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Teachers' Perspective of the Benefits of Team-Teaching and the Barriers to Creating Successful General and Special Education Teacher Partnerships

by

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Abstract

This thesis presents the findings of a recent study conducted at two comprehensive high schools within the same district. The researcher collected data using surveys that were distributed to core-curriculum general education teachers and special education teachers. Of the 161 surveys distributed, thirty-four were returned for an overall response rate of 21%. The first focal point of the study was based on individual teacher perception related to the benefits teachers and students receive when assigned to team-taught classrooms. The second focal point was to establish how teachers perceive the level of support administration provides to help make team-teaching successful. Participants were also provided the opportunity to relate any other concerns they may have concerning team-teaching. The survey results revealed all teachers have had students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) included in the classroom at some point in their career. In order to provide support for students with learning disabilities, when included in the general education classroom, some schools have chosen the team-teaching model. Survey data showed that a majority of teachers believe team-teaching does provide benefit for students and teachers; however, teachers suggested that administration does not always provide the necessary support for success.

KEY WORDS: collaboration, free appropriate public education, inclusion, least restrictive environment, mainstreaming, perception, team-teaching
Over the last half century pressure from the American populace has resulted in a vast array of societal changes to ensure all individuals have equal access to resources provided for the general public. One of the most important aspects of change has been connected to education and the availability of services to all students. In the 1954 landmark Supreme Court Case of Brown v. Board of Education, Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren stated, “We conclude that the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (Street Law & Supreme Court Historical Society, 2002).

Although the Supreme Court decision did not address access for students with learning disabilities, the decision did support the idea that all students should be provided an equitable, non-segregated education. As education continued to evolve over the decades after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, it became apparent changes needed to be made to effectively educate a continually changing diverse student population, including students with learning disabilities. As noted by Villa and Thousand (1995), “While this ruling had an almost immediate effect in breaking down the exclusionary policies toward blacks and other racial and ethnic minorities, it also led the way toward the increased study of exclusionary policies for students with disabilities decades later” (p. 19). Villa, Thousand, and Nevin (2004) reported, “Students with disabilities with primary placements in general education increased
from 33% in 1992 to 46.7% in 2001” (p. xi). As the number of students with learning disabilities being included in the general education environment continues to grow, it has become essential for educators to recognize there will be necessary supports for students with learning disabilities. Federal legislation has also recognized the need to provide supports for students with learning disabilities and have enacted public laws, which include the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). These two acts continue to help ensure all students receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) while being educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (U. S. Department of Education, 2006).

Statistics provided by the California Department of Education (CDE, 2006) confirm an increasing number of students with disabilities are being educated in the general education environment. During the 2004-2005 school year, 50.1% of students with disabilities received instruction in general education classrooms at a frequency of 80% or more during the school day (California Department of Education, 2006). Although the actual percentage of students with learning disabilities enrolled in public schools has remained comparatively constant, ranging from 10% to 10.1% during school years 2000-2001 and 2004-2005 inclusively, the total number of students with learning disabilities attending public schools has increased from 650,719 in 2001 to 681,969 in 2005 due to an overall increase in student population (California Department of Education, 2006). The CDE (2006), acting in compliance with federal legislation, stated, “Students with disabilities should be educated with their nondisabled peers in the general education classroom to the maximum extent
possible” (p.16). In order to provide support for the increasing number of students with learning disabilities being educated in the general education environment, the CDE (2006) developed five goals for students with learning disabilities, which are outlined in the Pocketbook of Special Education Statistics: 2004-2005.

Goal 1. All individuals’ unique instructional needs will be accurately identified.

Goal 2. All individuals with disabilities will be served or taught by fully qualified personnel.

Goal 3. All individuals with disabilities will be successfully integrated with nondisabled peers throughout their educational experience.

Goal 4. All individuals with disabilities will meet high standards for academic and nonacademic skills.

Goal 5. All individuals with disabilities will successfully participate in preparation for the workplace and independent living. (p. 7)

Although the goals outlined in the handbook are admirable, there are not any clear guidelines presented to ensure successful goal achievement. In order to achieve the goals set forth by the CDE, educators in both general and special education will need to work cooperatively to develop strategies to educate all students in a LRE. Teachers will need to understand that inclusion will be a permanent staple in education, and they will need to adapt as necessary to benefit all students. Gibb et al. (1998) corroborate this statement. They contend, “With the growing popularity of inclusion, both general and special education teachers must prepare to provide
appropriate educational services for students with disabilities in general education classrooms” (p. 34). Rice and Zigmond (2001) indicate there are many different services available to support students with disabilities, with co-teaching being an option that will help ensure students with learning disabilities have access to the general education curriculum. Collaborative instruction would appear to be the one option of service delivery to ensure that Goal 3 of the CDE’s Pocketbook of Special Education Statistics: 2004-2005 is met. With all students with learning disabilities included in the general education environment, there would be no need for separate or isolated classrooms. It would then follow that special education teachers would be well advised to prepare to abandon their self-contained classrooms and start seeking out compatible partners to work with in a shared classroom. Accordingly, general education teachers would need to be receptive and responsive to the changing environment, which might include accepting a special education teacher as a peer or partner. This type of partnership would help provide the support necessary for all students to (1) be successful, and (2) receive the maximum amount of educational benefit.

Collaborative instruction would also be a step toward achieving CDE’s Goal 5. If students continue to be isolated from their peers in general education and placed in separate classrooms, there may be a lack of opportunity to attain the social skills necessary to fully integrate into the general workforce or into society, in general. Being included with all students during the educational years would help instill
confidence and a sense of acceptance, providing the experience and fortitude necessary to become a positive contributor to society as an adult.

Statement of the Problem

For many students with learning disabilities, their educational experience has been one of isolation from the general education student population. Although legislation has required schools to provide access to the same resources the general education student receives, many districts have been slow to respond. Gibb et al. (1998) confirm this dilemma, “Although much is being written and discussed about the trend toward inclusion, little agreement has been reached about how inclusion settings are to be developed or what services they should provide” (p. 34). As a result, students may not have access to general education classes, which may impede their educational growth. Equally important are the difficulties districts face when attempting to adhere to legislation and evolve into an inclusive school environment as quickly as possible. When this happens, teachers may be placed in roles they are not familiar with or do not readily accept. Knackendoffel (2005) points out that educators may resist working in a collaborative partnership because of a lack of training, the necessity to learn new skills, and the notion of relinquishing a prior sense of autonomy.

One obtainable solution to providing access for students with learning disabilities is the concept of collaborative instruction. Collaborative instruction involves the partnership of a general education teacher and a special education teacher working together in the same classroom, providing services to all students.
Although the model has many successes, there are also significant impediments to success that have been identified, particularly at the secondary level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to substantiate or refute the findings of previous studies done on collaborative instruction at the secondary level. However, this research will only include data collected from one secondary school district. The qualitative and quantitative data collected were from one comprehensive school site currently employing a collaborative teaching model in the required courses for graduation, and from a second comprehensive site implementing collaborative instruction. The researcher chose these two sites for the specific purpose of comparing perspectives of (1) teachers who are currently involved in collaborative instruction, and (2) teachers who do not currently participate in collaborative instruction.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Collection of qualitative and quantitative data will allow for a comprehensive investigation into the attitudes and perspectives educators have concerning collaborative instruction. Once the data collection process has been completed and the information synthesized, the researcher expects to have pertinent information revealing the most effective strategies to use when implementing collaborative instruction, along with conclusions that can help the educational environment where collaborative instruction is currently in use.
Therefore, the research questions for this study are:

1. Should students with learning disabilities be included in the general education classroom?
2. Do students with learning disabilities receive educational benefit in a team-taught classroom?
3. Do general education students receive educational benefit in a team-taught classroom?
4. Does administration provide the necessary supports for successful team-teaching partnerships?

The researcher hypothesized that teachers will agree there are benefits to teachers and students when participating in a team-taught classroom. Additionally, the researcher hypothesized that respondents will report that administration does not provide the necessary supports to develop successful team-teaching partnerships. The researcher also felt that teachers with fewer years of experience, generally younger teachers, would view team-teaching more favorably than more experienced teachers.

Significance of this Study

The significance of this study is associated with the requirements schools face concerning students with learning disabilities. Because legislation has mandated students with learning disabilities are to be educated in the least restrictive environment, schools are now obligated to open their general education classrooms to all students, including students with special needs. Although there are many districts — with the support of the community, administration, and educators — that have
vigorously accepted the challenge and moved toward inclusion, there are also a significant number of schools yet to be proactive and take the necessary steps to allow full access to the general education setting. The U.S. Department of Education (2006) reported a 10% increase in students with learning disabilities being enrolled in secondary general education classes from 1987 to 2002. However, there were still a significant number of students with learning disabilities being educated outside the general education milieu: 50% in language arts, 43% in math, 29% in science, and 32% in social science. Taking the steps necessary for change does generate many challenges; the researcher suggests it is human nature to resist change when the changes may be difficult. Districts and schools, however, need to realize that providing access for all students has been mandated by law and is not a requirement that is negotiable. Additionally, allowing students with learning disabilities to participate with their general education peers in all aspects of education is morally and ethically the correct path to follow. Allowing all students to fully participate in the educational experience create benefits all stakeholders. Students who are allowed to fully participate will have the opportunity to obtain the education and social skills necessary to successfully transition from secondary education to adult living.

The focus of this study was the perceptions teachers have related to team-teaching. Teachers had the opportunity to provide input into the benefits all stakeholders may realize, the successes they have experienced at their individual sites, and the barriers being face to foster a positive team-teaching experience.
Definition of Terms

Co-teaching. Two or more people sharing responsibility for teaching some or all of the students assigned to the classroom. (Villa, Thousand, and Nevin, 2008)

For the purpose of this study the researcher will also identify co-teaching as Team-Teaching, Collaborative Instruction, and Collaborative Teaching.

Free Appropriate Public Education. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ensures that individuals with disabilities are not excluded, denied benefits, or discriminated against under any program receiving federal funding. (U.S. Department of Education, 2007)

Least Restrictive Environment. According to IDEA Sec. 300.114: To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled. (U.S. Department of Education, 2006)

Individualized Education Program (IEP). An educational program developed for students with disabilities designed to meet the student’s unique needs. (Choate, 2000)

Mainstreaming. Generally referred to as inclusion, allows a student with disabilities be taught exclusively in a general education classroom. (Choate, 2000)

In the next chapter the researcher provides a comprehensive summary of previous studies dedicated to co-teaching. The information provided in chapter two illustrates the importance of the topic, and how the findings relate to this study. Also included are statements from a variety of educators relating their own experiences in
regards to team-teaching, such as the benefits to students and teachers, and the impediments to overcome in the formation of partnerships.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Introduction

In recent years there has been much discussion related to the most beneficial ways of educating students with learning disabilities. These discussions have led to significant legislation in order to benefit all students, influence the processes districts take to implement educational programs, and affected the strategies educators adopt in their daily pedagogical practices. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997, in alignment with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), requires students with disabilities to be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), which provides the greatest degree of educational benefit. However, the LRE requirements of IDEA 2004, Sec. 300.114 state, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in private or public institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Because the IDEA language is non-specific in defining LRE, districts, sites, and IEP teams have the latitude to make placement decisions on their own. When making the placement decisions, many factors (including philosophical practices, past experiences, or available resources) may influence their judgment. Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, and Liebert (2006) offer support by indicating IDEA provides for state or district interpretation of the LRE, leading to a wide variation of placements and educational practices for students receiving special education services. Choate (2000) provides further confirmation, indicating research
has not provided any definitive answers as to what constitutes the most appropriate placement option for students with learning disabilities.

One of the popular movements to help serve students with mild disabilities in the LRE is referred to as collaborative instruction. Boudah, Schumacher, and Deshler (1997) assert collaborative instruction occurs when a special education teacher and general education teacher work simultaneously in the same classroom where students with special needs are enrolled with general education students. The review of literature presented focuses on the benefits of collaborative instruction, teacher roles in the classroom, perceptions and attitudes of teachers and the barriers educators face when working in or working towards a collaborative environment.

Throughout this literature review, co-teaching is referred to as collaborative teaching, collaborative instruction, and team-teaching. The terms are used interchangeably in this study and hold the same meaning.

Moving Towards Collaborative Teaching

Prior to social reform, and legislation requiring students with learning disabilities be educated in the LRE, students with learning disabilities were generally separated from the general education population in self contained classrooms. Both Key (2000) and Voltz, Brazil and Ford (2001) substantiate that it was not until the mid to late 1980s that students with special needs were being placed in general education classrooms with more frequency. The mainstreaming—referred to as inclusion by Choate (2000)—has required educators to adapt new strategies to
provide supports for students with learning disabilities to ensure academic benefit when taught in a general education environment.

Co-teaching is one of the popular methodologies being implemented to support students with learning disabilities who are included in the general education classroom. Idol (2006) describes co-teaching as a model in which a “special education and classroom teacher work together” to provide services in the same classroom for all students (p. 78). According to Mastropiere et al. (2005), it is now common to see a special education teacher and general education teacher working together in the same classroom. Even though collaborative teaching is being used as a popular model to support inclusion and comply with new regulations and requirements, the process has not always been easy. Nor has it always been met with full support by all participants.

According to Barnes (1999), the changes required by legislative mandates, along with individual districts and administrators scrambling to comply with new regulations, do not lead to a commitment on the part of teachers. Additionally, some teachers are being placed into unfamiliar roles involuntarily and without professional development training, resulting in a resistance to change. Because teachers are being required to make changes in their classrooms, they do not have a sense of “ownership or involvement” in the process of inclusive education (p. 233). Similarly, Knackendoffel (2005) offers that one obstacle to collaborative teaching is forcing teachers who are not willing to work together into a shared partnership. Aguilar, Morocco, Parker, and Zigmond (2006) further reveal how important pairing partners
is, proclaiming “teams are absolutely classic when they work, and absolute hell when they don’t” (p. 171). Mastropieri et al. (2005, p. 265) succinctly testify, “Forced marriages often fail”, providing additional evidence concerning the importance of forming partnerships. Although there are instances in which change, especially when forced, invokes resistance among the stakeholders, there are also numerous accounts of successful change when teachers realize the importance of the change and the subsequent benefits for all students and teachers.

Benefits of Collaborative Teaching

Because collaborative teaching is a relatively new model within the educational process, there is a limited amount of quantitative data available to make any final determinations related to the benefits students receive when being taught in a collaborative classroom. Key (2000) reports, “There has been little research to guide teachers and interns on meeting those students’ needs in the classroom” (p. 3). However, there have been a number of studies conducted using qualitative research and ethnographic research that provide results confirming benefits for students and teachers. i.e. Key (2000), Idol (2006), Walsh and Snyder (1993) among others, these studies are referenced throughout Chapter Two.

One of the most important benefits for students with learning disabilities is being accepted as part of the school community. Many times, students with learning disabilities have been separated from the general school population for their education program and placed in special education classrooms. Frequently these classrooms are on the outskirts of the campus and reinforce the idea of being
different, fostering an attitude of isolation and severely diminishing the education experience. When students are included in the general education classes, their peers become aware of their abilities and are more accepting of them. Bruce and Youngs (2003) report that teachers have higher expectations for students with disabilities when they are included in the general education classroom. One teacher in their study endorsed the belief of high expectations and the acceptance by other students when she stated, “Special education students interact in class and answer questions...It’s a real positive acceptance on their part, just being able to recognize the talents of other students that they normally wouldn’t think of [as] being talented at all” (p. 8).

When students are empowered to support students with learning disabilities by acting as a peer buddy, advocating in Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and working in cooperative group learning, the level of acceptance is increased (Villa & Thousand, 1992). Collaborative teaching also serves as a vehicle for general education teachers to facilitate understanding of the difficulties students with learning disabilities face in the learning process, promoting acceptance of the students by the general education teacher (Walsh & Snyder, 2003).

Students are not the only participants in collaborative instruction who benefit. Studies also provide documentation from teachers indicating there are benefits for teachers when participating in collaborative instruction. Rice and Zigmond (2000) report special education teachers were praised by general education teachers for their devotion and patience with students who have special needs; however, special education teachers were often viewed as not being actual teachers and “often given
low status in the secondary school hierarchy” (p. 195). These researchers contend that when involved in collaborative instruction and having contact with all students, special education teachers feel they are real teachers and this attitude is echoed by general education teachers. Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001) acknowledge how co-teaching promotes a belief of shared ownership by participating teachers, which in turn promotes a sense of belonging for students with disabilities. In addition, Barry (1994-95) provides an example of one teacher’s attitude when students with learning disabilities are integrated in the general education arena. The teacher states, “The class integration process appears to work especially well when the special education teacher works side by side with the regular teacher” (p. 6). Another example indicating how collaborative instruction helps involve all teachers is provided by Friend (2007), who explains, “All teachers, not just a few, contribute to an inclusive school culture” (p. 49). All of these examples provide positive evidence indicating how special education teachers and general education teachers benefit from collaborative instruction and become more integrated into the overall school environment, providing a sense of ownership for all students.

Roles of Teachers when involved in Collaborative Instruction

Villa, Thousand, and Nevin (2004) define team teaching as “two or more people [who] do what the traditional teacher has always done — plan, teach, assess, and assume responsibility for all of the students in the classroom” (p. 9). During a professional development seminar, Villa and Thousand (2005, September) provided three examples of co-teaching approaches:
1. **Supportive.** Supportive co-teaching occurs when one teacher delivers the instruction while the other teacher facilitates student learning by providing individual explanation or one-on-one assistance as necessary.

2. **Parallel.** Parallel instruction is described as two teachers working in the same classroom with different groups of students in different sections of the classroom. Both teachers may rotate among all groups during the instruction time.

3. **Complementary.** Complementary co-teaching is when both teachers provide input to enhance the learning of all students. Examples may be paraphrasing what the other teacher has said or writing the notes as the other teacher provides instruction. (Villa & Thousand, 2005, p. 8)

Ideally, any and all of these techniques should be used in any single classroom during the school year; however, the most frequently used technique at the secondary level is the supportive approach. The main reason for this choice of instruction is due to the content area knowledge the collaborative teachers possess. In many instances, the general education teacher is the content specific expert, while the special education teacher is the strategies expert who possesses a somewhat lesser foundation of expertise to teach the course content. This dilemma is the main reason co-teaching partners may not experience the sense of an equal partnership in the classroom. Although there are many examples where equal partnership does exist in the classroom, there are many examples indicating an equal partnership does not exist.
King and Youngs (2003) provide one example of the sentiments from a general education teacher; the teacher stated minimal collaboration took place because special education teachers “are just totally unprepared, unqualified to be in the room; they cause more problems than they’re worth” (p. 11). Another example concerning content area knowledge is provided by Mastropieri et al. (2005), who stated, Special education teachers frequently took on the role of instructional aide in secondary content-area classrooms. The issue is not specific content areas themselves, but rather the special education teacher’s level of knowledge of the content areas” (p. 268). There are many other examples in which the same sentiment is revealed by both the general and special education teachers. At times, the special education teacher does not have the confidence to teach content area curriculum at the secondary level. One of the contributing factors to the problem is the lack of planning time teachers have to prepare lessons so both teachers can equally participate. Although this scenario can lead to the downfall of a partnership, and a feeling of inferiority by the special education teacher, if teachers work together and employ all three teaching models provided by Villa and Thousand (2005, September) from time to time, a true and equal partnership can be developed.

*Barriers to Successful Collaborative Instruction*

As with any change being implemented in an organization, there will be hurdles to overcome in order to realize successes. The fact that federal legislation has mandated changes, and administrators are accelerating the pace to be in compliance, magnifies the existing problems during change. Too often administrators move
towards change without the proper planning and supports in place for the stakeholders participating in the changes. Consequently, participants may become disillusioned with their experience and resist partaking in the process of change.

Administration. For sites to create a thriving team-teaching culture, educators and administrators need to work collaboratively. As Villa et al. (2008) point out, it is the responsibility of teachers and administrators to work in harmony and be creative in their thinking when allocating resources, particularly when scheduling is concerned. Unfortunately, administration does not always provide the necessary support, making the change to collaborative instruction difficult and frustrating.

Zigmond and Rice (2000) indicate that one barrier exists when there is a change in administration. At one school site, an outgoing administrator provided full support for collaborative instruction. However, when the new administrator was put into place the understanding of co-teaching was not evident; consequently teachers did not receive the support necessary to be successful. Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, and Liebert (2006) also indicate that changes in administration can undermine the teachers participating in collaborative instruction because of different views being presented and the time necessary to be successful may not be allocated.

Staff perceptions and schedule changes. Staff changes may also influence the success of co-teaching. At one school site the special education department reported that “Shifting schedules, staffing changes, and inexperienced teachers impact the dynamics of teaching dyads” (Aguilar et al. 2006).
Time. One of the supports administrators need to provide teachers working in a partnership is time; however, this does not happen on a regular basis. As one teacher states, “We never have a chance to plan, so it’s not really a partnership” (Friend, 2007, p. 49).

Time, or the lack of time, is a special concern educators may face when attempting to create a thriving collaborative partnership. In an example provided by Friend (2007) related to planning time, one teacher indicated that a lack of planning time inhibits the collaboration process. Therefore, the teachers do not feel they have a true partnership. Gibb et al (1998) corroborate Friend’s contention, explaining that planning time is a concern also reported by teachers in their research. Teachers indicated the necessity to have a planning period together to discuss student needs, behavior management, and curriculum in order to achieve their goals. Another frustration concerning time is the general education teacher’s role in attending to a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting. Many general education teachers do not fully understand the significance of the meeting, nor do they necessarily understand the law that mandates their attendance at this meeting (Aguilar et al., 2006). Because they are involved in collaborative instruction, general education teachers who have large numbers of students receiving special education services in their classes are often requested to attend many IEP meetings.

Since public education relies on state and federal government money to educate students, funding is a noteworthy concern to provide the necessary resources to districts and schools. This is particularly true at this time, almost daily there is
some type of news report, whether reported verbally or in print, that indicate school districts need to reduce their budgets. Budget cuts reduce the amount of resources schools have at their disposal, including staffing levels. As written by Brigham, Parker, Morocco, and Zigmond (2006) budget cuts can inhibit schools to continually develop co-teaching partnerships. At one school site, teachers believe co-teaching is the best strategy to use when providing services to students with learning disabilities. However, due to budget cuts, the site is unable to offer team-taught classes beyond tenth grade because of personnel shortages.

Conclusion

Due to federal mandates requiring that students with special needs, to acquire academic benefit, be educated in the least restrictive environment, more and more students will be taken out of self-contained classrooms and placed with their general education peers in the mainstream classroom. Subsequently, collaborative instruction would appear to be one of the best strategies to employ when providing the necessary supports for student success. Although there are numerous benefits to be realized by both the students and the teachers who participate in collaborative instruction, the number one benefit all stakeholders receive is the feeling of ownership in the school and the educational process. Even though there are many advantages to implementing team-teaching, there are also many hindrances that may impede successful collaboration.

Among the hindrances are: (1) the lack of administrative support, (2) teachers' perceptions of the ability of all teachers to work in a general education classroom
because of course content knowledge, particularly at the secondary level; (3) the lack of time to allow collaborative instruction to be successful, and (4) the limited amount of funding being provided due to continued budget cuts. Even with these barriers in place, educators can make collaborative instruction work as long as there continues to be the belief that all students can achieve at a high level and positively participate in the general education environment.

The information gleaned throughout the literature review indicates there are numerous benefits for both students and teachers when sites implement a team-teaching concept. However, there are also barriers to be overcome in order to establish a thriving and beneficial educational experience for all.

In this study, the researcher obtained qualitative and quantitative data that examined the perceptions teachers have in one particular district and compared the results to the information provided by previous studies. It is his hope that the results will be used by each individual site to design and support teachers in their endeavor to create partnerships that result in positive experiences for all participants.

In the next chapter, the research will provide a thorough description of the methodology used in his study. In particular, he will include the research method used for this study, and the reasons for selecting the particular research design. In addition, the author provides a description of the district where the research took place, along with a description of the sample population. Furthermore, particulars are provided for the distribution and collection of the surveys.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine how special education teachers and general education teachers perceive the concept of collaborative team-teaching at the secondary level. Areas of exploration include: (1) the benefits for students and teachers, (2) the level of administration support, and (3) the concerns of teachers if they were assigned to a team-teaching partnership. The researcher collected quantitative and qualitative data by distributing and collecting surveys from teachers at two comprehensive high schools within the same district. One of the sites has been utilizing the team-teaching approach extensively for the past four years, while the second site is in the process of implementing team-teaching for core curriculum. Rice and Zigmond (2000), used the same approach for their research, which allowed the comparison of roles and responsibilities from the teachers’ perspective operating under two systems of education, one site using the team-teaching approach while the second site employed a traditional approach.

Design

The design of the study included the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. In this explanatory mixed-method design process, a researcher “first collects quantitative data and then collects qualitative data in order to help support, explain, or elaborate on the quantitative results” (Mertler & Charles, 2008, p. 291). The first section of the survey collected quantitative data soliciting basic demographic
information about the participants. The middle section of the survey consisted of four Likert scale questions, requiring participants to respond along a continuum selecting from the following choices: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree (Mertler & Charles, 2008). These questions concerned the benefit to students when placed in a team-taught classroom along with the level of administration support for successful team-teaching partnerships. Qualitative data was used for the final section of the survey and sought brief narrative responses from participants to relate their concerns about team-teaching and were presented the opportunity to provide any other comments they found relevant. Teachers provided a brief written response relating any other comments that are salient to team-teaching. By using a mixed-method design, the researcher was able to use the qualitative data to provide detailed explanation in support of the quantitative data collected.

Participants

The teachers who were invited to participate in the survey were chosen because they teach core curriculum at their respective sites. Because core curriculum—English, science, social science, and math—are required for all students, these are the classes in which students receiving special education services need the extra support for success. The targeted population for the study included 161 teachers at two of the three comprehensive high schools within the district. Teacher numbers were counted by the researcher from current staffing rosters provided by site administration. At School A, eighty-nine teachers were selected to participate, and at
Table 1.

Selected Sample Population by Department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Social Science</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Special Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School B, seventy-two teachers were selected to participate. The selection of the sample population included all teachers in both core curriculum departments and the special education department. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the sample population selected to participate according to department.

Each of the potential participants was provided an information sheet and survey approved by the California State University San Marcos Institutional Review Board. The information sheet explained the purpose of the study, description of procedures, the risks involved for participants in the study, and the potential benefits of the research. The information sheet also explained that by returning the survey, the participants were giving their consent to participate; if the recipients of the survey did not consent, they were instructed to disregard the survey.

Setting

The study took place in a large urban high school union district in the southwestern region of the United States. The district includes three comprehensive high schools, one independent study high school, two charter schools, one credit recovery site, and one adult school site. During the 2007-2008 school year, the district
employed 465 teachers, which included 327 subject area teachers, 26 vocational education teachers, 35 special education teachers, and 77 teachers listed as “other” (Educational Data Partnership, 2009) The Educational Data Partnership (2009) did not provide any facts indicating the number of teachers involved in team-teaching or the number of teachers with experience in team-teaching.

Instrument

To determine how teachers perceive the team-teaching process and the potential benefits to students and teachers, the researcher disseminated a paper survey, which consisted of (a) three demographic questions; (b) four Likert scale questions; and (c) two brief response questions. The Likert scale is defined by Mertler and Charles (2008) as “a scale used to assess attitude or opinion; subjects respond by indicating how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement provided” (p. 363).

The principal focus of the study was to determine how secondary core curriculum teachers and special education teachers perceive the team-teaching approach to instruction. The study also used demographic information based on years of teaching experience by the participants to determine if there was any correlation between years of experience and attitudes toward team-teaching. A further breakdown within the study compared perceptions of special education teachers and general education teachers.

The second focus of the study was on how teachers perceive the inclusion of special education students in the general education classroom. Teachers were asked if special education students should be included in the general education classroom, and
if both special education students and general education students benefit from the inclusion process and support from a team-teaching partnership.

Next, participants were provided the opportunity to provide narrative answers related to their concerns if they were assigned to a team-teaching partnership. Participants were also given a final opportunity to provide any information they deemed significant concerning team-teaching by providing a brief narrative response.

**Procedure**

The initial step the researcher took was to determine the most effective tool to use for the solicitation of data. The researcher chose a paper survey (Appendix A) for the study to provide participants with the greatest degree of anonymity in the hope of receiving unbiased responses. The investigator spent five years teaching at one of the sites chosen to take part in the study, team-teaching for three of those years, and determined an interview process would possibly result in biased replies due to preconceived notions of what the researcher would like to hear. According to Mertler and Charles (2008), a personal interview may provide information that is suspect due to the interviewer’s manner or encouragement; also, the respondents can easily be influenced by the interviewer.

The second procedural step was to contact administration at the three comprehensive sites chosen for the study to request permission to distribute the surveys to the staff. The researcher personally met with the three site administrators and received verbal approval for the study, however, one site administrator failed to provide written permission; therefore, that site was excluded from the study.
Once the researcher identified the sites for the study, he notified participants via email that they would receive a short survey in their site mailboxes, and he encouraged them to share their thoughts. The participants were also informed they would receive an information sheet explaining the purpose of the survey and directions for completion. The researcher explained in detail how he would collect the completed surveys, and how he would ensure that proper protocol steps would be taken for security and confidentiality of participants’ responses.

**Analysis**

The analysis of the collected data based on the explanatory mixed-method research chosen for the study includes examining quantitative data to determine if correlations existed between demographic information and perception responses garnered from the Likert scale questions. The researcher also provided an analysis of the qualitative data to support and explain the statistics assembled from the quantitative data. As stated by Mertler and Charles (2008), making sense of data involves the analysis of information after it has been collected. According to these researchers, “This process involves applying statistical treatments to quantitative data or applying logical treatments to qualitative data” (pp. 134-135).

A few of the key questions and concepts the researcher examined were: (1) Do years of experience coincide with teachers’ perceptions about team-teaching and benefits for students? (2) Do special education teachers perceive team-teaching differently than general education teachers? (3) What are teachers’ attitudes concerning administrative support? and (4) What are themes to responses to open-
ended questions related to team-teaching provided by participants? After synthesizing the data from the study, the researcher corroborated findings from previous studies conducted about team-teaching, which is explained in the final chapter.

**Summary**

After careful consideration, the researcher determined an explanatory mixed-method design using a paper survey provided the most reliable unbiased data for the study. Although the researcher contacted the three comprehensive sites within the district, only two sites chose to participate in the study. Therefore, the data collected do not provide insight into teachers’ perceptions of team-teaching throughout the district, but compares attitudes from two comprehensive sites employing different approaches to team-teaching. One site has aggressively been using team-teaching for a number of years, while the second site is in the beginning stages of the process of implementing team-teaching.

All participants for the study were given equal opportunity to respond. Each member of the targeted population received an email indicating they (a) would be receiving a survey and an information sheet explaining the purpose of the study; and (b) procedures for completing the survey and returning it to the investigator. All surveys were distributed on the same day and collected on the same day.

Once the collection process was completed, the researcher used tables to document his findings. The tables aided him in the task of comparison of data. These comparisons were used to determine if any significant correlations were found, and if so, how the results compared to results from previous studies conducted and cited...
throughout the literature review. Through the examination of quantitative data and explanation provided from qualitative data, the researcher explains the study results in the following chapter, providing graphic representation and narrative clarification.
CHAPTER FOUR
Results and Data Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions teachers at the secondary level have concerning team-teaching. With legislative requirements to educate all students in the least restrictive environment, there continues to be an increase in the number of students receiving special education services being included in general education classrooms. In order to provide support for students with learning disabilities, and ensure a least restrictive environment is achieved, some districts and schools have embraced team-teaching as standard practice. On the other hand, there are schools that have taken a less aggressive approach to inclusion and have been reluctant to implement team-teaching for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons appear to stem from a lack of resources due to budget constraints, a lack of administrative support, the willingness of teachers to share their classroom and sacrifice autonomy, along with concerns about curricular content knowledge. Although there are teachers who believe team-teaching is a viable form of curriculum delivery, and they acknowledge there are benefits for all stakeholders, these teachers also express that the transition from traditional classrooms to team-taught classrooms has, at times, been difficult. Some educators have expressed their concern about the benefits of team-teaching and the barriers they have faced, which has inhibited the creation of successful peer partnerships.
In this chapter the researcher provides the results of a study conducted at two comprehensive high schools in an urban high school district in the southwestern United States. The study solicited responses, through the distribution of surveys, from core curriculum general education teachers and special education teachers. Results of the collected quantitative data are presented in tables, with accompanying analysis of the qualitative data received from the respondents that supports the findings. The author also provides interpretation of the data assembled, explaining how the results support or refute the researcher’s hypotheses and information from previous studies provided in Chapter Two. In addition, the researcher provides a summary of the information included in this chapter, and a brief preview of Chapter Five.

Presentation of Data

The total number of participants selected for the study was 161, including 137 general education teachers and 24 special education teachers. Of the distributed surveys, there were 34 returned, resulting in an overall response rate of 21%. A further breakdown of the population that responded indicated 41% of the special education teachers returned their surveys (10 of 24), while 17% of general education teachers replied (24 of 137). As expected, there was a significant disparity in the number of responses received from the two sites, which can be attributed to the fact that the researcher taught at one site for five years and is very familiar with the staff. School A had a response rate of 29%, while School B had an 11% response rate.

The first section of the survey solicited basic demographic information from the selected sample population. The three questions asked were to determine if the
Table 2.

**Participant Teacher Years of Experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>1-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16 or More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Education Teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

respondents were general education or special education teachers, and how many years of teaching experience the individual teachers had. These questions were asked to determine if a correlation existed between the number of years of teaching experience and the perceptions teachers had concerning team-teaching. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the respondents’ teaching experiences. The researcher did not find any noteworthy correlation between the number of years of experience and perceptions teachers hold.

The last demographic question presented was “Have you ever had a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in your class?” All of the respondents answered yes. This is an indication that students with learning disabilities are being placed in general education classes.

Questions four through seven required a response on a Likert scale continuum that included the following options: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, (4) Strongly Agree. The results of each question are provided quantitatively in Figures 1 — 4, along with narrative analysis based on qualitative data garnered from respondents’ comments.
Figure 1.

*Special education students should be included in general education classrooms.*

Although the percentage of students with learning disabilities has not changed significantly during the last ten years, there has been an overall growth in student population, which corresponds to an increase in the number of students with learning disabilities. As the number of students being included in the general education classroom continues to increase, teachers need to be flexible and willing to change to discover effective strategies to provide support for all students, with team-teaching being one possible alternative. Survey question four asked the participants how they felt about including special education students in the general education classroom. Overwhelmingly, Figure 1 shows 88% of respondents indicated they either agreed or strongly agreed that students with disabilities should be included in the general education classroom. One teacher did not respond.

Team-teaching as an instructional option, when students with learning disabilities are included in the general education classroom, is supported by the
following comments from one general education teacher, who said, “Team-teaching allows more students to be included in regular education.” Another general education teacher indicated the students with learning disabilities are great to have in the class, and that team-teaching benefits all students. That teacher stated, “I wish I could have this in all of my classes.”

There was concern expressed about including students with learning disabilities in a large class, even with two teachers present. Two respondents worried about students becoming overwhelmed and getting lost in the class because they may be reluctant to advocate for themselves.

The second Likert scale question asked respondents to provide their perspective about the level of education benefit students with learning disabilities receive when placed in a team-taught classroom rather than in a self-contained special education classroom. As indicated in Figure 2, eighty-five percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that students receiving special education services do receive educational benefit from a team-taught environment. One respondent commented that in using the team-teaching approach “extra support and classroom management becomes much easier.” This comment is echoed by a second teacher who stated that students with learning disabilities “receive support from two teachers and in working with general education students.” A further respondent stated, “The educational growth from semester-to-semester is obvious.”
There were a few teachers who expressed their doubts about placing students with learning disabilities in a classroom of 35 to 40 students. Even though there are two teachers, the teacher-to-student ratio is still larger than a self-contained special education class of approximately 10 to 12 students.

The next question on the survey asked participants about whether they felt general education students benefit from being in a team-taught classroom. The responses presented in Figure 3 indicate 87% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that there is a benefit to general education students when being educated in a team-taught milieu. Two teachers did not respond.

One interesting result that emerged from the data was that 17 teachers strongly agreed that general education students receive educational benefit in a team-taught
Figure 3.

*Teacher perception of benefits to general education students in a team-taught classroom.*

class, while only 12 teachers *strongly agreed* that special education students receive the same benefit (Figure 2). In support of this disparity, one teacher stated, “Team-teaching works well for all students.” Another teacher wrote, “General education students see themselves as role models and provide assistance to special education students.” A further comment substantiated the finding with the following, “We found that our general education students were very needy just in different ways.”

There was also one noteworthy comment provided by a teacher who disagreed that general education students receive benefit in a team-taught class. That teacher stated, “With so many special education students in one class, all students are forced to move at a slower pace.”
Figure 4.

*Administration provides the necessary support to create successful team-teaching partnerships.*

The final question posed to the participants asked whether their school administration, from their perspective, provided the necessary support for successful team-teaching partnerships. As indicated in Figure 4, sixty-two percent of respondents contended that administration does not provide the necessary supports. Two teachers did not respond. Time constraints were the common barrier teachers identified when creating successful partnerships. As one teacher stated, “We need the time to work with the team teacher to lesson plan, grade, and discuss discipline.” Another teacher explained “Without a common prep period it is hard to work together and really feel like a team.” Other concerns expressed were: Who chooses the partnerships? Will the teachers be able to seek their own partners, or will administration assign the teams? Along the same line, one respondent indicated that
teachers continually get moved around in their assignments and are not able to build a working relationship over the years. Another legitimate concern related to physical needs. Many times, one of the teachers involved in team-teaching moves from classroom to classroom and is not provided with tangible items, such as a desk, computer, filing cabinet, etc. This, in turn, denies the feeling of classroom ownership.

The following section provides an analysis and explanation of the collected data to determine if there is any benefit realized when utilizing team-teaching in the classroom.

*Analysis and Interpretation*

Based on the findings of this study, from a teachers’ perspective, there is convincing evidence that team-teaching, when successfully accomplished, does provide educational benefit for all students. Most teachers also agreed that students with learning disabilities should be included in the general education classroom, and stated they have witnessed the educational and social growth of students, which may not have occurred if the students were placed in self-contained special education classrooms. Additionally, comments received indicate teachers who have participated in the team-teaching process, along with teachers who do not team-teach, understand the importance of providing equal opportunities for all students. As one respondent succinctly wrote, “Equal access for all.” Additional comments referenced the idea of all teachers working together for a common goal, which influenced the overall feeling of ownership, by students and teachers alike.
Although most of the respondents support and would be willing to participate in a team-taught classroom, there were numerous comments received expressing a variety of concerns. Many of the comments revealed a lack of confidence in the amount of administrative support that would be provided. The primary concern was the allocation of time to collaborate with their partner during the actual contracted school day. An example of this is scheduling common prep periods. Teachers indicated that two heads were better than one for the creation of ideas; however, if there was not time provided to be creative, then it is just two heads doing different things. This sentiment from teachers is very common, being thoroughly discussed in previous studies and referenced in Chapter Two of this study.

Another concern of teachers discovered in this study, which is also referenced in Chapter Two from previous studies, is the contention that special education teachers do not possess the necessary course content knowledge to teach at the secondary level. When this happens, special education teachers are not treated as an equal partner and relegated to the role of a glorified aide. One comment received from a special education teacher, indicated that having at least two periods with the same partner teaching the same course allowed for better understanding of the objective and provided more confidence to participate the second time around.

Summary

Overall, the findings of this study were very similar to the conclusions from previous studies conducted and discussed in Chapter Two. The researcher acknowledges there is the possibility of skewed data due to the familiarity he has with
one of the sites where the study took place, and from which he received the largest survey return ratio. However, since the results were very similar to those of previous studies, the author believes the findings are reliable and should be used to help guide school sites currently using the team-teaching model or for schools in the process of implementing team-teaching.

In the following chapter, the researcher provides an in-depth explanation about how the results of this study relate to results provided from previous studies conducted in relation to team-teaching. Furthermore, the author discusses the limitations of the study and provides considerations for changes that could be made to use in future research. Finally, the researcher concludes with an overall summary of this study reviewing its importance to the field of education and educators.
Chapter Five

Recommendations

Introduction

During the development of this study, the researcher decided to distribute surveys to a selected population of teachers at two comprehensive high schools to examine their attitudes toward team-teaching. Which included: (1) the potential benefits for students and teachers, (2) how they perceived the support provided by administration, and (3) the concerns teachers have if placed in a team-taught classroom. Previous studies indicated that there are many benefits for teachers and students to be realized, however, the results of these studies also indicated that there are barriers to overcome for team-teaching to be successful.

In this chapter, the researcher provides a summary of the survey results and illustrates how the survey results supported the author’s original hypotheses, along with a comparative analysis of results from previous studies described in Chapter Two. In addition, the researcher explains how the quantitative results are supported by the qualitative responses in this explanatory mixed-method study. The researcher also considered the implications of the study, and how the district and schools that participated may use the results to develop a successful team-teaching culture. Furthermore, the researcher describes the limitations of the study, and how the study’s shortcomings may have affected the results. Finally, the researcher provides recommendations for continued research in the future and the potential uses, and a brief conclusion highlighting the key concepts of the study.
Results of Findings

The researcher’s two main hypotheses for this study were: (1) A majority of teachers will report that they believe there are benefits to students and teachers when a team-taught classroom environment is employed, and (2) Administration does not always provide the necessary supports for team-teaching to be successful. Based on the results of the quantitative data received, with supporting qualitative data, both hypotheses were endorsed in this study.

The first area of exploration in this study was the perception of teachers regarding inclusion of students with learning disabilities in the general education classroom. As well, the researcher inquired regarding teachers’ perceptions of benefits of team-teaching as a means of support for these students. A majority of respondents in this study indicated that students with learning disabilities should be included in the general education classroom (Figure 1), and these students do receive educational benefit (Figure 2). The positive responses from teachers found in this study support the attitudes of teachers found in a previous study conducted by Idol (2006), in which she reported that one of the schools in her study had a vision of full inclusion and should make every effort to achieve the goal. Idol also reported that teachers in all six of the schools in her study were supportive of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The findings in the current study reflect the findings of a study conducted by Gibb et al. in 1998, in which the researchers described the perception of teachers as being positive toward inclusion and using team-teaching as support. Gibb et al. reported teachers believe students
with learning disabilities receive academic and social benefit when included in a team-taught environment. Teachers in their study indicated that the improved academic performance had a positive affect on students' confidence, which helped improve the students' self-esteem. The improvement in self-esteem led to a greater acceptance socially. As one teacher explained, "They make friends that they never would have made before" (p. 42). Another study conducted by King and Youngs (2003) discovered similar results related to academic benefit when they declared that teachers believe students with learning disabilities are held to higher standards when included in team-taught classrooms, and therefore they perform at a higher academic level.

The second focus of this study was to determine if teachers believe general education students realize any benefit when placed in team-taught classrooms. Unexpectedly, more teachers strongly agreed that general education students receive benefit in a team-taught environment than do students with learning disabilities (see Figures 2 and 3). The common theme that emerged was general education students take on the task as a role model, which improves their academic performance and social behavior. In a study conducted by Aguilar et al. (2006), teachers reported that when assigning general education students as a "peer buddy" and having the students provide peer tutoring to students with disabilities, academic and social growth was fostered. Key (2000) also reported that when students with learning disabilities are included in the general education classroom, they showed "better social interaction, enhanced skill acquisition and generalization, better health, more independence,
greater success in meeting the objectives of their IEPs, and more normalized adult functioning” (p. 5). All of these successes had a positive affect on the general education students, who developed a more positive attitude toward the students with learning disabilities.

General education students are not the only ones to realize benefits from team-teaching; general education teachers benefit, as well. As one general education teacher responded in the survey, “Having another teacher in the classroom is great. We share ideas and work with all students. I do not feel alone.” Results of a study conducted by Walsh and Snyder (1993) bolster this feeling, and validate that there are benefits to general education teachers when assigned to a team-taught classroom. Their findings indicated general education teachers developed a more positive attitude toward students with disabilities as they developed a deeper understanding of the challenges the students face with learning problems, leading to an increased level of tolerance within the classroom.

The final question concerned teachers’ perception of the amount of administrative support provided to create successful team-teaching partnerships. Based on the findings from previous studies, the researcher hypothesized that the majority of teachers would not respond favorably. This assertion was supported by the fact that 59% of the teachers indicated they disagreed or strongly disagreed (Figure 4) that administration provides the necessary support to create a successful team-teaching culture. The principle contention supporting the quantitative data, provided in qualitative data, is the issue of time constraints; many teachers do not feel
sufficient time is provided during the course of the contracted workday for collaboration with their colleagues to discuss lesson planning, grading issues, classroom management, or overall roles and responsibilities. Therefore, to be successful, many teachers indicated they spend their own time to complete the required tasks.

In almost every previously conducted study reviewed by the researcher, time was a primary factor teachers believed inhibited the formation of effective team-teaching partnerships. Rice and Zigmond (2001), for example, reported teachers were using many hours of their own time for planning purposes; however, the teachers stated they would not be willing to sustain the extra time for long. Mastropieri et al. (2005) reported, teachers felt there was a barrier to team-teaching because administration did not allocate co-planning time. Barnes (1999) indicated there are obstacles to team-teaching related to time. They reported, “There is little time provided in the school day to accommodate our need for developing daily plans, interventions, and assessments” (p. 237). Although the collective findings of previous studies and this researcher’s study indicate time is the principal barrier to overcome in the formation of team-teaching partnerships, curriculum knowledge at the secondary level is also a concern.

In this study, six of the 34 respondents expressed concern about the curriculum content knowledge a special education teacher would bring to the classroom. As one respondent indicated, “I was assigned a special education teacher to team-teach with; however, I teach English and the special education teacher was
teaching social science.” This assertion from a general education teacher has been commonly documented in previous studies. Boudah et al. (1997), for example, found that at the secondary level, “the general education teacher in a secondary classroom tends to function more often in the presenter role, with the special education teacher in a mediator role” (p. 298). Rice and Zigmond (2001) echo this belief. In their study, they found general education teachers were skeptical of the special education teacher's ability to teach core curriculum at the secondary level, but were praised for their “patience” and “devotion” to students with special needs. Based on the results of this study, and previous studies, there is a consistent attitude that special education teachers lack the course content knowledge to effectively teach in a general education classroom—particularly at the secondary level.

One hypothesis the researcher held was that less experienced teachers—generally younger—would support the inclusion of students with special needs in the general education classroom, and be more willing to engage in a team-teaching experience. Based on the demographic results of the respondents, this prediction did not hold true. There was not any significant difference in responses based on years of teacher experience, or, whether the respondent was a general education teacher or special education teacher. The researcher provided overall response numbers in Figures 1 through 4.

Implications and Limitations

Overall, the results of this study confirmed the researcher’s hypotheses, and substantiated results of previous studies conducted using an explanatory mixed-
method design. Therefore, the researcher believes the results are reliable—the results of this study authenticate results from previous studies — and valid — the results are presented as received, and without bias from the researcher. Because the researcher has deemed the results of this study to be conclusive, schools currently using team-teaching, implementing team-teaching or exploring team-teaching as a method to support students with learning disabilities, the author recommends using the results of this study as a template for creating a successful team-teaching culture.

Despite the confidence the researcher has placed on the findings of this study, there were limitations to the research. First, all three comprehensive high school sites within the district were invited to participate in the study; however, the researcher did not receive written permission from School C, and therefore, one school site was excluded from the research. Secondly, the two schools that allowed the research to take place provided different levels of support from administration; one site allowed the researcher to send out an email informing participants of the upcoming survey; whereas the second site allowed the researcher to place the ballot-type collection box in the site mailroom. Another limitation was the researcher had taught at School A for five years, including three years of team-teaching, which may have contributed to a higher percentage of participation on the part of School A’s teachers.

One other limitation to the study is based on the forced response Likert scale questions. As one teacher responded, “Students with learning disabilities have unique needs; therefore asking if all students benefit from education in a team-taught classroom is not appropriate.” The researcher acknowledges this teacher’s argument,
although research does imply that when done effectively, team-teaching can support *all* students.

**Recommendations**

Because the researcher believes the collected data to be reliable and valid, the author recommends school sites within the district, and outside of the district, use the information provided to enhance a current culture of team-teaching, or use the data when implementing a team-teaching environment when supporting students with learning disabilities.

**Conclusion**

During a meeting with administrators from School B, when the researcher requested permission to conduct the study, the principal and vice-principal requested a written and verbal summary of this study. Hopefully, after reading the document, and a full discourse of the findings, administrators will take the necessary steps to move toward full inclusion and support a cultural shift toward team-teaching as a practice to support *all* students in the general education milieu.
References


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APPENDIX A

Survey
Perceptions on Team-Teaching

The purpose of the survey is to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of the benefits and barriers of team-teaching at the secondary level in a large urban school district in the southwestern region of the United States.

Dear Teacher,
Please spend a few minutes completing this survey. DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME OR YOUR SCHOOL SITE'S NAME anywhere on the survey. After completing the survey, place it in the slot of the sealed box labeled “Survey: Dana Angell” located in your school’s mailroom. Please complete the survey prior to Tuesday, March 31, 2009. Surveys will be collected at the end of the workday on March 31st.

For questions 1 through 3, please check the box that applies.

1. How many years have you been teaching?
   - [ ] 1 – 5 years
   - [ ] 6 – 10 years
   - [ ] 11 – 15 years
   - [ ] 16 or more years

2. Are you a: [ ] General Education Teacher. [ ] Special Education Teacher.

3. Have you ever had a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in your class?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Do not know

For questions 4 through 7, please use the following scale for your responses. Circle your response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Students with learning disabilities should be included in the general education class.

   1 2 3 4

5. Students with learning disabilities receive more educational benefit in a team-taught classroom rather than in a self-contained special education classroom.

   1 2 3 4

6. General education students receive more educational benefit when included in a team-taught classroom rather than in a traditional general education classroom.

   1 2 3 4

7. Administration provides the necessary support for successful team-teaching partnerships.

   1 2 3 4
Please provide a brief written response for numbers 8 and 9.

8. What would be your main concern if you were assigned to teach in a team-taught classroom?

Please explain:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

9. Additional comments related to team-teaching:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your participation.

Dana S. Angell