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Supporting and Supervising Co-Teaching: Best Practices for Assistant Principals

at a Large, Southern California, Comprehensive High School

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine essential best practices for administrators to use when supporting co-teaching. The participants were five assistant principals in a large public comprehensive high school in southern California. All five assistant principals participated in a survey that asked about their experiences and knowledge of supervisory practices for administrators in the areas of observation and evaluation, placement of students with disabilities, and the pairing process for the co-teachers. The data were analyzed and compared to data found in the literature to determine the need for targeted support for special populations and the professional development needed to maintain the highest quality instruction within the district. Ultimately, this study provides a record of best practices for assistant principals who supervise co-teaching. These best practices include: (1) administrator professional development on how to support co-teaching through standardized observation and evaluation expectations, similar to the general education teacher observation and evaluation, but including the unique aspects of co-teaching, (2) allow teachers be a part of the process with whom they are co-teaching, and (3) attend and be actively involved in IEP meetings and share in the placement process of students with disabilities. In addition to the assistant principals providing professional development to the co-teachers for a new observation and evaluation protocol and student placement collaboration, I believe administrators would also benefit from professional learning in the form of their role in the IEP and student services and educational setting process.

Keywords: Co-teaching, inclusion, assistant principal, administrator, supervision

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Supporting and Supervising Co-Teaching: Best Practices for Assistant Principals
at a Large, Southern California, Comprehensive High School

Chapter I: Definition of Problem

Education is a fundamental right that advances societies as well as individuals. In the United States, all children have the right to a free public education. However, children with disabilities have only been served in public schools, as a legal requirement, for 42 years. Strongly influenced by the Civil Rights Movement and cases such as *Brown v. BOE*, the process of educating all students has evolved, and continues to do so with the implementation of inclusion and co-teaching.

Employed co-teaching pairs consist of a general education teacher and an education specialist who teach together in general education classrooms where up to thirty-five percent of the student population is comprised of students with disabilities. With the support of administration, education specialists attempt to maximize the general education placements for students with disabilities whenever possible. It is important to note that not all students with disabilities are candidates for inclusion. Administrator support includes various assistance to general education teachers and education specialists with students with disabilities in their classrooms, in order to increase not only student success, but the success of the co-teaching program. There is research that aids in the development of a co-teaching program, but there is insufficient research on administrator roles in co-teaching. This study will specifically look at essential best practices that administrators can implement to benefit their co-teaching program. In order to further research in the area of roles of administrators in co-teaching, the study will answer the following question:

- What are essential best practices for high school assistant principals when supporting co-teaching?

Response to Problem

Through research studies, I will investigate experiences and practices of administrators when supervising co-teaching such as observing and evaluating co-teaching; teacher selection and pairing process, and student placement criteria. I will survey my site administrators using questions that provide feedback on practices and supports for supervision of a co-teaching program at a large comprehensive high school in southern California.

Purpose of Study

The context of this research explores the role of administrators in supporting co-teachers in a large public comprehensive high school in Southern California and the supports necessary for the successful implementation of co-teaching. Administrators, general education teachers, and education specialists need supports and a protocol that will ensure success of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The purpose of this research is to gain common themes that will provide a record of best practices that can be used to further promote and implement successful co-teaching in an effort to improve student achievement.

Preview Literature

While there is research that provides best practice approaches to implementing co-teaching and the co-teaching practice itself, there is insufficient research on the role of administrators and specific administrative factors that contribute to successful co-teaching. As I collected credible research and data, I discovered reoccurring themes that I intend to define and contribute to the factors that increase student outcomes in the co-taught classroom. These

themes are strategies for the administrator such as: observation and evaluation, student placement criteria, and teacher pairing protocol.

Preview of Methodology

The methodology I will use for this study will be qualitative research. I will investigate data related to co-teaching procedures such as administrative support in the areas of observations and evaluations, student placement criteria, and teacher pairings. I will survey five assistant principals at a large public high school in southern California via Google Forms. I will use researcher-generated questions that will provide insight into their experiences and practices while supporting co-teachers in the general education classroom.

Significance of Study

The potential individual benefits of this study are the discovery of essential best practices site administrators use when supporting co-teachers in a large comprehensive high school in southern California. Co-teachers will benefit from the guidance provided to the assistant principals following the study. The societal benefit of this study will be for other administrators responsible for supervising co-teaching will be able to look at the research done in this study and gain insight on essential best practices for administrators and co-teaching programs. The risks associated with this study are minimal. Lack of experience in supervising co-teaching, unintentional information disclosure, and the possible inconvenience of filling out the survey are the most likely risks to this study. The benefits are that the study will identify essential best practices that can be applied to any co-teaching program.

Conclusion

This research asked the question, what are essential best practices for high school assistant principals when supporting co-teaching? It looked at the way administrators currently

support a co-teaching program in a large comprehensive high school in southern California. Key literature points out three areas where administrators should support co-teaching: observations and evaluations, student placement, and how teachers are paired for co-teaching. Using information gathered from qualitative research, five assistant principals at a comprehensive high school were surveyed. The results will benefit co-teaching programs by providing research-based essential best practices for administrators when supporting co-teaching.

Definitions

- A. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act - Section 504 states that "no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under" any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009).
- B. ADA - The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 "prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in employment, State and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009).
- C. Administrator - For the purposes of this study, an administrator is an assistant principal and/or principal that is responsible for coordinating the preparation of master scheduling, curriculum development and implementation, certificated and classified evaluations, and the management and supervision of daily operations.
- D. Assistant Principal - For the purposes of this study, an assistant principal who is responsible for the direct observation and evaluation of teachers as well as aiding the principal in the daily responsibilities, activities, instruction, and programming at a school.

E. Brown vs. BOE - The U.S. Supreme Court case of Brown v. Board of Education (1954) is commonly cited as the turning point during the Civil Rights Movement. The case ended the legal racial segregation in schools and other public facilities.

F. Co-teaching - “Two teachers of equivalent professional status, most often a classroom teacher and a special education teacher, share instructional responsibility for a diverse group of students that usually includes several with disabilities or other special needs” (Friend, 2007, p.49).

G. EAHCA - Otherwise known as Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed in 1975 and ensures state support for a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) to all students with disabilities. It was revamped to better serve students and their families and renamed in 1990 to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and in 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA).

H. Education Specialist - Otherwise known as a special education teacher, the education specialist plans for and provides learning experiences for students with disabilities in varied educational settings. They are responsible for maximizing student benefit from the general education curriculum, to the greatest extent possible, which may include supplemental aides and accommodations. For the purposes of this study, the education specialist is considered, but not limited to, the differentiation and services specialist. In a co-taught setting, they are expected to plan, organize and implement an appropriate instructional program with the general education teacher that guides and encourages students to develop to their academic potential.

I. ESSA - Signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act, reauthorizes the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and replaces the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (California Department of Education). Among other

hallmarks, ESSA narrows the role of the Federal Government in public school/K-12 education and shifts the accountability to the states.

J. FAPE - According to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, each child who has a disability and needs special education services will receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). “Free” means that all students with disabilities will be educated at public expense. “Appropriate” refers to the guarantee that children with disabilities are entitled to an education that is individualized to their unique needs. The appropriateness of a student’s education is documented in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). “Public” refers to all students with disabilities having the right to be educated in the public school system; in some cases, students are educated in private schools at the expense of the public school. Finally, the “E” in FAPE stands for the education that must be provided to every school-aged child with a disability. The education should prepare them for post-secondary education or training, employment, and independent living.

K. General Education Teacher - For the purpose of this study, the general education teacher is considered, but not limited to, the content expert. In a co-taught setting, they are expected to plan, organize and implement an appropriate instructional program with the educational specialist, that encourages students to develop to their academic potential.

L. Inclusion - For the purpose of this study, inclusion is the practice of providing opportunities for students with disabilities to learn in general education classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers.

M. LRE - “Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is the requirement in federal law that students with disabilities receive their education, to the maximum extent appropriate, with nondisabled peers and that special education students are not removed from regular classes

unless, even with supplemental aids and services, education in regular classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily... [20 United States Code (U.S.C.) Sec. 1412(a)(5)(A); 34 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Sec. 300.114.]” (IDEA).

N. NCLB - Before the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, served as the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This U.S. Act of Congress included benefits to districts by way of federal funding that was tied to areas such as Title I, standards-based reform, and teacher qualifications.

Chapter II: Literature Review

It is difficult to imagine that within our lifetime, students with disabilities were not allowed, welcomed into, or educated in public schools. Credit for including students with disabilities in public schools goes primarily to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975, otherwise known as Public Law 94-142 (Project IDEAL, 2013). When EAHCA reached full implementation, it required a free and appropriate education (FAPE) for all students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE). In 1990, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), and in 2004, its successor, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), aligned with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislative provisions (Project IDEAL, 2013). According to the authorizations, all students should be considered for placement in general education to the “maximum extent possible”, including general education placement with supports, aids, and services (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Removing students from general education environments should only occur when their achievement is unsatisfactory despite documentation of supports, aids, and services.

An increasingly popular way to provide FAPE in the LRE is inclusion with the use of co-teaching. Inclusion is the placement of students with disabilities in the general education

classroom with a general education teacher. Co-teaching is defined as “two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space” (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 2 as cited by Nierengarten, 2013, p.74). In this case, co-teaching becomes a specialized academic instructional service within the general education environment. While there are other ways to offer services to any given student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP), for purposes of this research, we are focusing on the students with disabilities in the general education classroom with co-taught support. Specifically, the co-taught support being delivered by an education specialist, otherwise known as a special education teacher. Co-teaching is a support strategy “used to address the challenges and to capitalize on the opportunities for learners with special needs in the general education classroom. Data from the National Center for Restructuring and Inclusion indicate that co-teaching is the most frequently cited model for inclusive education” (Lipsky, 1995 as cited by Nierengarten, 2013, p.74). Co-teaching allows us to place the focus on special education as a service being offered, called specialized academic instruction (SAI), not the place where the student receives instruction.

While there is research that provides best practice approaches to implementing co-teaching and the co-teaching practice itself, there is insufficient research on the role of administrators in contributing to successful co-teaching. As I collected credible research and data, I discovered reoccurring themes that I intend to define and incorporate with factors that are shown to improve student outcomes in the co-taught classroom. These themes are strategies of the administrator that promote successful co-teaching such as: meaningful supervision, observation, and evaluation; data-driven placement criteria for students with disabilities; and a consistent co-teacher pairing protocol. With the growth of co-teaching as an answer to the increase in the number of students with special needs in the general education classroom and the

insufficient supports for administrators, the following research will address the question: what are essential best practices for high school assistant principals when supporting co-teaching?

The assistant principal's experience and attitude related to students with disabilities has an understandable impact on special education practice. According to Kamens, Susko, and Elliott, who conducted a study on administrative practices in co-teaching, "school administrators seem to have positive attitudes about the inclusion of students with disabilities but their own beliefs and experience with individuals with disabilities has a strong impact on implementation of practice" (Horrocks et al., 2008, as cited in Kamens et al., 2013). With the idea that assistant principals are responsible for the supervision of co-teaching, their intentional support of inclusion and co-teaching is essential for all stakeholders. To provide the best support possible, administrators, ... "must understand what makes co-teaching effective with respect to student achievement and provide a context in which practice can be successful" (Kamens et al., 2013, p. 168). Kamens et al. (2013) is suggesting that it would be beneficial for administrators to understand the unique practice of co-teaching in order to observe and evaluate it effectively.

Meaningful Supervision: Observation and Evaluation

Observation

It is well documented that effective administrators influence school culture and teaching practices. Kamens et al. (2013) notes, "[a] key factor in the implementation of effective co-teaching is the impact of administrative support" (Cook & Friend, 1995; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007; Walther-Thomas, 1997, as cited in Kamens et al., 2013, p. 168). Observations, the data produced, and the feedback given can be a valuable support that benefits the teachers, students, and program. Unfortunately, researchers have found inconsistencies in the way administrators conduct formal observations and evaluations (Kamens et al., 2013, p. 181).

Some of the inconsistencies in practice may have been the result of negotiated contract agreements, tenure status, or individual teacher issues. A number of administrators indicated that they have observed the special education teacher and the general education teacher at the same time. In contrast, some administrators reported that they observe the co-teachers separately, particularly when they were responsible for only observing one teacher of the co-teacher team. They also noted that when they observed both teachers at the same time, they usually met with the teachers individually. (Kamens et al., 2013, p. 182)

Based on potential conflict, it is advised that the administration consider the teacher association contract, the local Board of Education, and the California Education Code for timelines regarding teacher evaluation due to the implications of observing co-teachers on different evaluation cycles. According to Kamens et al. (2013), observing two teachers at the same time could negatively impact contracts (p. 181). Depending on the contract verbiage, the research suggests that one way to rectify this is to write up the evaluations separately, hold the follow-ups separately, and only reference one teacher in the evaluation at a time. This may seem counterproductive, as the nature of co-teaching is collaborative. Despite the logistical inconsistencies in observations, research suggests that administrators are consistent with what they want to see during their observations. Kamens et al., (2013), found that:

Administrators expected to see both teachers active during the lesson...to see true collaboration, a positive classroom environment, evidence of joint planning, and a sharing of responsibilities including the modification of curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all students. A number of those surveyed indicated that part of their observation includes noting the interaction between the students and the two teachers.

The administrators indicated that they did not want to be able to identify which students were in the class for in-class support. (Kamens et al., 2013, p. 182)

Observations can range from formal to informal, and scheduled to unscheduled. Popular co-teaching author, Marilyn Friend, has shared some ideas for what an administrator should consider when observing co-teaching: “Are both teachers actively engaged in the instructional process? Do both teachers contribute to discipline and classroom management? Are they grouping students in ways that will help them meet learning goals? Are they addressing student learning needs and making use of each teacher’s strengths?” (Friend, 2007, p. 51). Based on the misalignments noted, it is suggested that observations are scheduled and conducted using considerations of the teacher association contract. In addition, districts should consider devising an observation protocol that utilizes suggestions above as a means of potentially increasing the data gathered from the observation as well as serve as a training tool for new co-teachers.

Evaluation

This is a time of accountability. An administrator’s evaluation is a significant component of the teaching practice; as it should also be for the co-teaching practice. Considering that “student achievement outcomes depend so heavily on the quality of implementation, school leaders should establish criteria for judging the quality of... co-teaching” (Salend, Gordon, & Lopez-Vona, 2002 as cited in Friend, 2007, p. 51). Co-teaching is growing out of an increased focus on student outcomes in the least restrictive environment and the need to decrease the achievement gap. Yet, co-teaching is often misappropriated, misapplied, and misevaluated; which has left many educators and administrators wary. Kamens notes that “[e]valuation of co-teachers was not substantially different than the typical practices used with other teachers”

(Kamens et al., 2013, p. 180). School and district level administrative support is crucial in implementation, support, and continued efficacy in a co-teaching program.

The shift [from traditional special education classrooms] places different demands on the school administrators responsible for appropriate delivery of special education services in general education classrooms. Establishing a framework for sound meaningful supervision and evaluation of collaborative teachers is crucial to the success of the professionals involved; the special education program; and most importantly, the classroom students. (Rea & Connell, 2005, p. 30)

So while the traditional teacher evaluation form may be applicable in terms of the site and district instructional expectations, administrators should consider, consult, or research ways of evaluating co-teaching.

Placement Criteria of Students with Disabilities

The placement of a student with disabilities in any classroom is a decision made by the IEP team that consists of the parents or guardian, student, an education specialist, general education teacher(s), Local Education Area (LEA) representative/administrator, and any service providers such as speech and language, counseling, or adaptive physical education that provide support to the student in order to receive maximum educational benefit. IDEA and educational placement regulations provide little guidance regarding who makes the placement decision, except that a student's parents must be involved in the process. According to IDEA, a site or district administrator "shall ensure that parents of each child with a disability are members of any group that makes decisions on educational placement of their child" (IDEA, 2004). Regulations to the IDEA require districts to consider a continuum of placements available to ensure most appropriate and least restrictive options. The continuum must include instruction in regular

classes, co-taught classes, special classes, special schools, homebound instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions (IDEA, 2004, as cited in Yell, 2004, p. 30). Furthermore, if an IEP team, including the parents, agrees that a general education placement is not appropriate, a statement must be listed on the IEP as to the harmful effects that exist that impede that student's ability to participate and make educational progress. Co-taught classes offer the general education curriculum with specialized academic instruction embedded, meeting both student needs and federal requirements. Administrators are a valuable part of the placement determining and parent liaison process.

Although offering and understanding the implications of inclusion and co-teaching placements are part of the team's responsibility, professional development for administrators and teachers, is needed to implement co-teaching with true efficacy. As claimed by Friend, "it is essential to identify exactly what high-quality co-teaching is and how to implement co-teaching with fidelity" (Friend, as cited by Samuels, 2011, as cited in Abbey-Taylor, 2014, p. 7-8). Areas of professional development such as data-based decision making, content-area specific professional learning communities, instructional strategies, grading, curriculum and standards for the general education teacher, education specialist, and administrators are needed to support the implementation of co-teaching.

The IDEA and the NCLB ensure students with disabilities have access to high expectations and to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom, "to the maximum extent possible, in order to meet developmental goals and, to the extent possible, the challenging expectations that have been established for all children..." (IDEA, 2004). High expectations is a key factor in outcomes for all students, especially those with unique needs. Co-teaching provides opportunity and access to the general education environment for students who might otherwise

not be able to be placed in the general education environment in order to receive grade-level content and expectations.

Abawi states that “[when you [harmonize] student and staff voices explicitly outlining and upholding the principles of an inclusive school culture, students will rise to the challenge” (Abawi, 2015, p. 47). This results in a culture of acceptance that fosters inclusion and promotes positive student outcomes. Effective inclusive secondary schools have administrators and teachers that lead by example and promote a sense of “shared ownership of students and instructionally focused collaboration” (Brigharm et al., 2006; Laframboise et al., 2004; Wallace et al., 2002, as cited in Eisenman, 2010, p. 102). In addition to the faculty leading by example, peer-pressure and high expectations play a positive role in a co-taught classroom. Pierson (2013) reported that “students with mild/moderate disabilities appeared to work harder when given the challenge of general education, [even if] the content demands were higher, [and] the curriculum was modified, students took their classes more seriously when in general education classes” (p. 229).

Co-teacher Pairing Protocol

Just as student placement is carefully determined, so is the pairing of co-teachers. Research studies related to co-teaching practices have consistently highlighted the importance of administrative support for co-teachers. For instance, Scruggs et al. (2007) noted that the number one need of teachers was having knowledgeable administrative support, with “picking the right teacher” as their second priority (p. 403). Using the strengths of both the general education teacher and the education specialist to complement the instruction and enhance the learning is a great starting place when considering co-teacher pairings. In a study mentioned by Kamens, the research “revealed some commonalities on how administrators pair general education teachers

with special education teachers... [the] most prominent factors for pairing teachers were the following: personality, compatibility, strengths and weaknesses of both teachers, the willingness of these teachers to work collaboratively in the classroom, competency in content (highly qualified status), and scheduling” (Kamens et al., 2013, p. 175). The general education teacher is expected to bring content-area expertise to the table, as the education specialist is expected to have the interventions and strategies readily at hand. Both teachers are, or should, be knowledgeable on providing accommodations, with the education specialist most likely taking the reins on this; both teachers are also expected to understand, or be willing to offer, differentiated instruction and product in a co-taught classroom.

There is a balance of considerations that administrators need to acknowledge when pairing co-teachers to avoid challenges within the school year. According to Friend: The administrators’ perception of the special education teachers’ content expertise at the secondary level often dictated how special education teachers were assigned to general education teachers. These respondents indicated that little or no consideration was given to how well the general education teacher and the special education teacher would work together. Teacher pairing was reported to emphasize assignments of highly qualified content general educators rather than co-teaching components such as personality, teaching style, training, or willingness to participate. (Friend & Cook, 2010, p.____)

The literature noted significant variances in how it was determined which teachers would co-teach. As noted in the research, administrators often rely on teachers to volunteer to co-teach; while one would think teachers would jump at the opportunity, most remain resistant.

“Classroom teachers may fear that special educators will judge their teaching. Special educators may worry that others will question the value of their work, or even that their jobs might be

eliminated" (Friend, 2007, p. 50). When we look at what is best for the student, backed up by the mandates from NCLB and IDEA, more students with disabilities are in need of instruction in the general education classroom. Consequently, "as more children with disabilities are being included in general education classes, teachers are being expected to meet the very diverse needs of those students" (Burstein et al., 2004 as cited by Murawski, 2009, p. 206). Administrators can assist with meeting the needs of the students and the site by establishing a culture of supporting all students with the idea that co-teaching is an opportunity and an expectation. Friend suggests, "principals can eliminate some of these [co-teaching] recruitment problems by gradually but firmly establishing the expectation that any teacher in the school might be asked to partner with a specialist, although not necessarily every year, ideally, co-teaching becomes a standard for practice that is integral to a school's efforts to reach all students" (Friend, 2007, p. 50). This shift and expectation may take time to cultivate. In addition to evaluating the co-teaching partnership, "leaders have the responsibility to partner teachers, arrange schedules and common planning time, and resolve dilemmas that arise. They also explain co-teaching to parents and community members and ensure that programs are accountable and sustainable" (Friend, 2010, p. 20). Best practices from the literature have arisen, noting that administrators were key in the success of co-teaching. Eisenman claimed that "[s]hared accountability for student success and development of shared teaching practices was made possible by the school's leadership, an emerging culture that valued collaboration, physical arrangements that facilitated access, and opportunities to tap into expertise of other teachers, the professional development specialist, and district colleagues" (2010, p. 101). This reinforces the influence administrators have on the success of a co-teaching partnership and program.

Conclusion

When effectively implementing co-teaching, administrators, general education teachers, and education specialists are implementing an instructional model that serves students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Researcher, Lindy-Anne Awabi, says that “ultimately, [co-teaching] is about empowering students to succeed and wrapping them with the support necessary to do so” (Awabi, 2015, p. 47). Such empowerment is possible when co-teaching is supported by site and district administrators. The literature revealed that there are essential supports that administrators can use when supervising co-teaching. “If co-teaching is to be successful, building-level leadership must champion inclusion as a practice, provide support for its implementation, and inclusion must be embraced by the school community” (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007; Eisenman, Pleet, Wandry, & McGinley, 2011 as cited in Abbye-Taylor, 2014, p. 6). The purpose of this research is to gain common themes that will allow a record of essential best practices for high school assistant principals that can be used to further promote and implement successful co-teaching. As noted in the review, administrators need to consider observation protocol and evaluations that will strengthen co-teaching partnerships while increasing student outcomes. It is suggested that administrators participate in the placement of students with disabilities along with parents, the student, teachers, and other stakeholders to consider the most appropriate and least restrictive placement for the student. In addition to observations, evaluations, and the placement of students with disabilities, research revealed that when pairing teachers for co-teaching assignments, the active role of the administrator is influential and beneficial. The research in this study attempts to answer topics addressed in the literature review through the question: What are essential best practices for high school assistant principals when supporting co-teaching?

Chapter III: Methodology

An increasingly popular way to provide a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment is inclusion with the use of co-teaching. While there are other ways to offer services to any given student's Individual Education Plan, for purpose of this research, the focus is on the student with disabilities in the general education classroom with co-taught support. Specifically, co-taught support that is delivered by both the general education teacher and an education specialist. Co-teaching allows us to place the focus on special education as a service being offered and not the place where the student receives instruction.

While there is research that provides best practice approaches to implementing co-teaching and the co-teaching practice itself, there is insufficient research on administrative support of the co-teaching model, specifically concerning supervision, observation, and evaluation; placement criteria for student with disabilities; and a thoughtful co-teaching protocol. Kamens, Susko, and Elliott (2013) noted in similar research that although "administrative influence on practice is clear, little research was available about administrators' preparation related to inclusive practice or specifically co-teaching" (p. 169). Through qualitative research, I investigated data related to co-teaching procedures such as administrative support in the areas of observations and evaluations, student placement criteria, and teacher pairings. I surveyed five assistant principals at a large public high school in southern California via Google Forms. I used researcher-generated questions that provided insight into their experiences and practices in supports and potential barriers while supporting co-teachers and in the general education classroom.

Research Question

What are essential best practices for high school assistant principals when supporting co-teaching?

Design

I conducted the study using qualitative research. The qualitative research design allowed me to explore the perceptions and practices of assistant principals. Professionals in the field agree that, “qualitative research is generally appropriate for describing and providing insights about attitudes, perceptions, interactions, classroom structure, and behaviors, relevant to co-teaching. Qualitative research also has increased enormously in special education research over recent decades” (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005; Pugach, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2006 as cited in Scruggs et al., 2007, p. 394). The questions I asked addressed meaningful supervision and evaluations of co-teachers, placement criteria for students with disabilities, and teacher pairing protocol. Through numerous research studies, I gathered qualitative data regarding co-teaching procedures such as observation procedures, administrative support during the placement procedures, and selecting co-teaching pairings. I was able to analyze the data from the research and the survey data from my school site to produce a comprehensive list of meaningful best practices for assistant principals to use when supervising and supporting the teachers and, ultimately, the students being serviced by the co-teaching model.

Participants

The participants in the study were five assistant principals in a large public high school in Southern California. There were two males and three females, all participants were Caucasian except for one Lebanese male. Collectively, their average administrative experience is 4.2 years.

The assistant principals are collaborative, reliable, and work diligently to put students first. One of the assistant principals served as an assistant principal at another local area high school for two years prior to coming to this site, the other four assistant principals have only ever practiced administration at the present site, although they have all taught at other sites prior. The assistant principals chosen to participate in this study are all directly involved with co-teaching in the multiple departments they support. The participants were asked to participate in June, during the last two weeks of the school year. This could be a possible explanation for the difficulty in receiving responses by the initial date requested. Another possible limitation in the study was the respondent's relationship with the researcher. The close professional and collaborative environment could have enabled respondents to place less priority on completing the survey.

Setting

The setting for the research was a large public comprehensive high school in southern California. The school has a population of 3,329 students, but the statistical information that follows will reflect the 2015-2016 publish data and a school population of 3,048. According to the last published School Accountability Report Card (2015-2016 data), the two major ethnic groups at the large public high school continue to be 44.9 percent Caucasian and 40.9 percent Hispanic, with other subgroups as follows: 2.8 percent African American, 5.8 percent Asian, and 3.0 percent Filipino. There are 113 full-time teachers, 17 of which are education specialists. Eight of the education specialists co-teach in areas they have NCLB highly-qualified competence. Eleven percent of the student population is made up of students with disabilities.

Ninety-seven percent of students with disabilities are in at least one general education or co-taught classroom. There are currently 376 co-taught placements in 24 co-taught classes; these numbers include students with multiple placements. This is the fifth year of the school site

practicing co-teaching. Co-taught sections are offered in the following subjects: English, History, Essentials of Algebra, Algebra I, Geometry, Earth Science, and Biology. The co-teaching pairings vary from first-year relationships to two years with the same teacher pairing. It is not uncommon to switch up pairings. This happens for many reasons, but not limited to: teachers leaving, teacher request, master schedule conflicts, common prep alignment, and administrative decisions. This school is in its fourth year using a bell-to-bell co-teaching model. The impact of the findings of this study stands to add to the success of the already growing co-teaching model. Improved program expectations and standardized procedures are the anticipated benefits.

Instruments

In order to gather the perceptions of assistant principals in a school that was already practicing co-teaching, a survey was conducted online. The data were collected using Google Forms and Google Sheets. I chose Google Forms and Google Sheets for collecting survey data due to the ease of use and familiarity of Google that the site has, in hopes of garnering increased response times. Kamens et al. (2013), devised a similar survey in an effort to develop supervisory consistency for co-teaching in New Jersey on a much larger scale. While his survey contained 26 questions involving demographics, mine contained 21, open and closed, researcher-developed questions that focused specifically on assistant principal roles when supervising general education, single teacher and co-teaching classrooms. A full copy of the online survey is available in the appendix section; below are three sample questions from the online survey:

1. What do you believe are some essential best practices for assistant principals when supervising co-teaching?
2. How is it determined which students with disabilities are placed in co-taught classrooms?

3. If you do not have a standard observation form for observing co-teaching, what would be the elements you would use that would tie in the district/site's instructional model, the mission and vision, as well as the unique elements of co-teaching?

There were no questions marked as required except for the collection of the respondent's email address.

Procedures

I received approval from the principal to administer the survey to the five assistant principals. An email and physical letter was sent to assistant principals to inform them of the survey. The email and letters included an invitation to participate and the adult consent form. The email and letters stated that the identification of all participants would remain confidential and they were free to withdraw or decline at any time. The survey was administered as a link in the email and respondents were asked to complete the twenty-one questions within seven days of the receipt of the survey. Participants were made aware that the survey would take approximately twenty to thirty minutes and they were given the option to complete a printed version of the exact survey or hold a face-to-face interview in lieu of the online survey. Response times varied due to the timing of the request corresponding with the last week of school. All assistant principals participated with the indication that they would participate in follow-up interviews if there was a need to clarify any survey data submitted.

Analysis

I conducted this study using qualitative research. A qualitative research design allowed me to explore the perceptions and practices of assistant principals in regards to their involvement to co-teaching. The use of Google Forms allowed me to present the survey to the participants in a convenient format and to conveniently view graphs and charts of the data predesigned by

Google. Information gathered from the survey and the data from previous research were analyzed to provide a clearer look into the expectations of administrators in regards to co-taught classrooms. The questions I asked addressed meaningful observation and evaluations of co-teachers, placement criteria for students with disabilities, and teacher pairing protocol. In a journal, I was able to use the raw data from my research and the survey data from my site to generate summaries, codes, and memos. Using this data, I looked for trends and common themes and made interpretations about the supports currently being used and those that are needed for assistant principals to effectively support co-teaching.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to discover best practices administrators can use when supervising co-teaching. In order to accomplish this task, the design of this study used qualitative data. To collect the qualitative data, a survey was distributed to five assistant principals at a large comprehensive high school in southern California. The participants were all given the same 21 question survey. The responses were collected and coded. The participants for this study were chosen out of convenience for the researcher; they are all from the same high school site. The setting was also chosen out of convenience, but also due to the site having experience with co-teaching. The site has been implementing co-teaching for five years now, giving it the criteria necessary for the research question to be answered. The research question explored in this study was as follows:

- What are essential best practices for high school assistant principals when supporting co-teaching?

The methodology in this study provided results that suggest implications for the research question. Chapter IV will look at the data analysis and chapter V will discuss the findings of this study.

Chapter IV: Data Analysis

With the growing implementation of inclusion, a general education teacher and an education specialist are paired up to co-teach in general education classrooms where up to thirty-five percent of the student population is comprised of students with disabilities. Education specialists, with the support of administration, are to maximize the general education placements for students with disabilities whenever possible. In an effort to support general education teachers with students with disabilities in their classrooms, teachers should receive support from administrators. The context of this research explored the role of administrators when supporting co-teachers in a large public comprehensive high school in southern California and the supports necessary for the successful implementation of co-teaching. The purpose of this research was to gain common themes that will provide a record of best practices that can be used to further promote and implement successful co-teaching in an effort to improve student achievement. In this chapter, I will review the research findings and themes from the literature review, while also analyzing the data in the Data Presentation and Analysis sections. In the Interpretations section, I will decode the data as it relates to the research question; how the findings relate to education practices, how education can benefit from the research, and what insights can be gained from this research. Finally, I will summarize the data analysis section.

Data Presentation and Analysis

While there is research that provides best practice approaches to implementing co-teaching and the co-teaching practice itself, there is insufficient research on the administrator's

role and factors that contribute to successful co-teaching. Using empirical and peer-reviewed articles and a survey of the high school administrators, recurring themes developed that defined and contributed to essential best practices for assistant principals who supervise co-teaching. These themes are strategies of the administrator that promote successful co-teaching such as: meaningful supervision in the form of observation, and evaluation; administrator's roles in general education placement for students with disabilities; and a consistent co-teacher pairing protocol. With the growth of co-teaching as an answer to the increase in the number of students with special needs in the general education classroom and the insufficient supports for administrators, the research addressed the question: what are essential best practices for high school assistant principals when supporting co-teaching?

I conducted this study using qualitative research. This design allowed me to explore the perceptions and practices of assistant principals in regards to co-teaching. I conducted a survey with five assistant principals at a large comprehensive high school in southern California. The questions I asked addressed meaningful observation and evaluations of co-teachers, placement criteria for students with disabilities, and teacher pairing protocol. Using the Google Forms output created by the participant's answers from the Google Forms survey, I was able to use the raw data from my research and the survey data from my site to generate summaries, codes, and memos. Using this data, I looked for trends and common themes and made interpretations about the supports currently being used and those that are needed for effective co-teaching.

Best Practices for Administrators Supervising Co-teaching

Meaningful Supervision: Observation and Evaluation. From the survey given to the five assistant principals, the following data was gathered:

Do you use a standard teacher observation form when observing teachers?
5 responses



Figure 1: This is a graph representation showing 100% of the administrators surveyed said "yes," they use a standard teacher observation form when observing teachers.

If you do use a standard teacher observation form, do you use this same form when observing co-teaching?
5 responses



Figure 2: This is a graph representation where 4 out of the 5 assistant principals surveyed said they do use the same form when observing co-teaching. The one that chose "N/A," noted they were unsure.

Do you use a standard teacher evaluation form when evaluating teachers?
5 responses



Figure 3: This is a graph representation showing 100% of the assistant principals surveyed use a standard evaluation form when evaluating teachers.

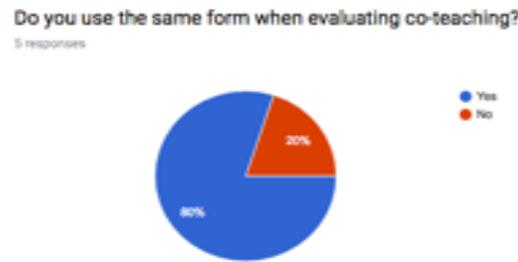


Figure 4: This is a graph representation showing 4 of the 5 assistant principals surveyed use the same form for evaluating general education teachers as they do co-teachers.

According to the above responses, the assistant principals are using the district's standard teacher observation and evaluation protocol when observing co-teaching. In the second question, there was one respondent that was unsure and of what to use when observing co-teaching, as that particular administrator was not responsible for observing any co-teaching pairings this year. S/he commented, "I believe it is the same as regular observations." The fourth question also had one respondent that said s/he used a specific evaluation for co-teaching but then in the comments noted using the same protocol of the "Essential Elements of Instruction and the Six Standards for California Teachers." Although there was no mention of adjusting the protocol to meet the needs of co-teaching in the responses to these two questions, the assistant principals are using the district's existing protocol and there was an opportunity for the respondents to elaborate on future plans and ideas for observing and evaluating co-teaching. Two of the respondents commented:

Jacky Thousand provided us with a great observation tool. Unfortunately, I have not used it but I am definitely going to use this or another standard co-teaching

observation form. The form should measure staff collaboration, student learning efficiency, role definitions, etc.

No protocol so far. This will change next year when observing co-teaching. We will have additional indicators to look for, like the type of co-teaching model being observed, the effectiveness of strategies used, etc.

According to the research, there are inconsistencies in how administrators conduct formal observations and evaluations (Kamens et al., 2013, p.181). Best practices for assistant principals supervising co-teaching is to train in the process and program of co-teaching in order to understand the responsibilities involved in such an assignment. Nierengarten found that administrators needed professional development in order to obtain a “clear understanding of administrative roles and responsibilities...which would provide background knowledge for better decision making in the schools by the administrator” (Nierengarten & Hughes, 2010, as cited in Nierengarten, 2013, pp. 74-75). With assistant principals as the traditional teacher’s observer and evaluator, there are set district standards that are addressed. This is not the case when it comes to assistant principals and co-teachers. Best practice for assistant principals when supporting co-teaching is to develop a standardized observation schedule and format, in alignment with district teacher observation protocol, that addresses the unique assignment of co-teaching. Kamens et al. (2013) found that:

Administrators expected to see both teachers active during the lesson... to see true collaboration, a positive classroom environment, evidence of joint planning, and a sharing of responsibilities including the modification of curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all students. A number of those surveyed indicated that part of their observation includes noting the interaction between the students and the two teachers.

The administrators indicated that they did not want to be able to identify which students were in the class for in-class support (Kamens et al., 2013, p. 182).

The research showed that co-teachers admitted to needing the support of their administrators, “Nierengarten and Hughes (2010) ...noted that administrative support was the single most noted area of need for the co-teaching teams in the mentioned case study” (Nierengarten, 2013, p. 75).

Placement Criteria for Students with Disabilities in Co-Taught Classrooms. Five assistant principals were surveyed and asked how students are selected to participate in a co-taught classroom. The following chart and graph shows their responses:

How is it determined which students with disabilities are placed in co-taught classrooms?

5 responses

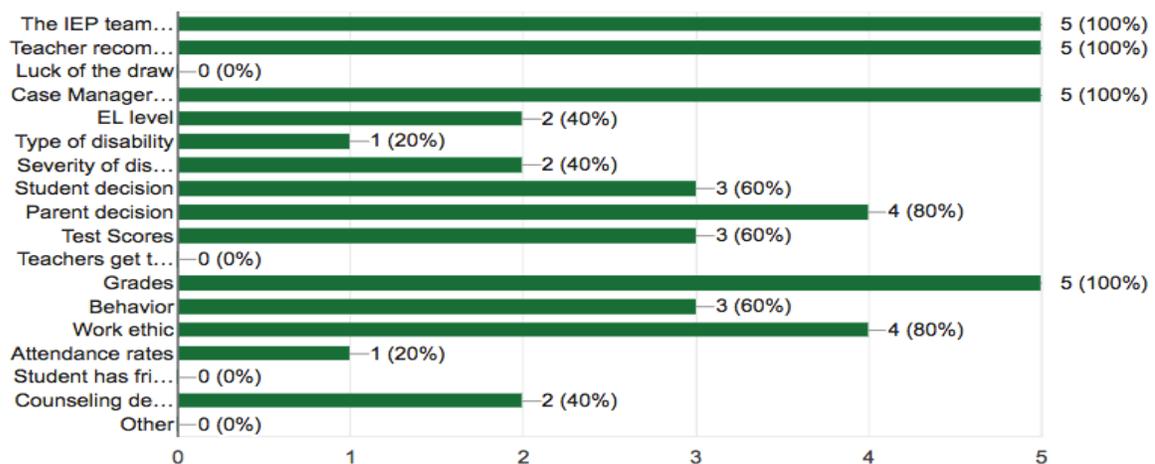


Figure 5: This is a bar graph representation of the responses from the assistant principals as to their knowledge of the considerations to be made when students with disabilities are placed in co-taught classrooms.

Have you ever been included in the decision of class placement for a student with an IEP?
5 responses

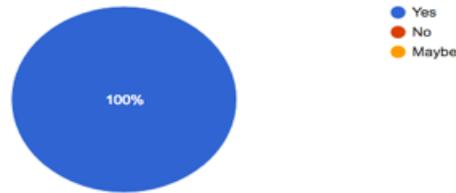


Figure 6: This graph shows 100% of the assistant principals surveyed have been included in the decision of class placement for a student with an IEP.

As members of the IEP team at the large comprehensive high school, the assistant principals, general education teachers, education specialist, case manager, student, parent, counselor, and data such as language acquisition, test scores, grades, behavior, and attendance all play a role in a student having the opportunity to participate in a general education setting. This conversation begins at the eighth grade transition meeting the March before the student begins high school. A beneficial follow up to these responses would be to have a professional development with the assistant principals about the how an IEP team determines the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), their role on the IEP team, and the legalities involved.

Services to individuals with disabilities are often more effective when administrators are actively involved in planning of these services (Walther-Thomas, 1997, as cited in Kamens et al., 2013, p 168). One of the best practices recommended for assistant principals is attending IEP meetings when the student's schedules are discussed so they are part of the placement conversation from the legal standpoint. Another item to take into account is the delicate balance of scheduling. Nierengarten suggests that administrators do not rely on a computer to schedule students with disabilities in co-taught classrooms due to challenges with ratios, class size, instructional assistants, and common planning time (Nierengarten, 2013, p. 76). He notes, "when

collaborative classes exist in a school, there is a temptation to overload these classes with high-risk students because there are two teachers in the classroom” (Nierengarten & Hughes, 2010 as cited in Nierengarten, 2013, p. 76). The best practice for an assistant principal supervising co-teaching is to monitor the scheduling of co-taught classes and determine a percentage or number of students with unique needs are allowed to be in one section. Furthermore, when “scheduling students with identified learning and behavioral needs, other students who may be at risk could benefit from this type of collaborative classroom” (Knackendoffel, 2005 as cited in Nierengarten, 2013, p. 76). This can easily become a challenge that is difficult to change once school has started and other classes are full.

Thoughtful Pairing of Co-teachers. The survey suggested that the site studied had created a culture of co-teaching and was well on the way to equitable selection of co-teachers.

Do you use a protocol for selecting co-teaching partnerships?

5 responses



Figure 7: This is a graph showing 100% of the assistant principals at the site surveyed that they use a protocol for selecting co-teaching partnerships.

Participants were asked if they use a protocol for selecting co-teaching partnerships. Following this question, they were directed to continue to provide more information, “If so, please explain the protocol.”

Academic content strengths, pairing- ability (i.e. flexibility), familiarity. This year we held a meet and greet for teachers who did not have an established partner. These teachers got together in order to "talk education" and see whose style matched theirs best.

Content area, teacher relationships, look at subjects that fulfill A-G /Grad requirements.

This year, an administrator sent a survey to teachers which, in part, asked if they would be interest in co-teaching.

Teacher selection of partner and interest. Sometimes we approach teachers who we think would be a good fit.

We partner people up based on their expertise subject area and teaching pedagogy style as well as preference.

Assistant principals, at the site studied, are responsible for teaching assignments from year to year, including co-teaching placements. The administrators work together as well as with the content area department chairs to narrow down co-teaching candidates. This was also found to be the case in Kamens et al. (2013) study:

Analysis of the data revealed some commonalities on how administrators pair general education teachers with special education teachers. Most prominent factors for pairing teachers were the following: personality, compatibility, strengths and weaknesses of both teachers, teachers' willingness to work collaboratively in the classroom, competency in content (highly qualified status), and scheduling. Based on the comments, it appeared that the building administrators make the assignments. (p. 175)

It seems that there could be more buy-in and a higher level of acceptance for teachers when they are told what their assignment is versus when they have a say in what they are teaching and who they are teaching with. As stated in the research by Nierengarten, "choice implies willingness and ownership. A sense of ownership by the teachers results in them investing in the co-teaching relationship and increases the likelihood of success and sustainability" (Reinhiller, 1996, as cited in Nierengarten, 2013, p. 75). Best practices for the assistant principals who support co-teaching

are allowing teachers to both, volunteer to co-teach and also, choose whom they are co-teaching. Assistant principals may need to get creative with scheduling and presentation of the program in order to do this with efficacy. For example, the site engaged in a co-teacher meet and greet and allowed teachers to engage in educational conversations before requesting with whom they wanted to partner. Nierengarten also found that allowing the educational specialist to choose the “content area..., interest, preference and strength in which to co-teach goes a long way in nurturing confidence in both educators as well as a willingness to share the teaching stage” (Nierengarten & Hughes, 2010 as cited in Nierengarten, 2013, p. 75).

Interpretations

The data shows the need for a protocol that addresses aspects of co-teaching and training for the assistance principals in order to implement with efficacy. A couple of the assistant principals are already forward-thinking in how to implement co-teaching observations and evaluations, but in order for this to be equitable, as there are 47 sections of co-teaching next year, all assistant principals should have stake in the observation and evaluation process. There is also a need for administrators to understand their roles in the placement of students with disabilities in any classroom, but for this research, it is in the co-taught classroom. This, along with the continued pro-co-teaching school culture the site has created, will continue the school goal of collaboration and honorable contributions to the students, the staff, the school, the district, and the community.

As noted in the district’s Single Plan for Student Achievement:

Special Populations (English language learners, special education, and gifted and talented students) will be provided targeted support to meet their learning needs. Emphasis will be placed on meeting district and state graduation requirements, such as successful

completion of algebra... [and] requiring enrichment or additional rigor will be challenged through differentiated instruction... (San Marcos Unified School District, 2016, p. 10)

According to the survey data, one way that the assistant principals are dedicated to providing targeted support in special education is through the co-teaching model. The assistant principal directly overseeing special education, said this:

“I am an assistant principal overseeing Special Education and the Counseling Department. Uniquely, I get to advocate for SPED programs via overseeing the Counseling Office. One of my major duties is forming the Master Schedule. Co-teaching has to be a priority in the Master Schedule for it to be a reality.”

With administrative support in scheduling, teacher observations and evaluations are critical in providing high-quality teaching to all students in a co-teaching environment. Walther-Thomas (1997) emphasized the importance of a school principal’s role as the model of special education support in the school, stating that the principal “performed multiple roles in establishing the credibility of new special education services” (p. 404 as cited in Kamens et al., 2013, p. 168). In this case, due to the size of the school and the evolution of administration, the assistant principal was filling this role.

In the District’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) Goal 3B: Professional Learning states the need to “[e]mploy the highest quality staff and support them throughout their career with relevant professional learning and structures to facilitate collaboration in order to maintain the highest quality instruction for students.... [with the identified need of] professional learning for staff working with students with special needs, English learners, “at-risk” learners. There is a need to increase the opportunities for students with disabilities to engage in general education settings...” (Bishop, 2015, p. 48). According to the data collected

through the survey of the assistant principals, the administrative staff members at the site were looking to increase the opportunities for students with disabilities so they may engage in the general education setting. When asked, two of the assistant principals noted the following proposals for staff observation, collaboration, and professional learning opportunities for co-teachers:

Clear and specific feedback, directly related to scripting, concrete observations and communication, follow-up meetings, and proper professional development to support [co-teachers].

When observing co-teachers, it is important to have a clear understanding of each teacher's role and responsibility. Best practices and professional development should include providing a differentiated learning environment, strategic questions to clarify the teaching and learning, and the use of objectives that are achievable and focus on a specific learning target. Most importantly, is the quality of instruction that challenges all students to think critically.

In an effort to answer the research question, each participant was asked how they support co-teaching through observation and evaluations, placement of students with disabilities, and co-teacher pairing. Participant revealed various levels of experience and involvement, revealing that professional development for administrators, in these areas, could possibly strengthen the co-teaching program.

Summary/Conclusion

Using research of best practices and survey data from five assistant principals at a large comprehensive public high school in southern California, the above action plan is intended to address the need for targeted support for special populations and the professional development

needed to maintain the highest quality instruction within the district. Ultimately, it will provide best practices for assistant principals who supervise co-teaching in a large comprehensive high school. These are:

1. Administrator professional development on how to support co-teaching through standardized observation and evaluation expectations similar to the general education teacher observation and evaluation, but including the unique aspects of co-teaching,
2. Allow teachers be a part of the process with whom they are co-teaching, and
3. Attend and be actively involved in IEP meetings and share in the placement process of students with disabilities.

In addition to the assistant principals providing professional development to the co-teachers for a new observation and evaluation protocol and student placement collaboration, I believe they also would benefit from professional learning in the form of their role in the IEP and student services and educational setting process. When it comes to pairing co-teachers, there is noted success and a developing protocol. Continuing in this manner will further strengthen the bonds of current co-teaching pairs and attract new co-teaching candidates.

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to look at essential best practices that administrators can implement to benefit their co-teaching program.

The research question for this study was as follows:

- What are essential best practices for high school assistant principals when supporting co-teaching?

Chapter I provided a definition of the problem, a response to the problem, a purpose of the study, a preview of the literature, a preview to the methodology, and the significance of the study.

Chapter II described previous studies and explored meaningful observation and evaluation, placement criteria for students with disabilities, and co-teacher pairing protocol. Chapter III explained the methodology used in this study by detailing the design, participants, setting, instruments, procedures, and analysis. Chapter IV presented the data collected by qualitative methods with analysis and interpretations. Chapter V discusses the limitations of this study, points out the findings that are in relationship with the literature review, offers recommendations for future research, reveals implications made by the study, and makes conclusions about the data collected.

Limitations

The goal of this research was to gain insights from literature and a study of five assistant principals that would produce essential best practices that administrators can use to support co-teaching. All five assistant principals participated in the survey, which met the target goal. While the participants were able to provide valuable insight, all five were from the same large comprehensive high school in southern California; this may limit their responses to that setting. Middle school and elementary school administrators may have a different perspective on supports when supervising co-teaching. Additionally, the limited time frame for the survey made collecting a larger sample size unfeasible. Only five participants were chosen for the survey; a larger sample size could have produced a broader sampling of responses. A more thorough study and analysis of the qualitative data collected would have occurred if more assistant principals were involved in the study.

Findings

The findings of this study are consistent with the literature reviewed. The data collected through the survey reflects previous research. For example, the literature suggests some essential

best practices for assistant principals when supervising co-teaching in a high school are observations and evaluations that reflect the unique qualities of co-teaching, active involvement of the administrators in the placement of students with disabilities in co-taught classrooms, and establishing a pairing protocol for co-teachers. Through the survey, it was found that a number of the assistant principals were already forward-thinking in ideas on how to implement co-teaching observations and evaluations, but in order for this to be an equitable school-wide practice, all assistant principals should have stake in the observation and evaluation process. In addition, the research reveals a need for administrators to understand their roles in the placement of students with disabilities in any classroom. It was also discovered that the school site has already initiated a pro-co-teaching school culture that includes 47 co-taught sections. These co-teaching partnerships were made up of many variables including, but not limited to continued successful co-teacher pairings, teacher volunteering, and an administrator led meet and greet.

Recommendations

It is recommended for assistant principals supervising co-teaching to train in the process and program of co-teaching in order to understand the responsibilities involved in such an assignment. Another best practice is to develop a standardized observation schedule and format in alignment with district teacher observation protocol that addresses the unique assignment of co-teaching. It would also be beneficial to conduct professional development with the assistant principals about the how an IEP team determines the placement of students with disabilities. Another item to take into account is the delicate balance of scheduling. A best practice for an assistant principal supervising co-teaching is to monitor the scheduling of co-taught classes and determine a percentage or number of students with unique needs are allowed to be in one section. A further recommendation is for the assistant principals who support co-teaching

includes allowing teachers to volunteer to co-teach and to choose with whom they are co-teaching. Assistant principals may need to get creative with scheduling and presentation of the program in order to do this with efficacy.

Implications

In order to fully understand what supports assistant principals should provide co-teaching programs, further research should look at roles of administrators considered successful in implementing and supporting co-teaching observations and evaluations, placement of students with disabilities, and effectively pairing co-teachers. Research should compare and contrast the new found qualities and then determine how they can enhance the role of an assistant principal supervising co-teaching.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to look at essential best practices that administrators can implement to benefit their co-teaching program. While it was determined that participants of this study are ahead of the curve for creating a culture of acceptance and participation for co-teaching, there are areas of supervision and professional development for administrators that would strengthen the co-teaching program at the school site. Through examining existing literature and conducting research of my own, I was able to provide deeper insight into essential best practices for high school assistant principals when supporting co-teaching. The research concludes there are several best practices that can improve the role of an administrator when supervising co-teaching. By narrowing it down to essential best practices, three areas arose as critical to the success of a co-teaching program. Ultimately, administrators facilitate the structure and culture of co-teaching and can determine the success of a co-teaching program.

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Administration Co-teaching Survey

The following is a study of current administrative practices in co-teaching: meaningful supervision, observation, and evaluation; placement criteria for students with disabilities; and co-teacher pairing protocol. There are 21 questions. The time to complete varies, but is approximated at 30 minutes.

1. **Email address ***

All ideas are welcome and appreciated. This study, and the data it produces, will be used for my Master's Thesis work and all participants will remain nameless and the responses confidential. Please do not leave blanks, instead - if needed, use "not sure" or "N/A."

The culmination of this data, if desired, can be used to strengthen our already successful co-teaching program. Thank you again for your ideas and encouragement! I am happy to share the results of my study with you, once complete.

2. **Describe your role when supporting teaching at your site.**

Provide details regarding supervision, observation, and evaluation.

3. **Describe your role when supporting co-teaching at your site.**

Provide details regarding supervision, observation, and evaluation.

4. **Do you use a standard teacher observation form when observing teachers?**

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

5. If so, what does it measure?

6. If you do use a standard teacher observation form, do you use this same form when observing co-teaching?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

7. If not, what do you use?

8. If you do not have a standard observation form for observing co-teaching, what would be the elements you would use that would tie in the district/site's instructional model, the mission and vision, as well as the unique elements of co-teaching?

9. Do you use a standard teacher evaluation form when evaluating teachers?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

10. If so, what does it measure?

11. Do you use the same form when evaluating co-teaching?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

12. If not, what do you use?

13. If you do not have a standard evaluation form for evaluating co-teaching, what would be the elements you would use that would tie in the district/site's instructional model, the mission and vision, as well as the unique elements of co-teaching?

14. Do you use a protocol for selecting co-teaching partnerships?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Other

15. If so, please explain the protocol.

16. If not, how are teachers paired for co-teaching?

17. Has this always been the model?

18. Have you ever been included in the decision of class placement for a student with an IEP?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Other: _____

19. How is it determined which students with disabilities are placed in co-taught classrooms?

Check all that apply or are considered.

Check all that apply.

- The IEP team decision
- Teacher recommendation
- Luck of the draw
- Case Manager decision
- EL level
- Type of disability
- Severity of disability
- Student decision
- Parent decision
- Test Scores
- Teachers get to choose their students
- Grades
- Behavior
- Work ethic
- Attendance rates
- Student has friends in the class
- Counseling decision
- Other

20. What do you believe are some essential best practices for assistant principals when supervising co-teaching?

21. Are you available for follow-up questions or clarification?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No *After the last question in this section, stop filling out this form.*
- Maybe
- Other: _____

22. What is the best communication for follow-up?

Mark only one oval.

- email
- face-to-face
- phone
- Other: _____

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided

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