from the general education teachers in those classes. Some rely heavily on the special education teacher to intervene when students are struggling while others feel comfortable providing the extra support these students need.

In the co-taught classroom, both Ellen and Janice believe inclusion is important for students with disabilities. As a special education teacher Janice has regularly witnessed the importance of inclusion. She explained there are certain requirements that must be met for inclusion to be successful. She related,

I think inclusion should be used as much as possible and it is very beneficial to the students. However we have to understand that each child is different and each child needs to be educated in a way that is best for them. But it's also important that if the child is in inclusion that they have the support they need.

Janice also believes her support to general education teachers is critical when students are included in the general education classroom. She expressed,

Students and teachers need the support of the special education teacher when students are included. Communication is important. Because all of my kids are in their [general education] classes I have to keep up with assignments and understand what's going on in their classes. I talk to the teachers about individual students, especially if they are having trouble in that class or if they are struggling with something.

Janice initiates contact with general education teachers routinely to check progress, but she also relies on them to keep her abreast of issues or concerns.

Ellen's experience with inclusion is more limited than Janice's. Her first year of teaching was at a private school where inclusion was seldom practiced. She came to Riverview High School at the beginning of her second year of teaching. Her first assignment at Riverview was to teach classes of students with mixed abilities, some with learning disabilities and some without. There was limited support from para-educators during class time. In order to provide more help to students with disabilities, she viewed co-teaching with Janice as a positive change.

In the area of English it's sometimes difficult for them to have a para because the classrooms that really need para support are the math and science classes where a lot of our special education students struggle. My students with disabilities just needed a little bit of extra support or a teacher who was willing to work with them a little bit more.

After the first semester of co-teaching with Janice, Ellen's understanding of and respect for Janice as a fellow teacher was solidified. Her understanding and appreciation for Janice's contributions to the classroom were illustrated in this statement,

I would definitely say that prior to the co-teaching experience I really didn't know what to think about how it would work. I knew that Janice and I would work well together because we get along well as people. But in the classroom, I have definitely come to understand special education and her role as a special educator.

As she works with Janice as a colleague Ellen has discovered the power the two of them have to work together to reach all students and the influence the general education classroom can have on students with disabilities. She also came to understand that co-teaching is more than just having an extra person in the room to help students. Ellen shares this belief when she stated,

I understand a whole lot better now that Janice has taught me how to work with a lot of different students and what will work best for other students. Having the special education students in with other high achieving students means they see those students striving and getting more points and it encourages them.

Ellen and Janice entered the co-teaching relationship with different experiences working with students with disabilities. After two years of working together in one classroom, they have come to the shared belief that inclusion can help students with disabilities succeed. They have also seen these students can surpass general education students in other classes that are not co-taught.

They believe there are a number of reasons why they have been able to become an effective co-teaching team. One reason revolves around their common experiences as teachers.

Common Career Levels as a Co-teaching Asset

Teachers at Riverview High School are represented by a wide range of years of teaching experience. Some teachers are approaching the age when they are eligible for retirement while others are just beginning their careers. A number of teachers are at the mid-career level. When Janice and Ellen first agreed to enter into a co-teaching relationship, they were drawn to each other by their common experience as career-entry educators. According to Janice,

> During my second year of teaching I learned about co-teaching and I decided it was
> something worth looking into. So I talked to Ellen. She's about the same age, a little
> younger than me, and has been teaching about the same amount of time. We get along
> very well and we have the same philosophies of education. And so I asked Ellen if it was
> something she would be interested in doing. She said she was.

Janice's decision to approach Ellen as a potential co-teaching partner was also influenced by her impressions of more experienced teachers. She felt Ellen was more open to doing things a new way and her openness was a combination of her experiences and teacher preparation. Janice explained her perception by pointing out the generational differences in teachers' attitudes and openness toward co-teaching,

> People of the same generation of teaching as me, I don't know if we've been taught
> differently. Or if we've seen it more in our own lives. Maybe the older teachers haven't
> seen special education in their classroom growing up. So I really feel it's a generational
> thing. The older teachers never experienced it so they're not quite sure how to deal with
> it. Sometimes they tend to close off. Teachers my age and maybe just a little bit older

have experienced it. They've probably taken classes in college. They tend to be more

accepting of it.

Ellen and Janice were able to lay a solid foundation for their co-teaching relationship based on

their shared core beliefs and their common experiences as both students and teachers. While

aspects of their relationship have changed as they continue to work together, these foundational

pieces are what keep them solidly linked together as co-teachers. During their two-year

partnership, Janice and Ellen have discovered they each had to adapt their teaching and

classroom management styles in order to work together effectively. Their ability to do this, and

maintain a positive relationship, has helped to solidify their commitment to co-teaching.

Building the Walls: Establishing Common Ground

As their co-teaching relationship has developed over the last two years, Janice and Ellen

have identified their core beliefs and years of teaching experience play an important role in

establishing a solid foundation for their relationship. When they first initiated their co-teaching

relationship, they chose to adopt the one teach-one assist co-teaching model. As was discussed in

Chapter 2, it is the most prominent model of co-teaching in use, but is not considered the best or

most optimal model of co-teaching (Scruggs, et al., 2007).

This model has required both teachers to adapt their teaching and discipline styles to

accommodate each other. Because Ellen has assumed the role of instructional leader in the

classroom, she and Janice have agreed to base their classroom management styles on what works

best for her. That is not to say that Janice's preferences for classroom management and discipline

are ignored. Janice acknowledged this by explaining,

> Ellen and I have very different classrooms. I'm a little bit more organized and I definitely
>
> like my structure. Ellen's class is structured, but it's structured in a different way. And we

also had different expectations and rules for the way students act in class. When I say no

talking, I mean no talking. In her classroom no talking may mean you can talk to your

neighbor if you have a question about your assignment. So I think it's very important to

understand the other person's rules and what they expect of students. I think we definitely

have our own roles in the classroom and we definitely stick with them.

Ellen agrees there have been challenges to overcome in terms of finding a balance between their

teaching and management styles. She stated how they have had to maintain open communication

lines and a willingness to work through issues as they come up,

We have had to talk about things like what's going to be acceptable and what's not going

to be acceptable so that we are on the same page. We don't want to be where I am getting

onto them for doing one thing and she's not getting onto them for the same thing. We

also had to be careful and keep the kids from playing us off of each other. So we've had

to work on those little things as they arise.

As their co-teaching relationship has evolved, the teachers believe it has been strengthened as

they have gotten to know each other better. Both teachers have grown more comfortable

knowing the expectations each has for students and what their specific roles are in the classroom.

Janice explained how she initially felt uncomfortable treading on Ellen's territory, "Because it's

not my classroom it's always a little, I don't want to step on anyone's toes about rules and

everything." However, establishing shared expectations has increased her comfort level, as she

attested, "And this year I think I know a little bit more about what she expects out of her

students. I'm able to translate that into what I expect from students in the classroom rather than

having my own expectations."

Some researchers have argued the one teach-one assist co-teaching model no longer meets the criteria of a true co-teaching relationship because it can reduce the role of the special education teacher to that of an assistant (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). Janice herself has had to overcome feelings of isolation and empathizes with the criticism and limitations of the one teach-one assist model. "It's hard because we only have one class together," Janice remarked. In addition to the co-taught class, Ellen teaches three more sections of freshman English. All classes are in Ellen's room, so when Janice is there for the co-taught section it has been more difficult for her to assimilate herself into the room.

For Janice having her own classroom is a key part of her identity as a teacher. "I feel like my classroom is a kind of a part of me. I'm here so much and I do a lot of work here," she commented. Working in Ellen's classroom for one period a day has challenged her sense of belonging. Janice expressed,

> We teach in her classroom. You don't always feel like it's your classroom and that it's part of you. I don't feel the same comfort level [in Ellen's classroom]. Not that I'm not comfortable there, because I am, but it's not my classroom.

Ellen also recognized that comfort and ownership are important to teachers. She was aware that Janice sometimes struggled with the need for two separate classrooms. She expressed empathy for Janice when she explained, "I have my perspective being in my classroom and that's different from Janice's perspective because she is not in her own environment. Taking yourself out of your element can be challenging."

Despite the challenges of developing a sense of ownership of the physical space for both teachers, Ellen and Janice believe their relationship overall is very positive. Ellen commented,

We get along really well in our co-teaching relationship. We work well together in our

personal and professional relationship. We can compromise about things. We can ask,

"Do you think this will work?" Those things seem to be effective for us.

Janice concurred their relationship was a positive one. "I think we get along well in the

classroom and I think the kids see we get along well. I think they enjoy the interaction we have

with each other," she said.

Janice and Ellen agreed there have been compromises during the development of their

co-teaching relationship. The most challenging have been those that required Janice to allow

Ellen to assume the role of lead teacher while she supports instruction and for the two teachers to

adapt their classroom organizational and management styles. They also agreed the longer they

maintain the relationship the easier it has become to feel they are no longer compromising.

Instead they believe they are now co-teaching more efficiently and their commitment to co-

teaching is stronger than it was initially. When asked how they would feel if they had to give up

their co-taught classroom Ellen stated,

I think it would be really sad if we had to give up the co-teaching classroom because I

can see how much it benefits students. Janice and I work together so well now. She keeps

the students up to speed and we are able to talk about much higher order material than we

would ever be able to without her.

Ellen also supports the idea that working together over time has improved their co-teaching

relationship. She initially felt anxious about co-teaching with Janice. "It takes a while to get used

to teaching when someone else is in the classroom. I was really nervous last year." She went on

to note, "I feel a lot more comfortable in the classroom too." Their co-teaching relationship

continues to grow the longer they teach together. The benefits they see the students reap as a

result of being in a co-taught classroom combined with their own professional growth have equaled a positive experience for all.

Building Stronger Teachers

As Ellen and Janice continue to refine their co-teaching relationship, they have discovered the unexpected benefit of believing they are better teachers because of their experiences. The stories told by Janice and Ellen throughout interviews and the focus group were those of teacher growth and empowerment. Both women spoke highly of the other's teaching attributes and what they have learned from each other.

Learning from Each Other

Janice attributes much of her newfound knowledge of teaching to her relationship with Ellen. She explained that Ellen is a wonderful teacher and she has learned a lot from watching her teach. She described Ellen's relationship with students and its positive effects on learning,

> She has a very good relationship with her students and that just opens up a lot for them.
> They are comfortable with her. And I think they learn a lot from her because of that
> comfort level. I feel that I've changed as a teacher because I get to see somebody who I
> think is a good teacher working every day.

Janice also believes working with Ellen has helped her become a better teacher when working with students and other teachers outside of the co-taught classroom. Because she was prepared as an elementary teacher she was not exposed to ways to teach literature. From watching Ellen, Janice has learned how to write and deliver lesson plans and how to more effectively teach content to high school students. Janice demonstrated her newfound confidence when she said,

> After seeing [Ellen], I feel more comfortable and I feel that I do a better job. I've learned
> that discussing a story has more benefits than just doing worksheets. And so I personally

feel that I have become a better teacher simply because of that. Learning new things every day, that helps me in my classroom too.

Ellen echoed Janice's impressions of improved instructional practice. Ellen has learned from Janice how to modify lessons and to use different strategies with a variety of students.

I understand special education and modifications a whole lot better now. Janice has really taught me a lot about just how to work with a lot of different students and what will work best for other students. It's a positive experience because I've gotten to know her as a teacher and learned some strategies and things from her that I definitely wouldn't have used otherwise.

Ellen has also taken what she has learned in the co-taught class and applied it to her other freshman English classes. She reiterated Janice's belief the skills she has learned in the co-taught classroom translate to better teaching in other classes,

[Janice] definitely draws to my attention to things that I don't notice sometimes. And likewise I bring things like that to the table. And that helps me feel like I'm a more effective teacher. In addition, in my other classes I definitely employ some of the things that she has given me for the co-teaching class. I've tried things out in my other classes that I teach on my own. I feel like it's overall made me more well rounded.

Ellen and Janice concurred they have become better teachers as a result of their co-teaching relationship. They have learned to appreciate each other's teaching and management styles and have developed a system that allows both to be effective in the co-taught classroom. And, maybe most importantly, they have seen the direct effect that their joint efforts have had on student achievement.

Co-Teaching and Student Achievement: Building Stronger Students

Support for co-teaching as a means to improve student achievement is based on the ideal that a general education and special education teacher can complement each other to reach all students. The general education teacher is expected to provide the content area knowledge students need while the special education teacher brings a skill set that includes specific strategies proven to help students with disabilities learn. By working together, the teachers can construct a classroom that provides instruction and assistance to raise achievement of all students in the class. Student achievement data for Ellen and Janice's co-taught classroom support this theory.

Co-teaching as a Catalyst for Improved Class Performance

During the two years that Ellen and Janice have co-taught freshman English they have witnessed an increase in overall achievement of that class as compared to the other freshman English classes Ellen teaches alone. In 2009 Janice conducted an analysis of the achievement levels of students in the co-taught class versus those in the traditional classes that Ellen taught. This analysis was part of a research project she was doing for her master's program. The data showed the average semester grade for students in the co-taught class was 90%. Averages for the traditional classes were 86%, 82% and 91%. While the teachers recognize there are variables they cannot isolate, they believe these numbers reinforce their assumption that students in the co-taught class are achieving at higher levels than those in traditional classes.

Ellen reported during her first year at Riverview High School she taught a remedial reading and writing class. The class was comprised completely of students deemed to be at risk for learning the course outcomes because they had performed poorly on the previous year's state assessments. It was believed at the time that putting all the poor performing students together in

one class would allow the teacher to tailor instruction to raise their present level of reading performance. The results were just the opposite, however. At the end of the semester the students raised their reading levels by one grade on average. When Ellen compared those results to the achievement of the same category of students in the co-taught classroom the following year she found that most in the co-teaching class had raised their reading skills by three grade levels. One student had increased his reading performance by five grade levels, from reading on a 4th grade level to a 9th grade level. Ellen said, "He was up to where he needed to be. He was right at 9.5 and he had been at a fourth grade level before that." Ellen powerfully related the excitement she feels for the co-teaching experience,

> I felt like when we first started co-teaching we had no idea how it was going to affect students' achievement and grades. But after several semesters we've been able to see the difference in grade percentages between my regular classes, which are full of students who are not special education students. So that means our special education students are achieving higher than many of my regular education students in many of my other classes.

For Ellen and Janice this is a strong validation of their co-teaching relationship. It provides affirmation they can influence student achievement by purposefully working together in effective ways.

Making a Difference for Elliott

Co-teaching has made a difference not only for groups of students but individual students as well. Ellen told the story of how one student in her co-taught classroom influenced her beliefs about student achievement and her role in making it happen. She related,

We had a student last year. He was intelligent and his writing and thought processes were really advanced. His handwriting was just really labored. After the first couple of weeks of school we realized how really labored his handwriting was. We started letting him use the computer every time we had a written assignment. Some of the work that that student generated over the course of the semester was some of the best that I had from any of my students. What if I hadn't let him use that computer? I wouldn't have seen all this great stuff come out of this kid and he wouldn't have grown like he did over the course of the semester.

Ellen's experience with Elliot transformed her belief that she could make a difference for each student if she looked beyond the obvious.

Factors Influencing Increased Achievement in the Co-Taught Classroom

The teachers involved in the co-teaching classroom at Riverview High School have found support for their theory co-teaching can result in increased student achievement. They attributed this increased academic achievement to several factors including an increased teacher presence in the room and immediate access to a teacher. Janice explained how students in the co-teaching class asked more questions because they had more than one adult to turn to.

The co-teaching classroom can benefit students because there are two people to ask questions of if you don't understand. Some students are not comfortable with one teacher so they can talk to the other one. The students in our co-taught class seem to ask more questions. If a student is not paying attention I walk around the room the whole time that [Ellen is] talking to make sure that the kids understand what's going on. So if a kid is having trouble it's immediately taken care of. If they don't understand what's being read in class we'll talk about it. Or if they don't understand the assignment they can come talk

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with me or with Ellen. There's always help for them and it's pretty immediate. It's not

something they even have to seek out. We notice it immediately and take care of it.

Ellen shared Janice's opinion that two teachers in the room can enhance student learning. She

related that Janice might observe students who do not understand the content while she is

teaching. She acknowledges that in a room with 30 students there are things she misses. "Janice

catches things that I don't," Ellen stated. "She'll tell me, 'that student doesn't really understand

this.' Sometimes I don't catch every little thing. She definitely draws my attention to things that I

sometimes don't notice."

Ellen and Janice also believe that peer models play an important for students with

disabilities in the co-taught classroom. Ellen described the effects that she has seen higher

achieving students have on lower achievers,

Having the special education students in there with the other high achieving students

means they see those students striving and getting more and more points and it

encourages them. They say, "Hey, if he is getting more and more points I can get more"

for the same goal. It's a good role model system for them to have. Kids will read over

each other's shoulders when quizzes are handed back and go "He got a 45 out of 45 and I

only got a 42. I really need to buckle down and study."

For Janice and Ellen, both anecdotal and quantitative evidence exists that a co-teaching

classroom can result in increased academic achievement for all their students. This belief has

been reinforced throughout the life of their co-teaching relationship. It promises to grow and

strengthen as they refine their co-teaching practice. Both teachers recognize there are things

about their co-teaching practice they would like to change, but conditions outside their scope of

influence exist that may prevent them from doing so.

Reconstructing the Paradigm: The Influences of High School Organizational Structure

Co-teaching in a secondary school brings a unique set of challenges that are influenced by the way high schools are organized. The challenges presented to Ellen and Janice as they have worked to develop a successful co-teaching relationship are not uncommon to those found in the literature. One of the most significant influences on the roles and responsibilities that Ellen and Janice have tried to establish for their co-teaching relationship is the way Riverview High School is organized for student learning. Teachers at RHS are prepared for their teaching assignments by completing the required coursework at their post-secondary institution. This preparation allows them to assume the roles that have been created for them at RHS. These roles take the traditional form of department level positions and special education teaching positions and were found to greatly affect how the co-teaching relationship evolved.

Teacher Education and Preparation

Riverview High School is organized into departments so students attend classes taught by teachers certified in specific curricular areas. State and federal licensing requirements are in place that ensure every teacher in each curricular area is highly qualified to teach that subject (Kansas Department of Education, 2008; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001," 2002). In Kansas, secondary teacher education preparation programs seldom provide more than a cursory examination of the role of special education at the secondary level. Requirements at the state's three largest universities include one course in preparing to teach special education students in the regular education classroom. This lack of preparation can create barriers to collaboration between general education and special education teachers. For Ellen and Janice, this was particularly true. Ellen expressed the belief that preparation programs at the secondary level do not necessarily prepare graduates for working with students with disabilities. She remarked,

I feel like that's something that we aren't, as high school educators, trained in as much as

we need to be. Before we began co-teaching, I didn't really check in with the special

education teachers that much, unless there was a really big problem. And when you're

only checking in when there's problems; that's not a happy thing.

Janice's teacher preparation was similarly lacking. She was initially certified in elementary

education and had no prior training or experience in secondary education before securing her job

at Riverview High School. The special education cooperative serving the Riverview school

district has found an extreme shortage in teachers certified in special education. The cooperative

offered Janice a job on the condition that she completed her secondary and special education

certifications. To fulfill this requirement, Janice took courses to obtain her secondary

certification and is currently working on her master's degree in special education. Janice

explained the circumstances of her hiring,

I had no special education background or high school background when I came to work

in the special education high school classroom. When they told me I was going to teach

English I went, "Oh well, I liked English in school so it can't be that bad!" I did my best

and trudged through, but I still didn't know how to teach it.

Janice not only felt unprepared to teach high school students, she had no expertise in the subject

she was assigned to teach.

Influence of Scheduling on Co-teaching

Riverview High School is organized to utilize a block schedule with a mapped

curriculum. This insures all students are given standardized curriculum within a uniform

structure. Teachers within each core department collaborate to create a scope and sequence of

curricular objectives and teaching materials. Because students can have one teacher for freshman

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English the first semester and another teacher for freshman English the second semester, curricular objectives as well as the sequence of teaching those objectives are matched across teachers.

Ellen teaches four sections of freshman English each semester. One of her colleagues in the English department teaches two additional sections of freshman English each semester as well. Because students might be in her class the first semester and her colleague's class the second semester, both teachers work to synchronize their instruction so all course content is taught in the correct sequence. The English department has aligned the curriculum at each grade level so teachers within the department have a scope and sequence to follow. Ellen and the other English teacher responsible for freshman English follow a curriculum map that keeps them synchronized. This map details the objectives to be met by the end of each semester. It includes a list of textbooks and materials for each teacher to use. This allows all students to be ready for the same instructional content when the second semester starts.

Ellen, the English teacher, has assumed the role of lead teacher in the co-taught classroom. This came about due to the need for Ellen to cover identical objectives and sequence the teaching of those objectives with another teacher. While Janice would like to be more involved in the actual instructional piece of the relationship, she and Ellen believe the existing structure prohibits it. Janice expressed, "Ellen teaches the class three other times. We are not going to change what we do in our class just because I'm in there. We can't because everybody needs to be on the same page." In this quote, Janice also acknowledged how hard it was to not be directly involved in planning and instructional delivery.

> Ellen will sometimes ask for help. She wants to do something a little bit differently and
> we'll come up with something fresh and different to do. I struggled with that when we

first started, because I wanted to have a little more say in the planning process. This is my class too. I want to have a part. But then I realized we can't. It's just not feasible in this situation.

It is not uncommon for the special education teacher in a co-taught classroom using the one teach-one assist model to have feelings of not contributing significantly to the course content and delivery. These feelings are most often overcome by adopting a co-teaching model that fully involves both teachers in planning, delivering, and taking accountability for student learning. Because of the systemic restraints in place at Riverview High School, Janice and Ellen do not believe they are able to adopt that model at this time.

Content Area Specialization

As their co-teaching relationship has developed over two years, Janice and Ellen have entertained the idea of expanding Janice's teaching role in the co-taught classroom. The literature on co-teaching at the secondary level affirms some of their hesitancy to raise their co-teaching relationship to this higher level. Janice and Ellen identified the importance of content area knowledge when designing instruction in their classroom. Generally, they recognized the advantage that Ellen, the content area specialist, has over Janice in terms of content knowledge. Janice acknowledged their dilemma, "As much as I would like to teach more, I don't feel that I would do as good a job as Ellen does. It's because that's what she is trained in. And I'm not. It just makes more sense to have her do it." Despite the fact that Janice does not routinely provide instruction to students, she and Ellen believe their co-teaching relationship works because of their ability to use their strengths to reach all kids. Janice commented, "Ellen is an awesome teacher. She breaks things down in a very easy way for kids to understand." Ellen reciprocated the compliment by stating,

We have a last hour class and I am not able to remember specific students and what they are missing. Janice has been great with that particular class, even with the general education kids. She makes sure that their makeup work is done. I think that's been good.

Janice has noticed there have been more opportunities for her to teach during the current semester than she has had previously. These opportunities have arisen on days when Ellen has been absent and Janice can easily take over the instructional role. When reflecting on the times that Janice has assumed a lead teaching role, both teachers have noted a gradual change in the students' perceptions of her. Janice commented, "The kids respond a little bit better to me this semester than they have in previous semesters. I think it's because they saw me as the teacher in the classroom and not just somebody who helps a few." Ellen agreed,

A lot of kids have been more vocal and comfortable with asking Janice for help. She takes some students out to work. Some of the regular education students have come out to work with her. They take tests in her room. They are getting more familiar with who she is as a teacher.

Janice is ready to try to assume a more equal role in delivering instruction and would like to begin doing so at the beginning of the next school year. This seems like an attainable goal for them and a logical next step in the continuing growth of their co-teaching relationship.

Planning Time

Having adequate time for teachers in a co-teaching relationship to collaborate and plan for curriculum, instruction, and assessment is identified in the research literature as being a key to co-teaching success (Scruggs, et al., 2007). During the first year of teaching together Ellen and Janice spent time in planning and collaboration once per week. They would use this time to create lesson plans and discuss the specific needs of students. This time was available because

Ellen had a planning period with no student responsibilities and Janice was free to meet with her during that time.

During the current year Janice and Ellen have found creating the time to plan one of the most challenging aspects of their co-teaching relationship. A number of Ellen's journalism students were not able to enroll in an appropriate class due to scheduling conflicts. Instead, they are enrolled in journalism as an independent study. They come to her classroom during her planning time to work. Ellen relates the difficulty in finding the time to collaborate when she explains, "This year I don't have a single planning period to myself. I always have students in my room. It's hard to find a time [to talk] and we have confidentiality and things like that."

Janice and Ellen look for opportunities to plan and discuss student needs whenever they can. Janice explained, "I can't just waltz into her room and talk during her plan time because there is always a student in there." Ellen added, "So I try to come in here [Janice's room] if we need to talk about something confidential or we send the kids to the publications lab." The two try to meet every other day before school to make sure they know what to do and are prepared. Ellen believes the work they did together the previous year has helped them overcome their lack of planning time this year. As she noted, "Last year we met together once a week and we talked about everything that was coming up. Now we pretty much follow the same lesson plans. We change things if they didn't work out last year."

Ellen also relies on Janice's input when she believes there is a need to revise a lesson. During the time they have to meet she will consult with Janice for ideas. Ellen said,

Oftentimes I'll discover there is something that was a problem and say to her, "Do you have a new idea about this?" Or "is there some way we can change it?" Or if we have a

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specific student who is struggling: "Is there a way we can reach that student for this particular subject, because I think it's confusing them?"

Both Janice and Ellen would like a schedule that lets them devote more time to developing their co-teaching relationship but the constraints of the current schedule do not allow it. Instead, they rely on their past experiences together to plan for the present. This arrangement seems satisfactory for now, but more time for collaboration could provide an opportunity for them to adopt a co-teaching model that allows for more equal responsibility and status for both teachers.

Support from Administration and Teacher Colleagues

The research literature routinely cites the importance of administrative support when beginning a co-teaching relationship (Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Scruggs, et al., 2007; Walther-Thomas, et al., 1996). Janice initiated support from her principal when she first learned about co-teaching. After gaining Ellen's support for the idea, Janice approached her principal. "I just brought it up with [the principal], and he said it sounded like a good idea," she reported.

The principal at Riverview High School saw himself in a minor role as facilitator of the co-teaching relationship between Janice and Ellen. He commented,

The main thing I did on the facilitating part of it was that it was presented to me that we may want to try the co-teaching setting to be able to better address the students' needs in the area of English. I basically allowed it to happen, to look at what the long-term plan was with the major goals. Eventually what I could see happening, if co-teaching works, there may or may not be a reason for us to have a separate course.

When asked if support was solicited from the special education cooperative, Janice explained that she told them she was going to try it. She also spoke with the school psychologist serving the Riverview school district. "I told her the plan," Janice stated. "She thought it was a good

idea. I didn't really bring it up with anybody else at the cooperative." Since the co-teaching relationship began, Janice has talked to cooperative administration about their endeavor and she believes there is support there for it. "I have mentioned it since and everybody thinks it is a great idea," she says. "Everyone has been very supportive."

Support for the co-taught classroom was not necessarily met with enthusiasm from other teachers in the English department. During the focus group interview, Ellen shared she was glad the principal let them try co-teaching because some of the other English teachers were opposed to it. She reported, "They didn't even want us to try it. They were against the idea of it being tried at all because they thought that then it would be expected to follow up into sophomore and junior and senior English." She understood embracing co-teaching required embracing change and explained, "Sometimes people get comfortable in their comfort zones and it's hard to get out. I get that way too and I am really glad we did this because it challenges me. It challenges me as a teacher to not get so stuck in a box." Janice expressed surprise at the reaction of the other teachers. She commented,

> I am kind of surprised to hear that the other teachers had a problem with it because I
> never expected it to go past freshman English. They are all wonderful, but I knew they
> wouldn't be open to having me in the classroom. And I'm not going to press that. I'm not
> going to make it "You have to do this." Forcing it on someone is the number one way to
> make it not successful.

Despite the fact that Janice and Ellen did not follow what the research literature marks as the best path for successful co-teaching, they believe they have built a successful relationship. For them, the co-teaching classroom is anchored on the foundational beliefs that when it comes to achievement all means all and every student has the potential to be successful. They also share

the core belief that students with disabilities can be successful in the general education classroom. Janice and Ellen base the success of their co-teaching relationship on the fact they are both early career teachers who have been exposed to the ideas of inclusion and success for all throughout their own learning experiences. They both look forward to continuing their co-teaching relationship and finding ways for them to add on to what they already built to create a new concept of educating students to the best of their abilities.

Chapter 4 included a review of the findings of the case study. These findings were revealed through analysis of interviews, focus groups, and observations. The chapter began with a description of the Riverview school district. It included a description of Riverview High School including demographics, staff, curriculum, and the history of student achievement at RHS. Inclusive practices at Riverview High School were detailed and the story of how the co-teaching participants formed their relationship unfolded.

The development of a co-teaching relationship between a general education English teacher and a special education teacher is dependent upon many factors including shared beliefs and a willingness to compromise and share. The benefits of such a relationship are increased feelings of teacher efficacy and heightened student achievement.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Implications

Chapter 4 described the findings of the study revealing how a co-teaching relationship has evolved over a 2-year period and its impact on the teachers and students involved. The teachers in the study used the building blocks of common core beliefs and experiences to lay the foundation of their relationship. They learned that building a co-teaching classroom required them to adapt their traditional teaching roles and classroom management styles in order to work together effectively. The teachers in the study found their beliefs in their teaching abilities grew as a result of their experiences as co-teachers and their students achieved at higher levels than they anticipated. Finally, their experience has revealed that co-teaching at the secondary level is influenced by the traditional organizational structures that impact the decisions they make in respect to the growth and development of their relationship.

The purpose of this study was to describe the development of a co-teaching relationship in a school setting organized to serve special education students through traditional pullout and inclusion models. As the study unfolded, the perceptions of the participants of what constitutes a successful co-teaching relationship and what facilitates and constrains the development of that relationship.

Chapter 5 unveils the conclusions offered as a result of an examination of the findings through the theoretical frameworks of social cognitive theory and collective efficacy theory. As the findings were extrapolated from the data, it became apparent that organizational structure played a significant role in the development of the co-teaching relationship. Therefore this theoretical perspective will also be applied to construct conclusions and implications for the study.

Social Cognitive Theory: The Importance of Developing Core Beliefs in Co-teaching

Social cognitive theory posits that human development is a result of the reciprocal interaction of behavior, cognition, and the influence of the environment (Bandura, 1989). It is this constant interplay that forms and shapes people as they grow and mature. As this process occurs, a certain set of standards and beliefs develops that allows people to form a sense of continuity and purpose for their lives (Bandura, 1986). These standards and beliefs then become a moral code by which people choose to live.

For the teachers involved in this study, their beliefs that all students could achieve and that all students deserved access to general education classrooms were grounded in their experiences from childhood to adulthood. Both teachers were in their twenties and had similar social and educational backgrounds. Their own experiences as public school students reflected the practice of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom. During their post-secondary education they were taught that the expectations of No Child Left Behind included students with disabilities.

This interaction between the behaviors modeled for them as students and in which they engaged as teachers, the environments in which they witnessed inclusion and were taught about working with special needs students, and the cognitive growth they experienced as teachers in training influenced their belief systems. This theoretical concept of triadic reciprocal causation, or the interaction between behavior, cognition, and environment, supports the way in which the teachers beliefs were constructed (Bandura, 1989).

Intertwined with the concept of triadic reciprocal causation is the role that fortuitous encounters play in developing human relationships. Bandura's social cognitive theory of personality development explains that people often encounter one another through a fortuitous

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series of events that lead to reciprocal exchanges of thought, behavior, and actions between individuals (Bandura, 1999). According to Bandura, a fortuitous event is not necessarily an unintended meeting of people who do not know each other. Instead he describes it as a meeting that may move people to a new relationship with an altered trajectory for their personal or professional lives. The attributes, skills, and interests of these people will help determine whether the relationship will grow and be sustained. The special education and general education teachers in this study were brought together via fortuitous circumstances. They shared similar attributes, skills, and interests that initially drew them together and which have helped them to sustain their relationship. As they continue to work together they find themselves growing closer and desiring to expand their co-teaching practices.

Once a relationship is initiated, the depth of the emotional attachment between the partners can sustain it. Strong interpersonal attractions and similar values and personal standards also have an influence on the relationship. People who have this emotional attachment with similar values and personal standards will maintain their relationship longer than people who do not. Both teacher participants isolated their personalities as a mitigating factor in the success of their co-teaching relationship. They were drawn together initially because of similar experiences, values, and standards. They formed an attachment that has lasted over time, which relates to the personality concept embedded within social cognitive theory.

Social cognitive theory has provided a supporting structure for this study. Part of social cognitive theory that has served as a lens through which to view conclusions of the study are the constructs of triadic reciprocal causation, agency, and the impact of fortuitous events and personality on the development of relationships. A micro theory that is directly related to social cognitive theory and is applicable to the conclusions of this study is collective efficacy.

Co-Teaching as a Catalyst for Constructing Collective Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a concept deeply embedded in social cognitive theory. Bandura's work on self-efficacy describes it as a person's belief that she has the knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish specific tasks (1997). A person's perception of her own efficacy impacts her thought patterns and ability to view her world as a place of possibilities or a place filled with obstacles. Perceived efficacy influences the type of goals people set and how hard they work to achieve those goals. Perceived efficacy affects the length of time that people will continue to work toward the realization of their goals. It also affects how they deal with the stressors and demands of their environment as they pursue their goals (Bandura, 2000).

Bandura cites that a person's sense of self-efficacy can have the most impact on whether they are successful in realizing the goals they set for themselves.(1989). Bandura writes that the actions people choose to take are motivated by these personal efficacy beliefs. From this principle of self-efficacy a new theory of collective efficacy emerged.

Collective efficacy is a group's shared belief they have the *collective* power to influence their actions to achieve the desired outcome (Bandura, 2000). Collective efficacy is not simply the beliefs of individual members added together. Rather it is a group level property that is dynamically different from individual self-efficacy beliefs. The shared beliefs of a group's members affect what type of future they envision for themselves. It also impacts how they utilize resources, how much effort they put into achieving their vision, and how long they persevere when they encounter opposition (Bandura, 2000). The construction of collective efficacy and its effect on the co-teaching relationship proved to be a provocative theoretical lens through which to construct conclusions from the study, because the group was comprised of only two people.

When viewed through this perspective, evidence from this study shows that teachers in a co-teaching relationship can develop an increased sense of collective efficacy. Both teachers noted during individual and focus group interviews they believed their own efficacy levels had increased. And when asked what they believed about their collective abilities to reach the students in the co-taught classroom they responded in kind. Both participants indicated the support they receive from each other and the ability to blend their strengths has resulted in a relationship that transcends what they can accomplish individually. The sense of collective efficacy that developed between the teachers in this study did not occur by happenstance. There were a number of specific experiences that led to a heightened sense of collective efficacy between the teachers.

Bandura states that efficacy development comes from four sources. These sources are mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and affective states (Bandura, 1986). Mastery experiences occur when we successfully perform a task and our sense of efficacy increases. It has been cited by Bandura as the most effective way of developing a strong sense of self and collective efficacy (1997). Teachers in this study had multiple opportunities to encounter mastery experiences. As they worked together over the course of two years they witnessed together the successful integration of special needs students with general education students. After planning and designing interventions for individual students they saw those interventions result in more effective learning. The most powerful mastery experience for these teachers was in the increased achievement of students in the co-taught classroom.

Vicarious experiences also played a role in the development of collective efficacy for the teachers in this study. While mastery experience might have had the most impact on developing collective efficacy beliefs, the effect of vicarious experience was evident throughout the data

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analysis phase. Vicarious experiences provide teachers with a model by which to measure their success (Bandura, 1997). Each teacher in this study made statements throughout the research process about how her co-teacher helped make her a better teacher. The general education teacher believed her knowledge of how to work with special education students increased dramatically. The special education teacher believed she learned strategies for teaching course content she would never have known had she not been in a co-teaching relationship. Both teachers stated they had learned from each other many strategies to use with students in the classes they taught by themselves.

The level of collective efficacy in co-teaching relationship can be a powerful influence on the growth and development of the relationship. As co-teachers have opportunities to witness each other's successful teaching abilities their own sense of efficacy increases. When they collaborate to maximize the strengths of each teacher to attain a common goal they are able to engage in the mastery experiences that continue to expand their collective efficacy beliefs. As their collective efficacy beliefs grow, they become a more and more effective team and their ability to influence student achievement grows as well.

Collective Efficacy and Student Achievement

Collective efficacy can be a predictor of student achievement as well as impact how teachers collaborate to teach all students (Allinder, 1994; Ashton & Webb, 1986). As teachers in this study became more confident of their collective abilities, the achievement of students in their co-taught classroom increased. In this study, collective efficacy provides a theoretical perspective that illuminates the link between co-teaching and student achievement.

Extensive research by Goddard et. al (Goddard, 2001; 2000, 2004) has established a connection between collective efficacy and student achievement. They pose that collective

efficacy may be an important variable explaining the differences in student achievement found in various schools. One study by Goddard et. al (2000) involved 70 teachers in 70 schools in five different states. The study used a collective efficacy scale designed by the researcher to measure the levels of collective efficacy of the participants. These scores were then correlated with student achievement levels in reading and math at each school. Results showed that an increase of one unit in collective efficacy beliefs was associated with "an increase of more than 40% of a standard in student achievement" (p. 501).

The co-teachers at Riverview High School also found an increase in the achievement of students with disabilities in the co-taught classroom. During the first year of co-teaching, more students in that classroom reached mastery of outcomes at higher levels than in the other classes the general education teacher taught by herself. Course outcomes and materials were identical in each of the classes. Achievement levels of some students with disabilities in the co-taught classroom even surpassed those of general education students in the general education teachers other classes.

Although the teachers in this study were not given an efficacy scale, data from individual and focus group interviews show their collective efficacy beliefs have influenced the achievement of their students. The teachers' perceptions they were able to reach more students in more effective ways were stated as a reason these students were achieving at higher levels. Statements that their increased feelings of collective competency resulted in higher student achievement also support this correlation.

In this study, collective efficacy played a significant role in the personal and professional relationships between the research participants. It impacted their belief in their abilities to grow and learn as teachers and in their abilities to positively impact student achievement. As the study

progressed, the role of organizational structures at Riverview High School on the development of the co-teaching relationship emerged. It became apparent through analysis of the findings that the degree of collective efficacy of the teacher participants helped them navigate through the maze of those existing organizational structures.

Collective Efficacy and Organizational Structures

Schools that desire to make changes to the traditional ways of schooling are often overwhelmed by the effect those changes may have on the existing structures. And rather than be able to affect change for those existing structures, they may be forced to adapt their change efforts to fit those structures. For Janice and Ellen, the organizational structure of Riverview High School placed specific restrictions on how they designed their co-teaching relationship. Their self and collective efficacy beliefs influenced why they chose to continue to pursue that relationship instead despite these restrictions.

Teachers in this study found the organizational structure of Riverview High School affected the decisions they made about their co-teaching relationship. One of the most profound influences was revealed by the roles each teacher adopted within the relationship. As the data were analyzed, it appeared the special education teacher was the co-teaching partner required to make the most significant changes to her practice. The structure of Riverview High School was often cited as the reason this occurred.

Ellen, the general education teacher, teaches freshman English within a departmentalized system. She teaches three freshman English classes each semester that are identical in course content to the co-taught freshman English class. It appeared her responsibilities for all these classes allowed her room to automatically become the home base for her and Janice, the special education teacher. Rather than explore an alternative setting for the co-taught classroom, it was

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assumed they would work within the existing structure to select the location of their classroom. Janice commented during her interview that it was difficult for her to give up her own teaching space, but that she understood they did not have another choice.

Ellen was assumed to have greater content area knowledge than Janice. The standardized secondary school system of departmentalization with experts for each curriculum area affected the co-teaching roles Ellen and Janice assigned to themselves. Janice deferred to Ellen's expertise as an English teacher and accepted her supporting role in the classroom. She expressed that she would like to be able to do more direct teaching but believed Ellen was better suited for it.

Riverview High School follows a traditionally accepted schedule. This schedule requires Ellen to cover curriculum identical to another freshman English teacher. She must also make sure she and the other teacher have covered the same material by the end of each semester. This is because students from both classes may have the other teacher for freshman English the second semester. Janice believes because Ellen had to teach three other identical courses they could not take the chance that Janice might not cover the identical curriculum in the same way. Due to the need to conform to the organizational structure of RHS, Janice has to suppress her desire to become a more active participant in the co-teaching experience.

When drawing conclusions from the finding that organizational structures impact the decisions co-teachers make about their relationship, Bandura's work on self and collective efficacy becomes particularly relevant. The teachers in this study desired to build a co-teaching relationship in order to help students with disabilities fully integrate into a general education classroom. They also hoped this opportunity would result in higher achievement for their students. Janice and Ellen embraced an ideal and immediately created a co-taught classroom

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without any of the work that is cited as important in setting up a successful co-teaching relationship. The principal of their school, while supportive of their efforts, remained on the periphery of the initiative. He did not alter existing school structures to accommodate the unique needs of co-taught classrooms and co-teachers. Ellen's departmental colleagues were skeptical of co-teaching and did not support it out of fear they may be required to implement it into their classrooms in the future. All of these conditions lead to the question of how Janice and Ellen were able to develop, sustain, and make plans for their co-teaching relationship in spite of obstacles.

Viewing this phenomenon through Bandura's work on efficacy provides an insight into how the teachers in this study were able to initiate and sustain a co-teaching relationship despite the obstacles presented to them. In addition to the relationship between self and collective efficacy and goal attainment previously noted, Bandura's concept of perceived controllability becomes especially germane (1993). Perceived controllability refers to the extent that people believe their environment is controllable. Controllability is manifested in two ways. First is the level and strength of the efficacy beliefs that one produce change by perseverance and using resources creatively. Second are the constraints on the environment and whether one believes they can modify their thoughts and actions to be successful despite those constraints.

People who doubt their abilities to persevere and to control their environment are able to produce little to no change to their environment even though there may be many opportunities to do so. On the other hand, people who have high efficacy beliefs find ways to exercise some control. They are able to use perseverance and ingenuity to create the environments they desire even when they system within which they exist has limited opportunities and a large number of constraints (Bandura, 1993). For the participants of this study, this seems particularly applicable.

Janice and Ellen believed they were able to develop their co-teaching relationship despite the obstacles created by organizational structures. They created ways of working together which did not require them to change existing practice at Riverview High School. They have continued to persevere in their relationship and have developed goals for its growth. They eagerly anticipate how they can adapt their co-teaching practice to move closer to the optimal model where each teacher has equal status in the classroom.

Despite the limitations of teaching responsibilities and classroom location imposed by existing organizational structures at RHS, this co-teaching relationship continues to grow. The initial professional relationship between Ellen and Janice has grown into a close friendship where they share philosophies, goals, and ideals. Their belief and trust in each other have increased as well. The mastery and vicarious experiences they have shared has helped them build an increased of self and collective efficacy that gives them the energy to pursue the relationship to a higher level.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This section discusses the implications of the findings and conclusions of the study in relationship to educational policy and practice. This case study of co-teaching at the secondary level suggests implications for creating co-teaching partnerships that can function within a traditional secondary school structure. This case study also raises questions about the appropriateness of traditional structures for contemporary education and the needs of today's students. It also suggests that it may be difficult for co-teaching, or other educational reforms, to be sustained if the structures are not altered to support the initiative.

Since the 1990s, co-teaching as a strategy for creating improved learning opportunities has been implemented across the country. In order to implement a model of co-teaching that

improves student learning there are specific factors that should be addressed. A number of research studies have been conducted on the conditions that facilitate effective co-teaching (Scruggs, et al., 2007; Weiss & Brigham, 2000). Teachers who desire to enter into a co-teaching relationship can expect a higher level of success if they attend to these conditions.

Partnering for Success

When planning and implementing a co-teaching relationship the research literature cites the importance of selecting the right match between co-teaching partners (Scruggs, et al., 2007). When both teachers voluntarily commit to the co-teaching partnership the success rate of that partnership is much higher. As demonstrated in the co-teaching relationship at Riverview High School, co-teachers can expect to work together more effectively and to experience professional growth when they have chosen to work together. Another equally important reason that the RHS teachers were able to initiate such a successful relationship was because they shared similar beliefs about schools, students, and teaching.

Pairing co-teachers with similar beliefs can strengthen the relationship and sustain it as they work through challenges. The co-teachers at Riverview High School used their shared beliefs that all children can learn if given the opportunity and that all students at Riverview High School deserve a chance to be integrated into the general education classroom as the foundation of their relationship. As they witnessed more special needs students achieving at higher levels these shared beliefs became more and more solidified, despite the challenges they encountered in building their relationship. Other educators choosing to enter into co-teaching relationships may find it advantageous to select partners with whom they share similar philosophies and belief systems. This may help them navigate change and create the strong model for which they are searching.

Self and Collective Efficacy Influences

Building a co-teaching relationship requires teachers to create a new vision for their professional practice. In this new relationship they collaborate to set goals for themselves and their students. They discuss and determine what roles each teacher will assume and how they will share or divide responsibilities. As they create this new paradigm, teachers' self and collective efficacy beliefs help determine its success. Understanding the influences that self and collective efficacy can exert on the co-teaching relationship can help maximize those influences.

Self-efficacy is the belief we hold that, as individuals, we have the skills and abilities necessary to achieve our goals. Collective efficacy is the belief shared by a group that they have the power to work together to achieve their goals (Bandura, 1997). As teachers look toward establishing a co-teaching relationship they can uncover their own self and collective efficacy beliefs and use them to construct a stronger partnership.

The study of the co-teaching relationship at Riverview High School revealed that the general education and special education teachers each had their own self-efficacy perceptions regarding their abilities to work with students. At the onset of the relationship both the general and special education teachers believed they were better able to teach their own target populations. In other words, the general education teacher had more content area knowledge and was more suited to teach that content to the students. The special education teacher was more effective at designing specific learning strategies for special needs students, so it was assumed she would be responsible for that portion of co-teaching. Both teachers had a high degree of self-efficacy with regard to their traditional roles.

Each of the co-teachers at RHS began their relationship with the belief they had the skills and abilities to reach the students for whom they were primarily responsible. They entered into

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the new co-teaching relationship with mastery experiences that helped them believe they were able to achieve goals they had set for themselves as individual teachers. They recognized, however, they did not have the same degree of efficacy when faced with assuming the responsibilities held by their new partner. As teachers enter into co-teaching relationships they can use their self-efficacy beliefs to strengthen their abilities to achieve the goals they set forth for their new way of teaching together. This result is known as collective efficacy.

Collective efficacy is not cumulative in nature. It is not the sum of each co-teacher's self-efficacy beliefs. Instead, collective efficacy results from teachers' mastery and vicarious experiences that happen when working closely together. It is what occurs when co-teachers remark that they cannot achieve individually what they can now achieve by working together (Goddard, et al., 2000). As documented at Riverview High School, co-teachers who are able to design effective relationships may expect to develop higher levels of collective efficacy. When this occurs, higher student achievement and greater professional satisfaction for the teachers can be the result (Goddard, et al., 2000).

The co-teaching relationship at Riverview High School demonstrated that carefully selecting co-teaching partners could help facilitate the development of the relationship. It also illustrated the effects of self and collective efficacy on the growth of the relationship and its connection to student success. Both of these are important considerations for teachers beginning their own co-teaching relationship. However, the discovery of how existing secondary school organizational structures affect the co-teaching relationship may signal a key implication for future practice.

Organizational Structures: Considerations and Suggestions

Co-teaching is one of a number of instructional reforms that have been suggested to increase student achievement. While it has been successful in many settings, the unique nature of secondary school organizational structure makes it particularly challenging to implement at that level (Mastropieri, et al., 2005). The research literature notes the organizational nature of secondary schools plays a role in how teachers select co-teaching models and how they adopt roles and responsibilities.

There are a variety of co-teaching models from which teachers may choose. In some models the special education teacher remains on the periphery of instructional responsibilities and in others both teachers assume equal roles and responsibilities. Dieker and Murawski (2003) include six indicators in their definition of an effective co-teaching relationship. They are 1) two or more credentialed faculty working together, 2) conducted in the same classroom with a heterogeneous group of students, 3) both teachers plan and provide substantive instruction together, 4) both teachers assess and evaluate student progress, 5) both teachers are actively engaged with students, and 6) teachers routinely provide feedback to each other on teaching styles, content, and activities.

As secondary teachers begin to plan for co-teaching they can expect to examine each indicator of a successful co-teaching relationship and determine if and how they can include each indicator in their co-taught classroom. The teachers in the study at Riverview High School entered into their relationship after the special education teacher learned of co-teaching in a university master's degree course. They were eager to begin co-teaching and did not engage in the pre-planning that can be critical as this new relationship is formed. It was later discovered

that the indicators of optimum co-teaching relationships were affected by the organizational structures in place at RHS.

Most secondary schools are organized into departments where students receive instruction from a number of teachers who are licensed to teach specific curriculum content. Special and general education teachers entering into co-teaching relationships at the secondary level may be influenced by this structure. Special education teachers may not be licensed in the same curriculum area as their general education partner and may not believe they have the knowledge base necessary to deliver substantive instruction. As co-teachers are matched, they must define the instructional role they will play in the partnership. The teachers at Riverview High School initially believed the general education teacher was more qualified to assume the lead teacher role. But after two years of working closely, both were ready to turn some of that responsibility over the special education teacher. So in order to allow both teachers to teach course content there should be open and honest discussion of the goals of the teaching partnership and how the goals may change over time.

Another important condition for effective co-teaching that can influence the development of the co-teaching relationship is the physical space the co-teachers share. Elementary school co-teaching often occurs within one classroom where the teachers share the space for the entire day (Weiss & Brigham, 2000). This allows both teachers to create a shared space that reflects their own personalities and teaching styles. It also gives the co-teachers the opportunity to design the organization and management systems that they will use in their classrooms. As demonstrated in the Riverview High School co-taught classroom, this ability to create a classroom where each teacher feels a sense of belonging may be harder to achieve at the secondary level.

The general education and special education teachers at RHS each taught many other students besides the ones in the co-taught class. The special education teacher maintained her own separate classroom where she worked with other special needs students throughout the day. This was a necessary condition for her to do her job. The general education teacher also taught other classes of students where the special education teacher was not present. This created a division of ownership for the special education teacher. She believed that, while she felt welcome in the general education teacher's classroom, she did not have the sense of ownership that may be present in a co-taught classroom at the elementary level. Teachers beginning a co-teaching relationship at the secondary level can use their experience to plan ways to increase the true sense of partnership that may be sacrificed by this organizational barrier.

In order for co-teachers to create a successful partnership they must have time to collaborate to design, implement, and sustain their co-teaching endeavor (Scruggs, et al., 2007). This is necessary at all stages of co-teaching from the planning sessions, through the implementation phase, and in order to grow and sustain the relationship. For co-teachers at the secondary level the master schedule becomes a critical piece to facilitate planning.

The research study at Riverview High School revealed that co-teachers were not assigned a regularly scheduled common planning time. Instead, they met before school, after school, and during the general education teacher's planning time. During their first year of co-teaching they met more regularly. They believed their hard work the first year made it easier to co-teach the second year. While that was true, it raised the question of whether the growth and development of their relationship was hindered because of a lack of time to devote to it.

For those teachers who desire to enter into a co-teaching partnership it will be important to secure designated planning time. Due to scheduling restrictions commonly found at the

secondary level they may need to work closely with school administrators to receive that scheduled time. In the event that it is not available, co-teachers may need to make a commitment to work together at other, nonscheduled times.

Sustaining the Co-Teaching Relationship

The research literature on co-teaching at the secondary school level clearly identifies the structural components that impact how a co-teaching relationship is designed and functions (Mastropieri, et al., 2005; Scruggs, et al., 2007). Co-teachers at Riverview High School organized their co-taught classroom to accommodate the organizational structures in place at their school. These structures reflected the traditional design prevalent in many of today's secondary schools. For the co-teachers at Riverview High School, developing their co-teaching model, as well as goal setting for the future, depended on working within the existing framework of RHS. Changing the existing organizational structures at Riverview High School to fit their co-teaching model was not an option for them.

An important implication for this study can be revealed by asking, "Can co-teaching relationships organized to fit existing structures be sustained over time?" An equally compelling question may be, "How can existing organizational structures be altered to fit the needs of a co-teaching relationship?" To answer these questions we can look to the role that key administrators play in supporting and sustaining optimum co-teaching relationships.

Administrative support for co-teaching has been identified as a primary need for creating and sustaining an optimum co-teaching relationship (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). From matching the right teacher partners to creating schedules that allow co-teachers sufficient planning time, administrators can influence the success of the co-teaching relationship (Mastropieri, et al., 2005; Walther-Thomas, 1997). The principal at Riverview High School

supported the co-teaching relationship by approving its implementation. Beyond that support he remained on the periphery of the initiative. Neither the general education nor special education teacher approached him with requests to change existing organizational structures to accommodate their growing relationship. Intentionally or not, the principal did not offer to change the structures to make it easier for the co-teachers to create a successful experience for the students.

Sustaining a co-teaching relationship over time may require organizational changes that can be difficult to make considering how entrenched schools are in their current practices. Garnering support from administrators and a willingness from them to consider how to modify their organizations to promote success can be essential when considering how to sustain co-teaching efforts. Without this support it becomes questionable whether co-teaching relationships can continue to grow and sustain themselves over time.

Summary of Conclusions and Implications

This study of co-teaching in a secondary school where special needs students were historically served through a combination of pull out and inclusive methods revealed that the secondary school setting creates a unique environment in which to build a co-teaching relationship. Shared core beliefs can facilitate the selection of co-teaching partners and can assist them as the build the model for their relationship. Both self and collective efficacy may be increased as co-teaching partners work together and experience success for their students and increased professional growth for themselves. As co-teachers in the secondary schools design, implement, and attempt to sustain optimum co-teaching relationships they must take into account the effect of organizational structures on their efforts. Sustaining co-teaching relationships over

time becomes an important implication when considering the way secondary schools are

organized to meet traditional paradigms.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Educational Leadership
Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142

Consent Form

Purpose: You are invited to participate in a research study of co-teaching relationships in a rural high school. The information generated from your participation will assist in identifying conditions that affect the development of co-teaching relationships and their influence on student achievement. I am conducting this research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctoral degree from Wichita State University.

Participant Selection: Participants will include 2 USD 005 Riverview High School teachers and a principal who voluntarily choose to participate in the study. You were selected as a possible participant because of your experiences in working and observing in a co-teaching relationship where special education students receive instruction in a regular education classroom.

Explanation of Procedures: If you voluntarily decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in individual interviews and focus groups, and to allow the researcher to observe you during teaching and team planning time. A review of relevant documents will be included in the research. Individual and group interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. A final group meeting will be held in December 2009 to get your input on the data analysis and findings.

Discomfort/Risks: To minimize the risk or lessen your feelings of vulnerability you will be reassured of privacy, confidentiality and your participation will not be reflected in any way on USD 005 evaluation/supervision processes or procedures. It will be my role as the researcher to establish and maintain good rapport, and model good listening skills with all participants. I will make every effort to communicate in an honest and respectful manner.

Benefits: The results of this study have the potential to identify factors that contribute to building co-teaching relationships that benefit all students. This study will provide additional empirical research on the ways that general and special education teachers can create co-teaching relationships that result in increased academic achievement for all students.

Confidentiality: Any information obtained in this study in which you can be identified will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Your participation is voluntary. And in the event you decide not to participate that decision will not affect your future relations with Riverview High School, USD 005, or Wichita State University. The data will be treated confidentially and none of the data will be personally identifiable. Your privacy will be protected and confidentiality of information guaranteed. Any data collected from you in this study will be aggregated and only available to me (the researcher) and my major professor. Your name will not appear in any report, publication, or presentation resulting from this study. Findings from this research may be presented at national conferences or published in scholarly journals. If this is the case your name will not be associated with the data, thus assuring confidentiality. By signing a copy of this form you are granting your permission to participate in this study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Refusal/Withdrawal: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University and/or USD 005 and Riverview High School. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or fear of reprisal.

Contact: If you have any questions about this research, you can contact my advisor at: Dr. Jean Patterson at 1845 Fairmount, Box 142, Wichita State University, Wichita, KS, 67260, phone 316.978.6392 or email jean.patterson@wichita.edu or Diane Nickelson, 9740 S. Tyler Road, Clearwater, Kansas 67026, (620) 584-2487,dnickelson@usd005.org. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-000, telephone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and you are one of 2 CHS teachers or a principal who have voluntarily decided to participate. You will be given a copy of this signed consent form to keep.

_____   _____

Signature of Subject   Date

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Interview Protocol and Questions

Hello. My name is Diane Nickelson and I am a Wichita State University doctoral student. I am conducting a research study on high school general and special education teachers who work together to impact student achievement. This relationship is known as co-teaching. There are different models of co-teaching and this study will explore how co-teaching exists among your team and how it impacts achievement for regular and special education students. This study will contribute to the existing research base on co-teaching and may provide a resource for teachers who are interested in using the co-teaching model.

Let's review the consent form and letter explaining the study. If you agree to participate in the study you may sign the consent form. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. Your decision not to participate will not affect your future relations with Riverview USD 005 or Wichita State University.

REVIEW CONSENT LETTER

With your permission I would like to record our session today so that I will be able to more carefully listen to your responses. The recording will be used so I can later transcribe the interview and will be destroyed following the completion of the study. Please remember that your anonymity is guaranteed and there will be no names used.

By signing one copy of this form you are granting your permission to participate in this interview. You are welcome to keep a copy of the form. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided and voluntarily agree to participate in the

study. You may also withdraw your data from the study without penalty or fear of reprisal.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please state your name and your position at Riverview High School.

2. What does the term co-teacher mean to you?

3. Please describe your relationship as a co-teaching teaching team.

4. What does your team believe about achievement for general and special education students?

5. What does your team believe about inclusion?

6. How does your team work together to design and deliver instruction for all your students?

7. What has most impacted your beliefs about working with other teachers?

8. What challenges has your team faced in regards to working as a team.

9. What role, if any, has relationship building played in the development of your co-teaching team?

APPENDIX C

Individual Interview Protocol and Questions

Hello. My name is Diane Nickelson and I am a Wichita State University doctoral student. When I conducted the focus group interviews I explained the purpose of the study and went over the consent form. Today I am here to conduct our first interview.

The research I am undertaking focuses on how teachers at your rural high school work together to facilitate achievement for all students. There are different models of co-teaching and this study will explore how co-teaching exists among your team and how it impacts achievement for regular and special education students. This study will contribute to the existing research base on co-teaching and may provide a resource for teachers who are interested in using the co-teaching model.

I would like to express my gratitude to you for participating in this study. Before we begin do you have any questions about the study? Are there any portions of the consent form that you would like me to review? Please remember that your participation in the study is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time. If you withdraw, there will be no reprisal from USD 005, Wichita State University, or myself.

With your permission I would like to tape record our session today so that I will be able to more carefully listen to your responses. The tape will be used only for the purpose of note taking and will be destroyed following the completion of the study. Please remember that your anonymity is guaranteed and there will be no names used.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please state your name and your position at Riverview High School.

2. Please describe your responsibilities in your role at Riverview High School.

3. Please describe the ways in which you and the other teachers in Riverview High School work together.

4. Please describe the ways in which you work with the special education teachers at your school.

5. Please describe the relationship you have with the regular and special education teachers you work with.

6. How have the increased expectations for achievement for all students, including special education students, changed the way you teach?

7. What are your beliefs about inclusion?

8. What teaching strategies do you use as a team to increase student achievement?

9. What action plans and/or strategies do you have in place for working with your teaching team to facilitate collaboration?

10. Do you think that working as a team is more effective in helping students achieve more? If so, why?