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What Perceived Barriers Are There When Establishing a Co-Teaching Model?

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Key Words: Co-teaching, barriers of Co-teaching, special education, resource program, co-teaching surveys
Abstract

The focus of the research was to determine the perceived barriers that teachers have in regards to co-teaching. Specifically, the study looked at what was found in the literature to be important to teachers when participating in co-teaching, and whether those important points were consistent in with the survey findings about perceived barriers of being involved in a co-teaching model. Therefore, the researcher was able to discover what barriers would need to be evaluated in order for a successful co-teaching experience to be accomplished.

The literature and the results of the two surveys yielded three major areas that may be barriers to having a successful co-teaching experience and outcome. The three areas that have been seen as barriers to teachers and to students must be addressed. First, before co-teaching can be successful, teachers must receive training before they begin to co-teach and throughout their entire co-teaching experience. Second, they must have complete support of their administrators at their school site. Third, teachers must also receive adequate planning time with their partner co-teacher in order to plan well thought out lessons, so they can deliver the information to the students appropriately and efficiently.

This researcher believes that through the discovery of the perceived barriers in the literature review and the perceived barriers seen by teachers at the school site in this study, these obstacles could easily be extinguished, and a thriving co-teaching program could be developed and implemented.

Key Words: Co-teaching, barriers of Co-teaching, special education, resource program, co-teaching surveys
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General education teachers go to school every morning, walk into their own classroom and prepare for the day. The number of students in an elementary school classroom range from eighteen, if it is a primary classroom, grades kindergarten to third; to over thirty children, if they are teaching grades fourth or fifth. Most classrooms include students with some type of special need. There are students who are English language learners, students who receive one or multiple special education services, such as speech and language, occupational therapy, adaptive physical education, and/or resource support. There are also students who receive remedial reading support, as well as students who just need extra attention.

In all of these cases, it is difficult for one teacher to be able to work with the student or students who need extra help, while appropriately and efficiently caring for and meeting the needs of all other children in the classroom. Students will usually get “pulled-out” of their general education classroom to receive the special education support or extra services needed in a separate setting/classroom.

Background

The California Department of Education defines Special Education as:

specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent,

to meet the unique needs of individuals with exceptional needs, whose educational needs cannot be met with modification of the regular instruction program, and
related services, at no cost to the parent that may be
needed to assist these individuals to benefit from
specially designed instruction. (CA Education Code
§ 56031)

One way in which special education services may be provided is through a Resource Specialist Program (RSP). When a student is diagnosed with a specific learning disability, he/she is placed in a Resource Specialist Program with a Resource Specialist (RS) teacher. An RS is a teacher who teaches the students who are placed in the Resource Specialist Program. In the RSP, the Resource Specialist works with students who have learning disabilities in small groups, so they are able to learn new strategies to compensate for their disability. The RS also teaches them in specific content areas in which the students are struggling academically. Our nation’s special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), defines a specific learning disability as the following.

A specific learning disability is when a child exhibits a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language that severely impairs learning. The child exhibits an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. A learning disability does not include children who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, orthopedic, cognitive,
or emotional/behavioral disabilities or of environmental,
cultural or economic disadvantage. [34 Code of Federal
Regulations §300.7© (10)]

If it is determined that the student needs special educational services, an
Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is developed. This document includes a
description of present levels of educational performance, a statement of educational
needs, measurable annual goals and objectives, services needed, and placement.

A student with a specific learning disability usually has an IEP that calls for
the student to be pulled-out of his regular education classroom for a specified period
of time, either daily or weekly, to work with the Resource Specialist (RS) in the
classroom. The student spends most of his or her day with the teacher and students in
the regular education classroom and is pulled out for a short period of time to work in
a small group on a specific area or areas of need as determined in the student’s IEP.

*Statement of the Problem*

This study explores perceptual barriers when establishing a co-teaching
instructional delivery model. In the co-teaching approach, a general education teacher
and a special education teacher work together to plan, deliver, and evaluate
instruction for a group of students, some of the students having special needs, in the
general education setting. The resource teacher works with the entire classroom of
students, including those students who have special needs and receive resource
support.
Today, a common and accepted way a child receives resource support is through a pull-out program. In a pull-out program, students receive supplemental instruction in the subjects needed based on their IEP goals by going to the resource specialist’s room where they are instructed in a small group by the RSP. A pull-out program may be so accepted as a preferred way for a student with special needs to receive support because of misunderstandings or unwillingness of the general education teacher to use the co-teaching model of instruction. The researcher will be exploring what perceived barriers there are when a co-teaching model is attempted to be established in a school.

The researcher is currently a Resource Specialist who pulls students out of their general education classes to come to the resource room to work in a small group setting. This is what is accepted and expected at the researcher’s school site. However, due to the great benefits seen from having a co-teaching model implemented, the researcher will explore why teachers oppose the change and hopefully begin the process of convincing those who have a negative perception of co-teaching that co-teaching is a positive approach to teaching students with special needs.

Limitations

There are two limitations that may occur throughout the writing and implementation of this thesis. The first limitation is there were only twenty-five teachers surveyed. This may be a limitation because, at times, studies are more credible the more people that are used. The research may only show how these
specific teachers at one particular school site react to co-teaching; it may not be a good representation of the perceived barriers of most teachers and staff members at other schools. It may just be how these teachers at this particular elementary school view co-teaching.

The second limitation could be the researcher's own personal preference, opinion, and bias. It will be difficult to limit personal bias and personal opinions of this matter, because it is so important to the researcher. There are many variables and different circumstances that can change the process and the results of this study. The researcher will do her best to make sure that there are as few limitations as possible.

Definition of Terms

*Caseload* – The number of students for whom the RS is responsible. The responsibilities include testing, writing IEPs, instructing students, and making sure that IEP goals are met and accomplished.

*Complementary Teaching* – This is a type of co-teaching in which each teacher does something to add to the instruction that is given by the other co-teacher (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2004).

*Co-Teaching* – A general education teacher and a special education teacher work together to plan, deliver, and evaluate instruction in the general education setting for a group of students, some of whom have special needs.

*Parallel Teaching* – This is a type of co-teaching in which the teachers work together to plan the lesson. Each teacher then presents the lesson to half the class.
Pull-Out Program – Students with learning disabilities receive supplemental instruction in the subjects needed based on their IEP goals by going to the Resource Specialist Program and being instructed in a small group by the RS.

Resource Specialist (RS) - An RS is the resource specialist teacher who is the case manager for students with learning disabilities. They are the teachers who teach students with learning disabilities in the specific areas in which the students are struggling academically.

Supportive Teaching – This is a type of co-teaching in which one teacher does the actual teaching of the lesson, while the other teacher reinforces what is being taught for those students who need reinforcement.

Team Teaching – Team teaching is sometimes called collaborative teaching, co-teaching, and cooperative team teaching. Team teaching occurs when two or more teachers share the leadership and the responsibilities for all of the students in their class. They plan the lessons, deliver the instruction, and assess all of the students in the classroom. (Villa, et al., 2004)
Introduction

According to Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg (1988) some educators and parents believe that the only setting for students in special education programs is within the general education classroom, whereas others, mainly a number of general education teachers, believe that children with special needs can only be educated in separate classrooms or facilities (as cited in Gay and Raisch, 1996).

McLouglin and Kelly (1982) point out that "Resource room programs are reported to be the most widely used educational service for the delivery of programming to the mildly handicapped" (as cited in De Denus, 1989, p.271). In this chapter, the researcher will examine past studies and research on resource programs, specifically the pull-out resource model, and the co-teaching model.

Resource Programs

The resource concept has been around for many years. Frampton and Gall (1955) and Frampton and Rowell (1940) point out that a man named Robert Irwin operated resource programs for the visually handicapped as early as 1913, and similar arrangements for the hard-of-hearing were developed soon after (Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1984). “Until the 1970’s, special education self-contained classrooms were the predominant service arrangement that school districts provided for the education of students with handicaps who had moderate to severe problems in learning and/or behavior” (Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1984, p. 15). At that time
resource programs began to be seen more often as the appropriate service model for students with learning disabilities.

Sindelar and Deno (1978) defined resource programs as any administrative organization in which children, in regular classrooms, receive some portion of their instruction from special education personnel. This definition states that the student with learning disabilities is placed in a regular education classroom for the majority of the day. It also states that for some part of the day, the student receives special instruction from a special education teacher.

When The Education of All Handicapped Children Act, Public Law 94-142, passed in 1975 (IDEA, 2004), the resource room model’s acceptance grew tremendously. This law guaranteed that students with disabilities would receive an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Under the least restrictive environment principle, students with disabilities must be educated with students without disabilities to the maximum extent possible (Reis, 1988). Wixson (1980) points out that the resource room model has allowed educators to provide remedial instruction on a tutorial basis to students with learning disabilities.

There are three types of services provided by the resource specialist in the resource program. The first service provided is the assessment of the student’s ability and achievement. The second service provided is direct instruction in the form of analytic, remedial, developmental, or compensatory teaching and or socio-emotional behavioral management. The third service provided is consultation support for
classroom teachers and parents. All of these services can successfully occur in the general education setting or in a resource room setting.

*Pull-Out Resource Programs*

Through the years, different methods used by resource programs have evolved. Wixson (1980) defined direct service as: assessment, program description, and implementation by the resource teacher in the resource room. This means that the resource program is planned and taught by resource teachers in their own separate classrooms.

The pull-out resource program has been criticized for many reasons. One reason is that some believe that teachers are not appropriately informed as to the instructional methods used with students in the resource program. Opportunities are limited for teachers to share insights about instructional methods that are successful with these “hard-to-teach” students (Meyers, Gelzheiser, and Gallagher, 1990). According to Allington and Johnston (1989) pull-out programs have been criticized for “segregating students unnecessarily, reducing time on task, minimizing classroom teacher responsibility for instruction, and fragmenting the curriculum” (p. 334).

Often the instruction given in the attempt atremediating academic deficiencies is not aligned with the ongoing teaching strategies used in the general education classroom. What results from this nonparallel instruction is confusion for the student and an inappropriate application of the strategies used in either one or both of the instructional settings (Johnston, Allington, and Afflerbach, 1985).
Will (1986) pointed out, "Although well intentioned, the so-called pullout-approach to the educational difficulties of students with learning problems has failed in many instances to meet the needs of these students and has created, however, unwittingly, barriers to their education" (p. 412). This quote sums up the effectiveness of a pull-out resource model.

Co-Teaching Programs

Co-teaching occurs when the special education student receives all instruction in regular academics, as well as in all IEP service areas, in the general education setting. In this model, the special education Resource Specialist and the regular education teacher collaborate to provide instruction together in the general education classroom. A general education teacher and a special education teacher work together to plan, deliver, and evaluate instruction for their students, some of the students having special needs, in the general education setting.

The Resource Specialist goes into the regular education classroom to teach alongside the regular education teacher. The resource specialist teaches and supports all of the students in the regular education classroom, including those students who have specific learning disabilities and an active IEP. The Resource Specialist teacher works with every student in the classroom, including the special education students, with whom they focus on specific IEP goals, so that these students can achieve their goals.

Marston (1996) expresses his passionate opinions of what is considered necessary in special education by saying,
Perceived Barriers of Co-Teaching

What is needed in special education is not a retreat from the basic principles that support a continuum of services for students with disabilities, but rather a renewed commitment to the thoughtful deployment of these ideas. Serious attention to the least restrictive environment, including a shared philosophy and commitment by general and special educators, will insure that a variety of learning opportunities across educational settings will exist for all students. (p.127)

Benefits of Co-Teaching

When the regular education teacher and the special education teacher share the same philosophy and work together, then the best learning environment for all students can be created. When the resource teacher co-teaches in the regular education classroom, this does not mean that the students will not receive individualized instruction. Depending on their needs, the students will receive continued support from their general education teacher, as well as their special education teacher.

According to Friend and Cook (1998), co-teaching is two or more professionals presenting significant instruction to a divers group of students in a single space or area. Their research shows that co-teaching is a practical way to have a successful inclusive education for students with special needs. Co-teaching allows students with special needs to not feel segregated or picked on. It is a wonderful way to provide special education services to students in their regular education classroom.
Implementing the co-teaching model not only benefits students with learning disabilities, but it also benefits students who do not have learning disabilities. “Students who struggle to learn but who are not eligible for special education or other support services gain the benefit of a reduced student-teacher ratio and the instructional variety that co-teaching brings” (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 4). More options are given to all students in the area of individualizing their education. The student-to-teacher ratio is down, therefore allowing students to receive more one-on-one or small group attention by their teacher.

Friend and Cook (1998), in their qualitative research, also point out that by co-teaching, the special education teacher is able to provide the general education teacher with suggestions and modifications immediately and on an on-going basis. Often times the consultation model, when a pull-out program is implemented, does not allow the special education teacher the luxury of continual instructional support to the general education teacher.

The Four Types of Co-Teaching

There are four different approaches to co-teaching: supportive teaching, parallel teaching, complementary teaching, and team teaching. Every co-teaching approach is designed around two teachers collaborating together and sharing the responsibility of teaching the students. Each teacher of the co-teaching team brings a unique and important aspect to the instruction of the students.

Supportive co-teaching occurs when one teacher delivers the instruction while the other teacher rotates throughout the students providing additional support. The
supporting teacher may, “add to the lesson by asking questions, restating important information, asking for clarification, adding examples, checking for understanding,...or prompting students to use particular learning strategies” (Villa, Thousand, and Nevin, 2004, p. 20).

Supportive co-teaching is often used by many teachers who are not used to co-teaching. It is the most simple to use between the special education teacher and the general education teacher. Usually the general education teacher will present the majority of the instruction while the special education teacher is in charge of giving specific feedback to those students who need the support.

Parallel co-teaching occurs when two or more teachers teach separate groups of students at the same time in the classroom. There are several variations to this type of co-teaching. A few of these variations are that both teachers may have the same amount of students in their groups to teach, one teacher instructs the majority of the class while the other teacher has a small group for more specific or direct instruction, or the teachers may rotate from one group to the next while teaching different things. Any way that the class is split, both teachers are the primary teachers and give direct instruction.

Like supportive co-teaching, parallel co-teaching is often used by many teachers when they first start implementing a co-teaching model. These approaches do not require much dependence on the other teacher. They each deliver their lessons without relying on the other teacher. Parallel co-teaching is often accepted by many teachers because of the result of having a decrease in the student-to-teacher ratio
when the class is split. This allows for the benefit of having better individualized instruction for each student.

The next type of co-teaching is complementary co-teaching. Complementary co-teaching occurs when each teacher does something to add to the instruction that is given by the other co-teacher. This could include pre-teaching the lesson, re-teaching the lesson, and/or paraphrasing what the other teacher taught. Complementary co-teaching is where the teachers must have confidence and trust in one another. They learn to communicate to each other better and therefore communicate to the students better. Their transitions and the delivery of the information are smoother and easier. They have more frequent face-to-face meetings and are more interdependent. They also hold one another accountable for the tasks they are to perform (Villa, et. al. 2004).

The final type of co-teaching is team teaching. In team teaching, two or more teachers share the leadership and the responsibilities for all of the students in their class. They plan the lessons, deliver the instruction, and assess all of the students in the classroom. Team teaching is when two teachers share the role of what the traditional teacher used to do on their own. Lessons are divided to take advantage of each teacher’s expertise and strengths. Both teachers provide instruction in the lessons. For a successful team teaching experience, both teachers are seen by the students as knowledgeable and experts in the area being taught.

Team teaching requires both teachers to trust each other. They rely and depend on one-another. Trust, confidence, planning time, and communication
between the two teachers is required for team teaching to be accomplished. This type of co-teaching needs more planning time than the other models of co-teaching. However, if equality between the teachers is the goal, team teaching is the model that should be implemented in co-teaching.

Perceived Barriers of Co-Teaching

There are many reasons why teachers are not willing to be a part of a co-teaching team. Some of these barriers are poor role delineation between the two teachers, inadequate training, and not enough planning time.

Brenan and Witte (2003) discussed the importance of defining the roles of each co-teacher. They found that when the roles of the teachers were not defined, it was easy for one teacher to do all of the teaching while the other teacher was more of an assistant rather than a teacher. Another important point that Brenan and Witte discussed was the fact that co-teaching is not “job sharing.” Both teachers must be in the room at the same time to teach and support the students. When one teacher is in front of the class teaching, that does not mean that the other teacher can take a break. Both teachers are there to instruct, support, and encourage the students in the subject area that is being presented.

Liu and Pearson (1999) spoke about a few of the barriers of co-teaching. They stated that the co-teachers do not receive enough training in the area of inclusion practices or in collaboration between the two teachers. Liu and Pearson (1999) believe that the area that needs the most training is the area of collaboration between the general education teacher and the special education teacher. There must
be an understanding of role delineation between the two teachers for co-teaching model to be successful.

Villa and Thousand (2002) discussed another barrier of co-teaching. They found that the teacher preparation and training of the co-teachers was inadequate and ineffective. Villa and Thousand (2004) state, “No matter how exciting or promising an innovation like co-teaching is, educators need training, guided practice, feedback, and opportunities to problem solve with colleagues and clarify the nuances of co-teaching” (p. 115).

The importance of training and practicing what they had been trained in is vital for co-teaching to be successful. Training must occur before co-teaching can even begin to take place. However, the importance of on-going and continual training must not be overlooked. It must be a priority for the school administrators and the teachers for this training to occur.

Another area where the commitment of the administrators is necessary is in the area of planning time. According to Cook and Friend (1995) finding opportunities to plan is a constant concern of co-teachers. “Even if time is limited, both teachers have to sense the direction the class is headed and how they play a role in it” (Cook & Friend 1995, p. 12). They go on to state that if they do not have a shared planning time the special educator can feel as if he or she is not an important part of the instruction being given, and the general education teacher may feel overburdened and that he or she is the only one doing the work.
Villa et al. (2004) continually discuss the importance of collaborative planning time for the co-teachers. In order for co-teachers’ instructions and teaching to go smoothly and the students receive the greatest benefit from having two teachers, face-to-face planning time must occur. Planning must be seen as an integral part of the co-teaching plan.

Langerock (2000) also expresses the importance of planning time. She states that problems in co-teaching were encountered when the necessary time was not given for co-teachers to plan lessons, coordinate goals, and debrief with one another. The importance of face-to-face collaborative planning time must be a commitment and a priority for all administrators and co-teachers for co-teaching to be successful.

**Summary**

It is seen through the review of the literature that the pull-out resource model is the model that is most readily accepted by the majority of teachers. However, it is also seen that although pull-out resource is the most accepted service model for students with learning disabilities, it is not the best way for students to be taught and to learn. Although there are many barriers that could prevent co-teaching from occurring, it is the best way for all students, disabilities or not, to receive instruction.

We must keep in mind that some students simply cannot make satisfactory learning and social adjustments without significant program and instructional accommodations in classrooms in which some teachers are neither willing nor able to accommodate the diverse nature of individual students (Roberts & Mather, 1995).
Perceived Barriers of Co-Teaching

However, if co-teaching is implemented, students would be able to access all curricula due to the support that would be available in the classroom at all times. The strategies and accommodations needed would be available from the regular education teacher and the special education teacher. Co-teaching is a way that all students can receive more attention and time from their teachers. Therefore, co-teaching makes sure that our students’ needs are being met.

The perceived barriers of co-teaching greatly influence the unwillingness of many teachers to embrace the co-teaching model. The researcher will explore what the teachers see as the perceived barriers of co-teaching so that a successful co-teaching model can be successfully established.
Chapter Three
Methodology

Introduction

In the following chapter the researcher will present a qualitative case study on the perceived barriers of co-teaching based at a school in Linda Vista, California. This chapter will explain how the researcher conducted the research. The researcher examined the perceived barriers of the co-teaching model in a school.

Design

Due to the qualitative nature of this research, data was gathered through surveys given to the teachers. The focus of the research was to determine the perceived barriers that teachers have in regards to co-teaching. Specifically, the study looked at what was found in the literature to be important to teachers when participating in co-teaching, and whether those important points were consistent with the survey findings about perceived barriers of being involved in a co-teaching model. Therefore, the researcher was able to discover what barriers would need to be evaluated in order for a successful co-teaching experience to be accomplished.

Setting

The K-5th grade school is in a low socio-economic neighborhood in Southern California. There are twenty-six general education teachers, three special education teachers, and three paraeducators. There are 631 students who attend this school. The demographic profile of the students who attend the school is quite diverse: 55.4% Hispanic, 7.8% White, 6.7% African American, 2.8% Asian, 4.2% Filipino, 21.6%
Indochinese, 1.1% Pacific Islander, and 0.3% Native American. All of the students receive free breakfast and lunch.

Subjects

The participants in this study included current teachers at a public elementary school in Linda Vista, California. All participants in this study did so willingly and on a voluntary basis. Thirty teachers participated in the study. Twenty-nine of the teachers have current California teaching credentials. One teacher has an emergency credential and will have her teaching credential within this next year. The average number of years taught for all teachers involved was eight years. Each teacher brings a different perspective, ethnic background, and expertise to their classrooms, as well as to the answers on their surveys.

Materials

The materials that were used were the two surveys given. The first survey was given to all of the teachers at the school (Appendix A). The survey was given so the researcher could get a better idea about what, if any, experience the teachers have had with co-teaching. It also gave the teachers the opportunity to share what would need to be in place for them to be willing to participate within a co-teaching team. The second survey was given to ten teachers who had first-hand experience with co-teaching (Appendix B). The survey was given to five of the teachers who had a negative opinion of co-teaching and five teachers who had a positive opinion about co-teaching. This survey was made and given to the teachers after the researcher found several themes of what would cause a co-teaching team to not be successful,
throughout the literature reviews. The researcher wanted to see if those emerging themes would also be found as perceived barriers to co-teaching at the school site where the study was taking place.

**Procedures**

The first step for this study was to receive permission from the IRB. Once permission was given, the researcher went to each teacher individually and asked if they would be interested in completing a survey (Appendix A) about co-teaching. Once the teachers said they were interested, the researcher distributed the survey to them. The researcher answered any questions that they had and allowed them to fill out the survey. This was done for all 30 teachers.

Once the researcher received all surveys back, the answers to the questions were analyzed and categorized according to the responses given. The first step was to divide the surveys according to those who had co-teaching experience and those who had never had any co-teaching experience. Next, the surveys were divided and analyzed based on those teachers who had experience with co-teaching. Whether or not the teachers saw any benefits of co-teaching were examined and documented. Each question asked on the survey was analyzed and documented. From there, the researcher chose five teachers who had a positive experience with co-teaching, and five teachers who had a negative experience with co-teaching. The ten teachers chosen were given a second survey (Appendix B) to fill out. This survey was created based on the themes found from the literature reviews about what could possibly be
barriers to having a successful co-teaching experience and successful outcomes as well as the answers and themes that were found from the first survey.

Once the 10 surveys were received by the researcher, the surveys were separated based on the respondents' answers to the first question, “When you were part of a co-teaching team, did you have a positive experience?” They were separated by “YES” and “NO” responses. Next, the researcher studied the answers to the remaining questions. The responses were analyzed to see if they were congruent with the findings from the literature review.
Chapter Four

Findings

Thirty teachers participated in the study. Twenty-nine of the teachers have current California teaching credentials. One teacher has an emergency credential and will complete her teaching credential within the next year. The average number of years of teaching for all teachers involved was eight years. The teachers bring different perspectives, backgrounds, and expertise to their classrooms.

Survey I Results

The first survey was given so the researcher could get a better idea about what, if any, experience the teachers have had with co-teaching. It also gave the teachers the opportunity to share a) what would need to be in place for the teachers to be willing to participate within a co-teaching team, and b) what was important to them. This survey also asked what would be the teachers’ greatest apprehension about being a part of a co-teaching team.

The first question asked was, “Have you ever had any experience with co-teaching?” Of the teachers surveyed, 68% had past or current experience with co-teaching. Thirty-two percent of the teachers surveyed had never had any experience with co-teaching. Two teachers had never even heard of co-teaching before the researcher asked them to fill out the survey.

The second question asked, “If you have had experience in co-teaching, was it successful, what went wrong?” There were many different answers to this question. One teacher responded, “It was successful when we had planning time and designated
roles. It was hard when one teacher had much more experience than the other.” This
teacher shows the need for training and planning. In the training, the teachers could
learn about the different types of co-teaching models, how to designate roles, and
communication. The desire for planning time with their co-teacher is also an
important point.

Another teacher wrote, “Co-teaching was successful when we took time to
discuss students’ progress and next steps.” This teacher also expressed the
importance of planning. An essential part of planning is making sure that you
critique yourself and examine where the students are, what they are struggling with,
what the next steps will be, and how you can get them to the goal of comprehension.
Planning time is more important than many people think.

Many of the teachers surveyed had an enjoyable and successful experience
with co-teaching. They received the training, planning time, and administrative
support needed for the crucial task of being a part of teaching students with another
teacher. Unfortunately a majority of the teachers surveyed had a negative experience
with co-teaching due to many issues.

A few teachers expressed their concern of having worked with another teacher
who always had to be the one up front and in charge of the students and in charge of
all of the teaching. It is evident from the concern of these teachers that training did
not occur before the co-teaching teams began. If all teachers had received the proper
training of what co-teaching was supposed to be, how to delineate roles, and how
each teacher had an indispensable part to play, the teachers would not have been in that situation. The critical need of appropriate training is seen once again.

Two teachers expressed their frustration of not being able to plan with their co-teacher. One teacher wrote, “It was difficult to coordinate a time with my co-teacher when we could plan how and what we were going to teach. Most of the time we split up the days of who was going to teach and who was going to monitor behavior. This way we didn’t have to use time to plan together.” Unfortunately, this happens often. This is not co-teaching; this is having teachers reduce the amount of times that they do the actual teaching.

Question three asked, “Do you see any benefits of co-teaching?” Teachers who had a good experience with co-teaching, as well as teachers who had never co-taught before, saw that there could be real benefits to co-teaching. They believe that a few of those benefits would be smaller teacher-to-student ratio, more one-on-one or small group instruction could occur, different teaching styles of the teachers could reach different students, and support from another teacher would help improve their teaching skills, to name just a few.

Those teachers with a negative experience of co-teaching had a different answer to seeing any benefits of co-teaching. The overall feel of co-teaching was that the outcome was that lessons were not organized, students were confused about having another “teacher” in the classroom, and the teachers themselves did not feel as if their time was well spent in the classroom while another teacher was there. So, no benefits were seen from their standpoint.
If teachers are expected to have a successful co-teaching experience and outcome, they must be trained before and throughout the experience, given ample planning time with their partner, and supported by the administrator. Without these things, failure is imminent.

Question four asked, “Would you be willing to co-teach if you had complete support from your administrators?” One hundred percent of the teachers surveyed, answered yes to this question. It did not matter if the teachers had any experience with co-teaching or if they had a negative or positive experience with co-teaching; the importance of having the administrators support is evident. If teachers have the support of the administrators, then it is more likely that they will be properly trained, supported, and refined before and throughout their teaching experience. The teachers are also more likely to receive time for planning with their co-teacher if support from their administrators is given.

The fifth question asked, “If you were given an incentive to co-teach, would you be more willing to learn and be a part of co-teaching?” Like question four, one hundred percent of the teachers surveyed, answered yes to this question. It did not matter if the teachers had any experience with co-teaching or if they had a negative or positive experience with co-teaching; the desire to have an incentive was made clear.

The sixth question goes along with question five, “What do you value as an incentive?” Every teacher surveyed had extra planning time as one of their incentives for co-teaching. Thirty-three percent had training opportunities as another valuable incentive. While ten percent of the teachers given the survey responded that being
paid extra money to be a part of co-teaching was a good incentive for them to be willing to be involved. The researcher found that ninety percent of the teachers surveyed did not need money to participate in co-teaching. They were realistic in their desired support and time needed to have successful co-teaching results.

Question seven stated, “Would you be more willing to volunteer to be a co-teacher if staff development was about co-teaching resources, training, and support; and extra planning time was given to you and your co-teacher?” One hundred percent of the teachers who participated in this survey answered yes to this question. Thirteen percent of the teachers wrote a comment next to this question saying that they think they would enjoy co-teaching if all of these things were in place.

One teacher who had a previously negative experience in co-teaching wrote next to question seven, “If all of these things were in place when I was co-teaching, I think I would have had a very different experience. I would love to try it again if I were promised that these things would in place.” This particular teacher saw the great importance of having trainings and staff developments, support from others, and extra planning time. Without them, co-teaching will not be as productive as it could be, if productive at all.

The eighth question asked, “What is your biggest apprehension about being involved in co-teaching?” After analyzing the answers given, the researcher found four themes emerged from the teachers’ responses. The first and most predominant theme was not having any time to plan with their co-teacher. One teacher wrote, “Finding time to schedule and meet with the co-teacher is nearly impossible.” Forty-
three percent of the teachers expressed their concern of not having enough planning time.

The second most dominant theme was the concern of one teacher being in charge while the other was either not valued as a teacher or chose not to participate. One teacher wrote, "Some people like to be in charge and see their co-teacher as a little employee to boss around." Another teacher responded to the question by saying, "It is bad when one teacher doesn't equally share the responsibility and one teacher gets stuck doing all of the work." Twenty-seven percent of the teachers agreed that this was their biggest apprehension to co-teaching.

The third theme was identified by twenty-three percent of the teachers surveyed. Their concern was that of not knowing enough about co-teaching to be able to do a good job or to be able to be a good partner. One teacher wrote, "Co-teaching is very unfamiliar to me. I wouldn't know the first thing to do. I would be totally at the mercy of the teacher I was co-teaching with." Another teacher stated, "I don't know enough about co-teaching to make it successful. I think my students would not benefit from having me as a co-teacher."

The final theme was shared by seven percent of the teachers. These teachers had a concern about who they would be paired up with to be co-teachers. These teachers desire to be able to choose with whom they would co-teach. "I would like to have a say in who I teach with. There are some teachers that I wouldn't want to partner with. We teach too differently," said one teacher. They believe that choosing
your partner would make the difference between a successful co-teaching team and co-teaching that reaps no benefits.

The last question of the first survey asked the teachers, “What would ‘perfect’ co-teaching look like to you?” After analyzing the answers given, the researcher found that the teachers responded to this question with answers that fit into four major themes. The teachers see “perfect co-teaching” as a) having extra planning time and materials so that lessons are well thought out and delivered effectively; b) the co-teachers are comfortable with each other so that there is appropriate and needed communication with each other; c) the co-teachers share equal responsibility and power in planning and delivery of the lessons, and d) co-teachers would have the same goals and expectations for their students’ behavior and performance.

The first and most predominant theme was that perfect co-teaching would involve having extra planning time and materials so that the lessons could be well thought out and delivered to the students appropriately and effectively. Thirty-seven percent of the teachers agreed with this. One teacher commented, “More time to plan our thoughtful lessons and gather materials needed for teaching the lessons would be helpful. This would make teaching a pleasant and worth-while experience.” Another teacher wrote, “Having planning time available to me and my co-teacher and having materials to support our teaching. This would make lessons work and the students would be able to meet or beat my expectations.”

The second theme seen which was expressed by thirty-three percent of the teachers was that to have perfect co-teaching, there would be teachers who were
comfortable with each other so that they could communicate effectively and efficiently with their partner co-teacher. “I would like a co-teacher who can voice a different view or question in a professional manner (‘I’m wondering if...or My concern is...”) focusing on what is best for the students,” responded one teacher. Another teacher wrote, “I need to work with someone who I am comfortable with who would give me immediate specific feedback so that I can make changes quickly.”

The third theme was that each teacher in the co-teaching team would have equal responsibility in the planning and delivery of the lessons, and students would view each teacher as having the same authority as the other. Seventeen percent of the teachers surveyed believed that this would give them perfect co-teaching. One teacher said, “Both teachers must share equal responsibilities in planning and teaching.” Another teacher wrote, “Both teachers must have equal power. They have to value and compliment each others skills and weaknesses.”

The fourth theme seen was that the co-teachers would have the same goals and expectations for their students’ behavior and performance. Thirteen percent of the teachers surveyed agreed that this was important if “perfect co-teaching” was to be accomplished. One teacher commented, “Both teachers must have similar goals and expectations of behavior and performance of their students. If you don’t have the same goals and expectations the students will be confused and there will be utter chaos in the classroom.” Another teacher responded to the question saying, “The teachers need to work together to analyze information about the students’ strengths
and needs and then plan their lessons, goals, and expectations for their students based on the information that they gathered.”

The researcher has discovered from the first survey that the teachers have many valid and important apprehensions about co-teaching. Of the thirty teachers surveyed sixty-eight percent had past or current experience with co-teaching. Thirty-two percent of the teachers surveyed had never had any experience with co-teaching. Of the sixty-eight percent who had experience with co-teaching, more than half of them did not believe that there were any benefits from having two teachers due to the many barriers they faced throughout their co-teaching experience.

If teachers are expected to have a successful co-teaching experience and outcome, they must be trained before and throughout the experience, given ample planning time with their partner, and supported by the administrator. Without these important things being in place, failure is imminent.

Survey II Results

The second survey was given to five of the teachers who had a negative experience with co-teaching and five teachers who had a positive experience with co-teaching. This survey was made and given to the teachers after the researcher found several themes of what would cause a co-teaching team to not be successful, throughout the literature reviews. The researcher wanted to see if those emerging themes would also be found as perceived barriers to co-teaching at the school site where the study was taking place.
Those teachers who had a negative experience with co-teaching all answered similarly on the questions in the survey. Likewise, those teachers who had a positive experience with co-teaching all had positive answers to the questions given on the survey. The first question asked was, “When you were part of a co-teaching team, did you have a positive experience?” As expected, five of the teachers had a positive experience and five of the teachers had a negative experience.

The five teachers who had a positive experience all had the same general answers to the rest of the questions. Question number two asked, “Did you feel like your students benefited from having two teachers?” Each teacher responded yes. The teachers who had a positive experience with co-teaching saw that the students did benefit from having two teachers. Not only was the student-to-teacher ratio smaller, but the students also benefited from the different perspectives, expertise, and teaching style of two different teachers.

Those teachers with a negative experience of co-teaching had mixed answers. Three of the teachers stated that they did not see any benefit from co-teaching. Lessons were not organized, students were confused about having another “teacher” in the classroom, and the teachers themselves did not feel as if their time was well spent in the classroom while another teacher was there. The other two teachers also said that they did not see any benefits to co-teaching. However, they went on to say that if they had the training, support, and planning time, they could see that there would be many benefits of co-teaching, if it was done right.
Question three begins the questions which address the themes found in the literature review, which are seen as a vital part of a successful co-teaching team and experience. “Did you have the support of your administrators?” Teachers who had a positive experience unanimously said they did have the support of the administrators, while those who had a negative experience unanimously responded that they did not have the administrators support. It is seen that with the support of those who are “in charge” much can be accomplished. After all, teachers are not going to receive extra planning time, training, feedback, and the needed support and resources if those with the power to get those things are not supportive and fighting for what is needed to make co-teaching successful for all.

Question four asked, “Did you receive any training or guidance before you began co-teaching?” Again, those teachers who answered yes are the ones who had a positive experience and those who answered no did not. As with any new idea, there must be training, guidance, and feedback. Teachers must be allowed to practice what they are taught, and receive support and constructive advice from an administrator or another teacher. Many teachers have never co-taught with another teacher. It is important that they be trained on how to distribute roles, how to communicate, and also how to co-teach. These are vital for the success of each co-teacher as well as the success of the students.

Question five and six go together: “Did you receive any training or guidance throughout the time that you were co-teaching?” and “If you answered yes to number five, by whom or how were you given this guidance and/or training?” Like the
previous questions, those who had a positive experience all responded that they had continual guidance and training throughout the time that they were co-teaching. Two of the teachers received training and guidance from their peer coach and other colleagues. Three of the teachers received their training and feedback from their administrators. They not only were observed while co-teaching, but they also had many staff developments about co-teaching, specifically based off of what the administrators had seen as needs while observing other co-teachers in their school.

It is important that teachers are constantly being observed and refined. Whether it is another teacher, peer coach, or their administrators, teachers need continual training, feedback, and guidance to enhance their teaching skills. The five teachers who reported that they did not have any training or guidance throughout their time of co-teaching all had a negative co-teaching experience. The answers to questions five and six lead the researcher to conclude how important continual learning and developing new skills is to the achievement of co-teaching.

Question seven asked, “Were you given any time to plan with your co-teacher?” Questions eight and nine were continuations of number seven. “If yes or no, when would you plan?” Again, all of the five teachers who did not have a good experience co-teaching were not given any time to plan together. Three of the teachers said they never planned together. One of those teachers wrote, “There just wasn’t enough time in the day to do all that I had to do and then try to plan with another teacher on top of all that. It just wasn’t worth it.” The other two had similar comments. One teacher said that she planned with her co-teacher “when they had
time, which wasn’t very often” after school. The last teacher said, “I would plan with my co-teacher at lunch once a week. That is if he showed up, which was about four times throughout the entire semester.”

Those who were not given time to plan with their co-teacher did not have a good experience. Their planning was done scarcely, if at all. Those teachers who were given planning time had a different experience. Two teachers were given two and a half hours of planning time every other week on the day that their school was in session for a half day. According to one teacher, “This allowed us to plan for two weeks in one setting. It was very helpful to have that chunk of time to work some things out as well as plan for the upcoming weeks.” Three teachers were given the same prep-schedule as their co-teacher. This allowed them to have forty minutes together every week to do their planning. One teacher wrote, “One week my co-teacher was not able to meet during our prep-time. Wow, was that week of co-teaching a mess. After we saw how important it was to meet together to plan, we both made it a priority to plan during our indispensable planning time.”

The answers to the last question of the second survey was very telling. “Would you be interested in being a part of another co-teaching team?” All five of the teachers who had a negative co-teaching experience answered that they would not be willing to co-teach again. The five teachers who had a positive experience with co-teaching all said that they would be willing to be apart of another co-teaching team. It is clear that unless the co-teachers have the complete support of the administrators, training and guidance before and throughout their co-teaching
experience, as well as having time to plan with their co-teacher, teachers will not be willing to participate in the amazing teaching model of co-teaching.

Summary

When people learn a new sport, they do not spend one day being lectured to about how the sport should be played, and then spend the rest of their life doing it perfectly. They need practice, advice, and skills refined and improved. It takes continual trial and error, practice and improvement. If they are going to be the best, they must have training, time to practice and prepare for their games, and they must have the support of their coach and those around them. Without those three very important things, success is not attainable.

We have seen that the same is true with co-teaching. Co-teachers must first have the opportunity to be trained, before and during their entire co-teaching experience. Second, co-teachers must be given the time to prepare for their lessons by having planning time with their co-teacher. Finally, they must also have the support of their administrators and all of those around them. Without these, teachers and students will not receive the maximum benefit of all that co-teaching can bring.
Chapter Five

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Summary

A co-teaching approach to teaching is when a general education teacher and a special education teacher work together to plan, deliver, and evaluate instruction for a group of students, some of whom have special needs, in the general education setting. The resource teacher works with the entire classroom of students, including those students who have special needs and receive resource support.

Today, the most common and most accepted way a child receives support is through a pull-out program. A pull-out program is often used because of the unwillingness of the regular education teacher to use the co-teaching model of instruction. This unwillingness by the general education teachers is usually due to a previous negative experience with co-teaching and, in turn, the perceived barriers that they have toward the co-teaching method.

Many teachers have had negative co-teaching experiences and therefore have a negative perception of co-teaching. In this chapter the researcher will review and analyze the findings from the literature review and the results from the teachers who were surveyed. The researcher will then draw conclusions about why teachers have perceived barriers about co-teaching and what next steps need to take place to remove those barriers, which will then allow the desired success of co-teaching to be brought to fruition.

Throughout the literature review the importance and benefits of co-teaching were seen. Co-teaching is a beneficial way for students with special needs with an
active IEP to receive their services in the least restrictive environment. The least restrictive environment is required by IDEA, and therefore it required by law that students with special needs be educated in the least restrictive environment.

Another benefit of co-teaching, seen throughout the literature review, was that students who do not qualify for special education can still receive extra support by having another teacher. Every student can benefit from having a smaller student-to-teacher ratio and having another teacher to teach, support, and guide them.

From the results of the surveys given to the teachers at the designated school, these benefits were also seen by those who had a positive experience with co-teaching. There are many benefits for the students with special needs, the students in the general education classrooms, and the teachers themselves. If the necessary supports are given, each person involved, whether a student or a teacher, has the opportunity to grow, learn, and benefit from the co-teaching experience.

The literature and the results of the two surveys yielded three major areas that may be barriers to having a successful co-teaching experience and outcome. The three areas that have been seen as barriers to teachers and to students must be addressed. First, before co-teaching can be successful, teachers must receive training before they begin to co-teach and throughout their entire co-teaching experience. Second, they must have complete support of their administrators at their school site. Third, teachers must also receive adequate planning time with their partner co-teacher in order to plan well thought out lessons, so they can deliver the information to the students appropriately and efficiently.
Training is essential when one begins anything new. Such is the case with co-teaching. Teachers must be trained in many areas before they would be ready to begin co-teaching. They must be trained in how to effectively communicate with their co-teacher. Teachers must be taught the different types and methods of co-teaching. They must also be taught about role delineation. The importance of being trained before they begin co-teaching is vital. However, it is just as critical that the teachers are given continual and updated trainings, practice time, and supports throughout their entire co-teaching experience.

The support of the administrators is seen as another imperative part of having a successful co-teaching outcome. If the teachers have the support and encouragement from the school administrators, it is more probable that the teachers will be appropriately trained and developed. Their thorough training will presumably be before and throughout their co-teaching experience, most likely ensuring a productive and successful experience for all involved. With the support of their administrators, the teachers will also be more likely to receive the planning time needed to adequately plan and deliver productive lessons.

During the planning time, besides planning a lesson, the co-teachers must answer many questions. They must think about several important aspects of their lesson. Who will be responsible for particular sections of the lesson before the lesson begins, during the lesson, and after the lesson has been taught? Who will be in charge of behavior throughout the lesson--one teacher or both teachers? Who will be responsible for checking for understanding throughout the lesson? Who will be
accountable for recording the outcome of the lesson? What should the next lesson include? How will the students accomplish their goals? All of these questions should be discussed within the planning time set aside for the co-teachers.

Recommendations

The administrators are the key to having a successful co-teaching team, classroom, and outcomes. Administrators must give total and complete support to all of the teachers who are co-teaching. The administrators must be the co-teachers' biggest encouragers and confidants. They must find and deliver trainings about communication, defining roles of co-teachers, how best to collaborate, and much more. They must be willing to listen to the co-teachers' needs and desires and do their best to find ways to help them every way possible.

The administrators should encourage co-teachers to observe other co-teachers in action. By allowing them to observe a veteran co-teaching team, the new co-teachers can see how co-teaching should look. This would also give them an opportunity to see the many benefits of a successful co-teaching program. Giving them the time, including substitute time, to observe an experienced co-teaching team that is cohesive and proficient would give the new co-teaching team the encouragement and determination needed to begin their own vibrant and successful co-teaching team. The administrators must allow teachers time to practice co-teaching before they are expected to do it in front of students.

The administrators must also give teachers ample planning time to plan with their co-teacher. Extra planning time must be given in the beginning of co-teaching.
The teachers are going to have many things to work out between the two of them before any lesson planning can begin. The co-teachers must be helped throughout the beginning planning stages and throughout every step of the co-teaching process.

**Summary**

More research in co-teaching is needed. This study has examined the perceived barriers of establishing a co-teaching model. There are many challenges and possible barriers to co-teaching. However, if this model of inclusion is embraced, the benefits and successes would far outweigh the sacrifices and failures. This researcher believes that through the discovery of the perceived barriers in the literature review and the perceived barriers seen by teachers at the school site in this study, these obstacles could easily be extinguished, and a thriving co-teaching program could be developed and implemented.
Perceived Barriers of Co-Teaching

References


http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/general_info/gen-2.html


Appendix A

Co-Teaching Survey, Part 1

1. Have you ever had any experience with co-teaching? Yes or No

2. If yes, When and was it successful, what went wrong? ______________

3. Do you see any benefits of co-teaching? Yes or No

4. Would you be willing to co-teach if you had the complete support of your administrators? Yes or No

5. If you were given an incentive to co-teach, would you be more willing to learn and be a part of co-teaching? Yes or No

6. What do you value as an incentive:
   a. Extra planning time
   b. District/Community recognition
   c. Special training opportunities
   d. ______________________ (write in your own)

7. Would you be more willing to volunteer to be a co-teacher if staff development was about co-teaching resources, training, and support; and extra planning time with your co-teacher? Yes or No

8. What is your biggest apprehension about being involved in co-teaching?

9. What would “perfect” co-teaching look like to you? ______________________
Appendix B

Co-Teaching Survey, Part 2

1. When you were part of a co-teaching team, did you have a positive experience? Yes or No

2. Did you feel like your students benefited from having two teachers? Yes or No

3. Did you have the support of the administrators? Yes or No

4. Did you receive any training or guidance before you began co-teaching? Yes or No

5. Did you receive any training or guidance throughout the time that you were co-teaching? Yes or No

6. If you answered yes to 5, by whom or how? __________________________

7. Were you given any extra time to plan with your co-teacher? Yes or No

8. If you answered yes to 7, when would you plan? __________________________

9. If you answered no to 7, when would you plan? __________________________

10. Would you be interested in being a part of another co-teaching team? Yes or No