SPECIAL EDUCATION THAT ISN'T SO SPECIAL: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF URBAN SPECIAL EDUCATORS WITHIN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

Dissertation in Practice

Submitted to

The School of Education and Health Sciences of the

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of

Doctor of Education

By

Nadja D. Payton

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

Dayton, Ohio

December 2022

SPECIAL EDUCATION THAT ISN'T SO SPECIAL: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF URBAN SPECIAL EDUCATORS WITHIN THE GENERAL

APPROVAL PAGE

Name: Payton, Nadja D.

APPROVED BY:

_____
Corinne Brion, Ph.D.
Committee Chair
Assistant Professor of Educational Administration

_____
Carol Rogers-Shaw, Ph.D.
Committee Member
Adjunct Professor of Educational Administration

_____
John R. Jackson, Ph.D.
Committee Member
Senior Pastor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SPECIAL EDUCATION THAT ISN'T SO SPECIAL: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF URBAN SPECIAL EDUCATORS WITHIN THE GENERAL

Name: Payton, Nadja D.
University of Dayton

Advisor: Dr. Corinne Brion

Special education within urban, public schools does not always look the same from state to state, district to district, or teacher to teacher. More specifically, teacher knowledge, abilities, and experiences also oftentimes differs in inclusive classrooms that service both students with disabilities as well as students without disabilities. These differences can present problems of practice between co-teachers as well as within the classroom procedures and practices. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of special education teachers in urban schools with experience in both co-teaching and independent teaching of students with disabilities. The findings revealed the following themes reported by special education teachers: teacher-assistant role playing, communication replacing co-planning, and desire to share input.

Dedicated to

Jeff “Gitgone” Johnson.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Tripp, my whole heart - thank you for pushing me to lengths I didn't know were possible; you've shown me just how strong I am. I hope one day you'll be proud to call me your Mommy.

Mom & Mook - thank you for holding my hand along this (and literally every other) journey.

Will - thank you for the endless encouragement, words of wisdom and faith, your curiosity of this journey, and ongoing support always.

Jeff - I know you're forever rooting for me from heaven.

Steven & Jourdan - I wouldn't have gotten to this point without either of you; thank you.

Friends, colleagues and students - thank you ALL for the random words of encouragement, speaking life into me, and calling me "Dr. Payton" before it was even earned.

God - You never have played about me; I ask and You supply. Thank You x 100000000.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE: STUDY PROPOSAL

This study explored the lived experiences of special education teachers with both co-teaching experience as well as experience independently instructing students with disabilities. The research took place at one high school within a large district in the midwestern United States. Furthermore, the study explored the barriers to general education inclusion.

Problem of Practice

Special education within urban public school settings looks different across the country from state to state, district to district, classroom to classroom, and teacher to teacher. For the purpose of this study, students with identified disabilities were defined as children with mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities needing special education and related services (National Center for Special Education Research, 2021). Some teachers who are tasked with educating students with disabilities receive proper training, be it through a teacher preparation program or professional development; this allows them to adequately work with students with disabilities in all different types of settings (Buell et al., 1999; Byrd & Alexander, 2020; Kaczorowski & Kline, 2021). Though this is the route for some teachers, there are others who do not receive this training. Some special education teachers teach only students with disabilities within one classroom setting and some special education teachers teach students with disabilities within the inclusive classroom setting where there are two teachers (one general education teacher and one special

education teacher) and a combination of students with disabilities and students without disabilities (Buell et al., 1999; Byrd & Alexander, 2020). The aforementioned approach, two teachers and a combination of students of differing abilities in one classroom, is what co-teaching is.

Within the inclusive classroom setting, there is a mix of teacher knowledge and skills that both the general education teacher and special education teacher possess that could make the shared classroom thrive (i.e. student achievement, student engagement, co-teaching models that enforce collaboration) (Ghedin & Aquario, 2020). In the high school context, it is more common that the general education teachers receive training and continued professional development in the subject area in which they teach as opposed to how to teach all students; therefore, knowledge and resources on how to teach students of all abilities is not shared with those general education teachers (Marin, 2014). In the same sense, there may be a lack of knowledge and skills from either teacher that could make the shared classroom flounder (i.e. poor collaboration, inadequate planning, mediocre instructional strategies) (Marin, 2014).

As schools all over the world continue to encourage the inclusive classroom and continue to push for inclusive education for all students, it is important to look at the ways in which this inclusive model could be beneficial for all students and teachers while also looking at the barriers that may cause an unsuccessful implementation of this model (Ashbee & Guldberg, 2018; Banks et al., 2019; Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004; Woodcock, 2021). Therefore, the purpose of this action research study was to better apprehend the lived experiences of special education teachers in the general education inclusive classroom setting in urban high schools in midwestern United States within one

of the top five largest school districts in the area. Currently, the plans and practices in place at this organization are not entirely conducive to all students. This action research study better identified those barriers to a success-for-all instructional model and furthermore guided an action plan to ensure supports will be implemented to combat said barriers. Educators, no matter the specific title, as well as individuals who aspire to join the field of education may benefit from this study.

Justification of the Problem

Though advances have been made to mainstream students with disabilities into classrooms with students without disabilities such as Universal Design for Learning (Lowrey & Hollingshead, 2017), there still remained a lack in research and proper plans in terms of teacher preparation for both general education teachers and special education teachers and the way in which the idea of what an inclusive classroom should look like in order to adequately serve all students of differing abilities in this particular high school. Gaining a better understanding of the realities that special education teachers experience when pushed mainstream with the students they serve may cause a ripple effect of increased supports for all teachers, all students, and all instructional supports that would, in turn, support the school's and district's overall organizational goals for student achievement. Highlighting special education teachers' lived experiences revealed barriers to co-teaching that can be solved which could furthermore lead to better co-teaching and collaborative teaching practices, less stress and increased retention (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2010).

Deficiencies in the Organizational Knowledge Record

While past research has proven that co-teaching models oftentimes fail for various reasons (Mangope et al., 2018) and that general education teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive classrooms tend to lean toward the negative side (Orr, 2009), there was a gap in revealing special education teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences with inclusive education within the organization being examined for this study. There was also less research that examined co-teaching in the high school setting of the United States, be it from general education teachers or special education teachers, that could be due to various reasons such as tracking and that general education teachers' preparation programs tend to prepare them for their specific content certification (Cole & McLeskey, 1997; Dieker & Murawski, 2003). Additionally, though there is significant research in the field of special education, there was limited research and lack of action plan knowledge, tools and resources that is specific to the population of students and staff at said organization.

Audience

The targeted audience for this specific study included the co-teachers and administrators of the school. School administrators and instructional staff will benefit from the results of this study as students with disabilities continue to be mainstreamed into the general education classrooms. Comparably, parents of students of all abilities will also benefit from this study so that they can better understand the challenges that are presented in the classrooms that may adversely impact the learning of their child(ren) at this school (Cummings et al., 2015).

Overview of Framework, Methods, and General Research Questions

In considering the topic of lived experiences of special education teachers at the high school level, the research question the study sought to answer is: how do the lived experiences of the special education teachers at Green High School (GHS), an urban high school, contribute or detract from the co-teaching relationship at that particular school site? The qualitative paradigm that resonated most is the constructivist paradigm, primarily through the lens of relativist ontology and transactional/subjectivist epistemology. A participatory action research approach was also applied for this study.

Through the constructivist paradigm and relativist ontological views, knowledge gained is solely dependent upon the vicarious experiences of individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013) and entails subjective experience and small-scale interactions (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Constructivists not only aim to reconstruct systems that are already in place, but also aim tounderstand those systems and the people within them before reconstructing. Being a constructivist means that meaning is created through learning and doing; being a constructivist means that one must engage in physical activity for them to discover knowledge and that one's knowledge is built upon those lived experiences. Because of this, knowledge gained is completely subjective as reality is entirely subjective under this view. Under this relativist view, realities are subjective because they rely on the person who holds those views through their personal experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

Limitations

One limitation stemming from this study is that it involved convenience sampling due to the participants being close in nature, making them easily accessible and available to participate. Due to this type of sampling, the results of this study may not represent the

entire population of special education teachers; the possibility of both overrepresenting and underrepresenting special education teachers exists. Moreover, because of my relationship with the study participants, the results of the study may be negatively or positively impacted which furthermore reduces the generalizability of the study. Lastly, the study participants and the experiences in which they discussed pertain to their experiences with urban schools; therefore, the data from this study may not be completely applicable to other areas such as rural or suburban areas. Each of these limitations suggests the following for future research: increasing the sample size may increase the accuracy of generalizations from the data, having access to participants whom the research is not familiar with personally may eliminate bias impact, and broadening the participants' experience from just urban areas to include other areas may also increase the generalizability.

Review of Related Literature

Frameworks Informing the Study

In addition to this study being led through constructivism as the conceptual framework, the theoretical framework was guided by the values of the Critical Theory of Love. Through the lens of Brook's Critical Theory of Love (2017), organizations must exude intentionality in using love as both a personal and political project that stimulates change and addresses the still-lingering apathy and fear that remains within our society. Imbedding this Critical Theory of Love within an organization to create equitable change can allow for the organization to adopt a nonfamilial concept of love and use it as a catalyst that guides the cohesive environment of employees and stakeholders that, instead of resisting change and strategies for further social justice, creates policies and practices

that reunifies and accepts all persons. This theory was relevant to the study as it can encourage the act of nonfamilial love as a driving force to equity and social justice in its value of all people of differing races, cultures, beliefs, and more specific to this study, abilities.

Along with the aforementioned frameworks, the conceptual model that also guided this study is the Collaborative Teaching model. This model encompasses the following foundational elements: co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing a group of students with differing needs to meet all of those needs. This model has shown through empirical studies that adopting this collaborative teaching model can result in the following four basic advantages: better learning opportunities for students, transformation of students post-adopting positive behaviors from both classroom teachers, better school and classroom environments, and progressed educational sector (Ghazzoul, 2018; Hurd & Weilbacher, 2018). This conceptual framework suggests that three teacher components (lack of support, professional development, students' development) urge the need for the adoption of alternative methods such as co-teaching and teacher collaboration to yield advantages (Ghazzoul, 2018). Collaborative teaching amongst general education teachers and special education teachers plays a key role in the transformation of students as well as promotes skill and capability development amongst students (Ghazzoul, 2018). Using this conceptual model to guide this study in addition to the abovementioned frameworks ultimately fostered an inclusive, transformative, collaborative classroom environment and classroom culture amongst both teachers and students by increasing shared responsibility of both teachers within the co-teaching model as well as employing nonfamilial love characteristics to promote educational social justice.

Related Research

Education for students with disabilities looks different across school districts, states, and countries. In some cases, special education is inclusive, and students of all abilities are within the same classroom as all of their peers, but some may receive different accommodations and modifications for their instruction. Inclusion is also where students of all abilities can participate in extracurricular activities with their abled peers (Zvoleyko et al., 2016). In this co-taught setting, all students have equal access to both the general educator and the special educator. Instruction and responsibility are split between both educators and this can increase the strategies incorporated into the instruction to reach all students of differing abilities (Márquez & Melero-Aguilar, 2021). In some cases, special education is also inclusive in the sense that students with disabilities share the same physical space as their peers without disabilities but still receive their instruction within a small group instructional round where a pull-out service takes place (Márquez & Melero-Aguilar, 2021). Either way, general education teachers and special education teachers face challenges when trying to follow this blended model for their classrooms, partly because of lack of knowledge, meaning and implication of an inclusive educational environment (Márquez & Melero-Aguilar, 2021).

There is some research-based evidence that students with disabilities who are taught outside of the inclusive classroom, or in self-contained classroom environments, often times have lower academic achievement due to the special education teachers not being required to be content-certified; lower academic achievement also has been contributed to the misjudgment students with disabilities already receive based on the belief that they are incapable of grasping and comprehending the skills for areas such as

reading and writing (Bock & Erickson, 2015). Therefore, one would think that teachers all over would believe that the inclusive classroom environment is best for all students, but this is not always the case. Many special education teachers experience feelings of inadequacy as they feel unprepared for the shift into mainstream with their students (Hettiaarachi et al., 2018), but this unpreparedness comes from knowing that general education teachers will also be just as unprepared for this shift as they typical need more professional development and training on inclusion (Odongo & Davidson, 2016). Though research should continue to be conducted for full insight on the lived experiences of special education teachers who are closing down their self-contained classrooms to merge into the inclusive classroom environment, the research that has been conducted on this focus can be organized into two common themes: lack of preparation, support and resources for all educational staff and negative attitudes from general education teachers that adversely impact the classroom practices of the special education teacher. These common themes, amongst others, also emerged throughout the interviews of this study's participants.

Lack of Preparation, Knowledge, & Training. Over the last decade, teacher shortages have been on the rise, and this continues to pose threats to schools for many different reasons (Howard, 2003; Sutcher et al., 2019; Wiggan et al., 2021) . Without properly trained and certified teachers, schools have been negatively impacted as teachers without adequate training, knowledge and preparation were placed in those schools. As the number of individuals entering the field of teaching through teacher preparation programs decreased, while the number of school-aged children increased, the need for teachers remained a critical issue (Bassinger, 2000). Not only have schools been

negatively impacted in ways such as higher teacher-student ratios (Sutcher & Carver-Thomas, 2019; Wamukuru, 2016), but students have also been negatively affected in ways such as weakened classroom instruction and reduced IEP services being met (Sims & Allen, 2018).

Due to this shortage of new teachers, current teacher retention rates, and the current supply and demand for teachers, alternative avenues have been created and put in place for teacher certification (Cleveland, 2003; Hanson & Yoon, 2018). Contrary to teachers who have taken the traditional teacher preparation route, many teachers who go the alternative certification route have, historically speaking, come from non-education occupations due to seeking a change in career (Bassinger, 2000); more than one-third of all new teachers have entered the field of education through the completion of an alternative certification program (Feistritzer, 2003). The alternative route to a teaching license typically requires one to already have a bachelor's degree in any area, complete a short teacher preparation program (that is usually 1-2 years, which is much shorter than a traditional teacher preparation program), and pass the same state examinations as traditional-route educators (Beare et al., 2012). These alternative teaching avenues are not just for general education teachers, but for special education teachers as well such as the Teach Mississippi Institute's (TMI) Transition to Teaching (T2T) program which issues a one year special education license upon completion of its program (Boggan et al., 2016). This rise of the use of alternative certification programs made it difficult for school leaders to identify qualifications and behaviors of new teachers from these programs that would make them effective teachers while they simultaneously learning how to teach but

the demand is so high that school leaders employ these individuals anyhow (Sawyer & Gimbert, 2008).

Though some teacher preparation programs may have provided knowledge on topics such as the different co-teaching models and how they should flow in the classrooms, special education teachers and general education teachers still experience insufficient support and exposure in terms of which models of inclusion practices work and when (Mangope et al., 2018). Furthermore, only special education teacher programs prepare teachers to work with students with disabilities whereas general education teacher programs do not. This lack of proper training can cause chaos in an inclusive environment if only one teacher has gained knowledge on working with students with disabilities, limiting the balance of responsibility of both teachers in the classroom (Mukhopadhyay, 2013).

In addition to the lack of training that general education teachers receive on working with students with disabilities, "there may be a disconnect between programs for general education and special education teachers, where a greater emphasis is provided in special education courses on professional collaboration … while there is minimal treatment given to collaboration in general education courses" (Dally et al., 2019, p. 65). This disconnect suggests that not only are general education teachers lacking in the necessary knowledge of working with students with disabilities, but they have also not been adequately trained in working with other professionals for collaboration within the same classroom environment. Without proper training in these areas, the expectations of the general education teachers continue to be low-level in that they believe that students

with disabilities fall under the responsibility of the special education teacher, even within the inclusive classroom (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2010).

Mpu and Adu (2021) conducted research in the South African Buffalo City Metro area on inclusive education to study the challenges that emerge from mainstreaming all students in education. The findings of that study showed that amongst many other challenges faced, lack of resources and overcrowding were the most common themes discovered while implementing inclusive classrooms. Similarly, Bellimer (2019) sought to explore how teachers in the inclusive classroom environment define inclusion, their recommendations for further training and resources to better support students with disabilities, and the current training they hold regarding students with disabilities. The 33 Ohio elementary teachers' data suggested that not only do they feel ill-prepared to properly service students within the general education classroom environment, but they also feel as though due to such large push towards inclusive curriculum, the necessary social and emotional issues and curriculums get reduced to lesser priority which makes the shift into an inclusive classroom unsuccessful (Bellimer, 2019). The participants also expressed disdain with the lack of training teachers receive on how to provide specific accommodations and modifications to Common Core curriculum for those students with special needs.

Additionally, the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) had a significant impact on the education system beginning in the 2019-2020 school year that continues to make an impact on education even today (Gandolfi et al., 2021). When COVID-19 ran rampant throughout communities, schools were shut down and forced to begin instruction remotely. Teachers who were already burned out from the traditional way of teaching

were now forced to learn new technological skills and ways to reach all their students, those without disabilities and those with disabilities (Gandolfi et al., 2021). Still without much training, teachers were forced to remain the single point of contact for every student, intensify their instructional focus on students' social-emotional well-being, strengthen their teacher-parent partnerships, and even individualize instruction even more for each student (Heyward et al., 2020). The newest demands teachers have faced without proper training or professional developments have resulted in a worsened teacher shortage as teacher retirements and resignations have increased (Carver-Thomas et al., 2020).

Co-teaching Resistance. Though mainstreaming, including students with disabilities in the general education classrooms, is not an entirely new concept in education, many teachers are still used to having their own classroom space, planning independently without the input of other teachers, and simply doing things their own way (Ferrante, 2017; York & Tundidor, 1995) . As a result of this notion, there tends to be quite a bit of resistance to welcoming students with disabilities and special education teachers into these inclusive classrooms (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). Many of these negative attitudes are overly hostile with a blatant lack of enthusiasm as the general education teachers tend to not be excited about the merge (Orr, 2009); more specifically, Austin's (2001) study's results showed that some general education teachers reported they did not particularly care for the classroom disruptions of some students with disabilities that can negatively affect the academic performance of those students without disabilities. This attitude flows into the actual classroom with students as the general education teachers do not feel as if they should be responsible for both the general

education students as well as the students with disabilities (Harkins & Fletcher, 2015), and some feel as though the inclusive classroom environment simply is not beneficial to students with disabilities (Hunter-Johnson et al., 2014), so their negative perceptions of this model can also negatively impact student achievement. These attitudes are not always held primarily by the general education teachers as special education teachers tend to share resistance to the inclusive model as well for many of the same reasons. In their study examining the perceptions of teachers on inclusive education, Keefe and Moore (2004) found that many special education teachers felt there is never enough time to co-plan with general education teachers nor discuss roles which resulted in division of roles within the classroom.

Even a factor as small as the tone in which lessons are taught vocally can offset the attitudes and feel of a classroom. If co-teachers are not aligned in attitudes, at least in front of students during instructional time, students can pick up on the moods which can ultimately lead to them shutting down and becoming disengaged with lessons (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020). Students have been reported being able to notice when their teachers provide more or less support to students of differing abilities, ignore their individual needs, and fail to provide them time to complete work or process information properly, also known as differentiation and accommodations (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020). Teachers' prosodic features (alignment and misalignment) within their classroom instruction are correlated with the creation of solidarity and conflict which are, in turn, related to successful and unsuccessful classroom instructional lessons (Roth & Tobin, 2010). These prosodic features are easily picked up by students which can lead to disengagement in conflict is suspected amongst co-teachers. Zweers et al. (2021) found

that students with emotional disabilities had more conflicting relationships with their teachers in the general education classroom than they did with their teachers in the self-contained classroom setting; one reason for this could be that special education teachers who have gone through traditional teacher preparation programs have received training to deal with students of all types of disabilities whereas general education teachers have not (Zweers et al., 2021).

In examining teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, Kandhari and Chowdhry (2016) found that general education teachers tend not to support inclusive education, partly due to their lack of knowledge and experience with students with disabilities. Given proper training, the study furthermore showed an increase in teachers' positive attitudes toward inclusive education as they felt more prepared and knowledgeable to instruct and support students with disabilities. The study was conducted at various schools within Jaipur, India with participants having a minimum of three years of teaching experience. Comparably, a Sri Lankan study included 15 inclusive teachers were interviewed about their perceptions of inclusive education; results showed that majority of the teachers experienced a fear of incompetence and felt as though not only did they lack adequate training to instruct and support students with disabilities within the inclusive classroom, but they also felt as though they should be offered some sort of incentive to work with this population (Hettiaarachi et al., 2018).

Lack of Administrative Support. If implemented successfully, co-teaching can truly help teachers understand their own teaching pedagogies and practices, and it can also foster a sense of reawakening of their desire and interest for teaching (Lock et al., 2016). Yet, there tends to be a lot of push-back from teachers on co-teaching for several

potential reasons such as lack of proper training to teach all populations of students, lack of continued professional development, and lack of understanding of effective collaboration and co-teaching models (Mangope et al., 2018; Márquez & Melero-Aguilar, 2021; Hettiaarachi et al., 2018; Mukhopadhyay, 2013). Despite the different reasons for the push-back, school administrators could step-up and help foster more positive co-teaching ideas that would ultimately make teachers more willing to be onboard with the idea of sharing a classroom and instructional time with one another; this can happen by school administrators making the commitment to support the academic success of all students, including those with disabilities (McGrady, 1985). Making a commitment to ensure supports that yield success for all students can result in increased student learning for all students as well as increased teacher skills for the teachers within that organization (McGrady, 1985). For some, co-teaching can be seen as ongoing, continuous professional development (Crow & Smith, 2005); school administrators should be regularly offering and supporting ongoing professional development; therefore, they should be working with teachers to create positive co-teaching relationships (Klingner et al., 2003). Administrators must also provide teachers with the time and resources to implement these newly learned instructional strategies if they want to see progress towards the organization's overall vision regarding student achievement (Klingner et al., 2003). When teachers receive proper care, support, and preparation from school administration on the nature of the educational development that is needed for teachers to be adequately prepared for all that co-teaching entails, those same teachers have reported being more ready and enthused for implementing co-teaching within their classrooms (Lock et al., 2016). Furthermore, students with disabilities who are mainstreamed into the general

education classroom as well as both general and special education teachers would all enjoy a classroom environment that is cohesive with strong instructional practices from both teachers and one where everyone within the classroom will feel welcomed, respected, and prepared (Hackett et al., 2020; Lindacher, 2020).

In a study where 29 elementary teachers, ranging from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade, were examined after receiving a two-week professional development program, Klinger et al. (2003) found that one barrier to implementing knowledge gained through professional development is absence of administrative support. The program consisted of four research-based strategies to be implemented within the inclusive classroom; each teacher was deemed a high-implementer (nine teachers), moderate implementer (nine teachers), and low implementer (11 teachers). Of the low implementing teachers, the majority of them attributed their inability to successfully implement the newly learned strategies to little to no administrative support. Results showed that strong administrative backing is vital to maintaining research-based practices (Klinger et al., 2003).

This thematic literature review captures relevant and significant research led in inclusive education, but many gaps still remain. The researchers mentioned have all conducted research in other countries as well as in primary grades as opposed to the United States and high school level. Furthermore, these studies included interview data mainly from general education teachers; only general education teachers have been able to voice their perceptions and discuss their experiences with inclusive education. This study is being conducted in the United States and within an urban high school to fill this gap in special education phenomenological research.

Action Research Design and Methods

Positioning Your Study as an Action Research Design

This qualitative, critical participatory action research study was conducted using a phenomenological research approach to better understand lived experiences of urban special education teachers. Using qualitative methods as opposed to quantitative methods provided a more holistic and naturalistic approach where participants were able to remain in their natural settings while the researcher worked to make sense or interpret phenomena (Jones, 1995).

Critical participatory action research "expresses a commitment to bring together broad social analyses, the self-reflective collective self-study of practice and transformational action to improve things" (Kemmis, et al., 2014, p. 27). A critical participatory action research design ultimately challenged any implicit or structural absoluteness of societal views and narratives through the personal narratives of this study's participants, while also allowing participants who were the experts at what it is that they do to lead the way to make the necessary changes needed within their organization and field (Dillard, 2020). Action research will always have an empirical foundation that is linked with an action or resolution of a problem that is perceived by the participants, that is also related to the researcher in some form of unity (de Castro Pitano et al., 2020). This allowed the researcher to have a level of involvement in the research process which gives them, in addition to the study participants, the opportunity to learn by doing.

A phenomenological approach was chosen to ultimately reach the goal of this research study which is to thoroughly understand the lived experiences of special education teachers in urban schools who have familiarity with teaching students with

disabilities within the inclusive classroom environment; this design was also chosen to better understand how the lived experiences of special education teachers contribute to or detract from co-teaching relationships. By using this type of qualitative research approach, the researcher was able to gain awareness of the experiences of teaching within inclusive classroom environments through the lens of special educators (Mukhopadhyay, 2013).

Site or Population Selection

Green High School (GHS; pseudonym) is an urban high school in one of the largest school districts in the midwestern United States. This school district serves students and families stretching across five different cities. Currently, the school district has an enrollment of 37,701 students with 64.1% identifying as black or African American, 16.3% Hispanic/Latino, and 15.4% white. Students receiving special education services make up 23.5% of the district's population. The school district has a total of 63 K-8 schools, 36 high schools, 1 preK-5 school, 1 preK-2 school, and 2 K-6 schools. During the 2018-2019 school year which is the most recent school year that data was collected in regards to the school report card due to COVID-19, the district received the following letter grades on the Midwestern state School Report Card: overall District Grade of D, F for Achievement, F for Progress, F for Prepared for Success, D for Graduation Rate, D for Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers, and C for Gap Closing (State Department of Education [SDE], 2021).

A total of 1, 625 general education teachers make-up this district's teacher population while a total of 625 special education teachers (SDE, 2021). For this action research approach, six special education teachers from one urban secondary school in the

midwestern United States within this school district were selected using convenience sampling. The sample frame specified that selected participants were special education teachers with at least three years of high school teaching experience within an urban district, with those three years consisting of both co-teaching and self-contained experiences; three years of experience is a requirement because in this state, three years of teaching could allow one to become an administrator which suggests enough classroom experience has been gained to be knowledgeably informed on classroom matters (SDE, 2021). These participants were selected because not only do they qualify based on the sample frame, but because they are convenient, easily accessible and could be approached with little to no effort.

Researcher Role and Positionality

As a current special education teacher within an urban high school, I fall within the parameters of my study's sample requirements. I am an active, full-time special education teacher at the school site where the study was conducted and therefore only needed to seek building-level permission to carry out this study.

Holding a Masters of Education in Special Education, I have more than 3 years of experience teaching special education in an urban high school setting where all years of experience consisted of both inclusion (co-taught) and self-contained instruction. Because of my roles and experience both within the field of education and at my organization, I possessed some level of influence with my colleagues who also served as my study participants. I am seen as a leader as I've held positions on many building-level teams, and I've gained a level of respect from even the veteran teachers who direct many of their questions and concerns to me as they see me as someone who either has all the answers

or can find all the answers. Though this may be, I still remain an equal to my colleagues and study participants, so my influence did not have a negative impact on the responses I received from my participants.

As the researcher of this study, the roles I fulfilled were primarily related to conducting interviews with the participants, implementing a suggested plan of action, and observing the data from that plan of action; I was not one of the teachers who implemented this plan of action, so I eliminated possible biases. Other roles I held included maintaining anonymity of the organization and participants, safe storing of data, and involving other stakeholders all throughout the process of data collection and analysis.

Ethical & Political Considerations

Potential political considerations that may have affected this study include the current push to popularize mainstream classrooms in public schools and the variety of ways in which this takes place; this sudden pressure placed on educators has forced them to find new and innovative ways to deliver services to students with disabilities (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). The pressure from this push may have caused additional stress to participants such as feeling inadequate and improperly prepared to be able to do the work now required of them, questioning whether mainstream is actually the more suitable for each individual student, and taking on even more responsibility to equip themselves with the necessary skills and knowledge for mainstream instruction (Amr et al., 2016; Gee, 2020; Mangope et al., 2018). When interviewing and observing this study's participants, attempts were made to alleviate this pressure by ensuring that each participants understood and was often reminded of the purpose of this study. I did not want

participants feeling as though I was interviewing or observing them critically which could have added to this pressure.

One way I mitigated the implicit biases regarding the study participants and their points-of-view is through perspective-taking, which is the act of recognizing intricacies and ethical dilemmas that may impact the study (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017). This strategy helped me to focus primarily on the point-of-view of the participants and their lived experiences which created and sustained healthy personal relations between myself and the participants (Hughes & Leekam, 2004). I led and listened with the sole intent of understanding their experiences from their perspectives. Engaging in the process of introspection also prevented implicit biases within this study as it allowed me the opportunity to explore my own identity, biases, and prejudices before interviewing the study's participants; this was done through the act of journaling after each participants' interview; this allowed me to make a clear distinction between the participants and myself to focus solely on the participants and their experiences (Xue & Desmet, 2019).

I engaged in reflexivity to maintain a neutral stance in the study. The participants of the study included special educators who are colleagues of mine that work at the same high school that I do. Therefore, I could not take any personal offense to anything that was said in the interview process just because I, too, work at the same organization. This process of reflexivity was vital for me to situate myself within the research process and the processing of self for me (Patnaik, 2013). Doing this ensured that I, too, was committed to the study purpose, and also showed that I engaged in reflexivity to reflect on the comfortability of my participants.

Data Collection Methods

Prior to conducting any interviews with any of the study participants, approval to move forward with the research process was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) as well as the school's administration team. Following this approval consent forms were provided to each participant to outline the study's details such as intent, procedures, any associated risks, benefits, audio/video recording permission, the ways in which the data would be collected and other relevant information.

Data collection took place via semi-structured interviews with the study's participants one-on-one with the researcher. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain a clear, thorough understanding of special education teachers' lived experiences within both co-teaching and self-contained classroom environments to gain knowledge and create interventions that will ultimately improve these experiences (Naeem & Ozeum, 2021). All interviews were conducted via Zoom and lasted for 60 minutes each; interviews were recorded and transcribed using Zoom's transcription feature. Notes were taken during the interviews; field notes help the researcher make note of any personal observations or reflections that are noticed during the interviews (Sun, Ashtarieh, & Zou, 2021). The interviews were guided by a series of open-ended questions (Appendix C). In order to assure the least number of distractions and disruptions during the interviews, participants selected the times and dates of their interviews that were most convenient for them or conducive to a focused interview session.

Lastly, following the interviews, the researcher observed each participant in the inclusive classroom environment for approximately 45 minutes of instructional time during in-person teaching; this was done to triangulate the data from the interviews, observations and peer-debriefing, and furthermore establish potential theories related to

the phenomena being studied (Raguindin, Custodio, & Bulusan, 2021). Observations were done to observe the roles of both educators and their interactions with all of the students in the shared classroom to further triangulate the data from interviews and peer-debriefing. The role of observer that I played required me to be a silent observer; notes and timestamps were jotted down roughly during observations. When reporting the findings of the research, pseudonyms were used to maintain fidelity of each participant.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data was analyzed using the inductive analysis method to summarize the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). This method allowed the researcher to identify possible themes in the experiences of the participants by taking several, deeper searches into the transcriptions of the interviews in order to discover these patterns. This process consists of both open- and axial-coding which initially begins with analyzing the transcribed data line by line using keywords to code (open codes), conceptually grouping those open-codes into categories, and then later looking for relationships amongst those open codes to identify links between categories (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Doing this process also helped the researcher determine, if any, mention of anything that relates back to literature or other research within the same field. Discovering these patterns and regularities amongst experiences helped sort, synthesize, and summarize the data collected (McMillan, 2009). Constant comparison of the data collected also helped validate common themes when they appeared across interviews (McMillan, 2009).

Procedures to Address Trustworthiness, Credibility & Transferability

Trustworthiness of this study was established first through the process of credibility. Several times during the transcription of the interviews the participants were

provided the opportunity for member checks to ensure that the researcher was explaining and describing their lived experiences in the same way that they explained and described their experiences. Once the interviews were completed, I downloaded and printed copies for the participants on a personal printer; I then hand-delivered the transcripts to each participant at work in manilla folders to maintain discretion. Once I completed the coding processes, I also communicated with the participants the codes, categories, and themes I found within their interviews to which they had the option of confirming or disconfirming my perspectives. When I finalized my findings, the participants had one final opportunity to review, or member-check, what I had come up with to again confirm or disconfirm. This process provided my participants the chance to see in writing all that had come out of their interviews and to furthermore verify the credibility of the study. Trustworthiness was also established through triangulation in that it is being used to corroborate data from two separate sources (interviews and observation) (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Lastly, trustworthiness was established using peer-debriefing. Peer-debriefing is credible as it allows "outsiders," or colleagues to offer different perspectives on the chosen research design, data collected, and the data analysis processes (Mihajlovic, 2020). Colleagues engaged in peer-reviewing and debriefing of this study for trustworthiness.

CHAPTER TWO: RESULTS OF RESEARCH

The purpose of the qualitative, phenomenological study was to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of special education teachers teaching in an urban high school; these special education teachers have experience co-teaching in an inclusive classroom environment with a general education teacher as well as experience independently teaching students with disabilities solely in the self-contained classroom environment.

Reporting Qualitative Results

Procedures to Address Trustworthiness (Credibility & Transferability)

Credibility was established first as a means of trustworthiness for this study. Throughout the individual interviews with the six participants, I stopped often to repeat what I had gathered from their responses to ensure that I was perceiving their experiences accurately. Upon completion of each interview and the downloading of the interviews' transcripts, I was then able to deliver each participant a copy of the interview transcript for them to look over for any errors or misconstrued transcription. After I completed the coding processes and identified themes within and amongst the interview transcripts, I offered each participant the opportunity to review my themes and confirm or disconfirm my perceptions of the information gathered from each of them. Lastly, the participants were offered the opportunity to review and verify the field notes I'd taken during each classroom observation. These opportunities for them to review the data collected allowed them to engage in member checking to ensure that I captured their described experiences in a way that accurately reflected them. Member checking lets participants review and validate the information collected and analyzed (Calam, Far, & Andrew, 2000).

Trustworthiness was also established through the engagement of triangulation; triangulation is the means of using data from two separate sources with the intent of corroboration (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Participants' interviews and classroom observations were the two methods used to collect data for this study. Lastly, trustworthiness was established through peer-debriefing, which participants all provided consent for, by allowing a colleague within the Ed.D program to review the selected design, data collected, and the data analysis procedures.

Transferability was established describing explicitly the processes in which data was collected and analyzed. Providing rich descriptions of the research processes as well as the descriptions of the dialogue within interviews supports the transferability of this study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Participants' quotes pulled directly from their interviews allowed me to provide narrative descriptions and supportive evidence relevant to my findings.

Qualitative Findings

Using Zoom's transcription feature, each interview was successfully transcribed and downloaded onto my personal laptop device. Upon download, I printed each transcription and began the process of inductive analysis which consisted of both open- and axial-coding. This process begins with engaging with the data by going line by line to identify open codes, or keywords, so that I could begin grouping these codes into categories and then identifying possible links between these categories that stood out (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Additionally, with these identified codes, categories, and links, I was able to find commonalities and differences between each of the participants' interview transcripts. From these processes, the following main themes were identified:

teacher-assistant role playing, communication in place of co-planning, and input sharing beyond differentiation (see Table 2).

Table 1 details the participants' names, ages, and years of experience teaching in total. Each participant had at least three years of experience teaching students with disabilities in a self-contained classroom setting in urban schools.

Table 1
Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Years of Experience
Angela	48	14
Lindsey	67	> 40
Shayla	29	6
Chris	29	7
Jourdan	42	19
Steven	28	4

Table 2
Identified main themes and subthemes from interviews

Main themes
Teacher-Assistant role
Communication in place of co-planning
Desire to share input beyond differentiation
Teacher-Assistant role
Barriers to being included as a teacher
Student-resistance to special education teacher
Communication in place of co-planning
Positive communication between both
teachers can compensate
Desire to share input beyond differentiation
Sharing of expertise

The process of naming these themes, both the main themes and subthemes led to highlighting what the participants and I considered to be priorities for this specific study and also focused me on analyzing all of that data collected (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). This step was supported by the analysis and use of direct quotes from the lived experiences of those special education teachers which was required for this step of naming themes (Marsha et al., 2018) (see Table 3).

Table 3 *Themes, subthemes, and participant quotes.*

Participant Quotes	*Themes** & Theme-Related Components	Assertions
"Just because I am willing to take attendance daily doesn't make me your assistant." "I am another resource . . . I will take kids to my own class to help them [students] catch up if they weren't there the day prior . . . " "We both have all access to grades, instruction, knowledge, classrooms . . . we are both teachers." "She didn't include me on her introduction slides ... she had all this personal information about her . . . hobbies, kids, bitmojis … and I assumed she'd have my slide but there was nothing ... she didn't even introduce me to the class . . ." "I get down about it . . . I feel the students don't view me as a teacher because the other adult in the room didn't present me in that way . . ." "We had a substitute one day and ... the students assumed I couldn't be there without the sub because they didn't even respect me as a teacher . . . until after I addressed this with her . . ." "She wasn't prepared or ready to have a co-teacher in the room . . . I'd asked her what her expectations were of me as	*Playing the role of Assistant* 1. Having a co-teacher in the classroom was a new experience for some of the general education teachers. 2. Including special education teachers tends to be more of an afterthought than a priority. 3. Special education teachers are oftentimes looked at as errand-runners or disciplinarians when the general education teacher doesn't know how else to include them in the classroom.	Without the general education teachers' welcome and support into the inclusive classroom, the special education teachers resort to feelings of insignificance and roles such as teacher-assistants. Without the general education teachers' welcome and support into the inclusive classroom, students do not respect the special education teachers as real teachers.

her co-teacher and she literally told me 'just show up." "It became clear that… She didn't want my help as it related to instruction . . . she wanted me to enforce rules, classroom behaviors . . . she wanted me to make up for her lack of classroom management, she wanted me to be the disciplinarian, the 'bad cop.'" "She didn't know what to do by having another adult in the room." "Not being respected by students . . . being called a special education teacher where I have to correct them . . . such a big lack of respect . . ." "… being asked to go grab something from the printer or take attendance. . ."		
"Our communication is open ... we'll text at any time . . . 'hey do you think this will be a good idea?' The communication piece is there but full planning together . . . no." "We're comfortable . . . the communication is there with her." "With not being the content teacher, I want to know what you are planning . . . So I can brainstorm strategies necessary to support my students since it seems like I am only respected when I work with "my" students . . ."	*Regular Communication Supports Lack of Co-Planning* 1. Co-planning time is not something that is required at this organization. 2. Communication between co-teachers supports the lack of co-planning time when it includes specifics surrounding lessons prior to their taking place. 3. Positive communication between co-teachers in the classroom	Teachers desire and welcome regular co-planning time built into their schedules in order to map instruction out adequately to include supports, resources, and differentiation prior to implementing the lesson(s) in class. Regular communication between co-teachers (email, texts, calls, verbal conversations) increases special education teachers' involvement in the lesson planning processes.

"If we're not required to co-plan, it just becomes so many different pages that we're on and it shows in the classroom . . ."	supports teacher-student relationships.	
"When we both can agree on what we're going to do . . . planning together . . . not just for me to go over her already planned lesson to incorporate differentiated pieces . . . But more like "have you read the story before? Did you teach it before? Okay, what went well? What didn't go so great?" "Discussing and planning together, so that when we're teaching . . . if I feel more comfortable presenting something to the students and vice versa.." "He'll just take over because he's comfortable doing that.. I hate situations like that. . . So then I feel like I am just going to do what I need to do, write my IEPs, do my SDI, etc.." "Without that time that I had when I taught that 4th grade class and co-teacher… Everything ran so smoothly. We planned together because we were provided the time to plan together . . . planning wasn't an afterthought like it seems it is at this high school level . . . it was prioritized so I never felt like . . . like an assistant . . . we were both the lead teachers in the room.."	*Sharing Input Beyond How to Differentiate* 1. Special education teachers prefer to be included in the planning processes so that they aren't responsible for just providing differentiation to the lesson plans. 2. Providing input on a lesson prior to teaching it allows both teachers to share experiences, strengths, and weaknesses for implementing lessons. 3. Without opportunities to co-plan or to provide input, special education teachers resort to instructing only their caseload students.	Special education teachers have more to offer the classroom than differentiation strategies. Special education teachers are not solely responsible for the students with disabilities in the classroom; general education teachers are not just solely responsible for students without disabilities in the classroom.

Teacher-Assistant Role

The first theme identified through the inductive coding process was the notion that special education teachers oftentimes fill the role of being an assistant to the general education teacher in the classroom when they do not feel welcomed by the general education teacher or the students within the classroom. When asked about the challenges they face when co-teaching that they do not face when teaching independently, all participants expressed some feeling of their teacher role being reduced to something less than, such as being a teacher-assistant as mentioned by both Angela and Lindsey. In terms of regular classroom procedures, Angela described her daily duties during the first half of the current school year in the inclusive classroom as the following: "I've just fallen in the routine of taking the attendance every daily ... something that began as something for me to do to learn the students and their names but now I just do it because I don't have a real role in the classroom." Steven also stated, "I believe the students don't respect me as a teacher because my co-teacher never presented me in that fashion ... Now this isn't to say that they don't respect me as an adult, but if they have content related questions or need help on something specific, they disregard me and go straight to her even if she has three other students also waiting for her attention and I have none." When speaking about a time when her general education co-teacher was out for the day and had a substitute covering her, Shayla discussed the students even still treating her less than a "real" teacher by "making comments about me being incapable of being there alone without her [co-teacher]." She went on to express how "they make me feel completely inadequate when it comes to being a teacher but again, I don't blame them but the teacher."

Two of the participants also shared that the same sentiment of feeling less than equal to their co-teacher makes them resolve and resort to 1) working solely on their duties and responsibilities of special education teachers (i.e. writing IEPs, collecting student data for progress reports, providing specially designed instruction for students with disabilities in the room) and 2) servicing only those students with disabilities who legally receive those supports specific to their individual needs. Lindsey stated that "doing this makes me sad because I want to support all the students in the room, not just those with disabilities.. and my experience and knowledge afford me to support them all, but my co-teacher does not." Chris added, "I'm used to it now ... this school year isn't my first experience of a co-teaching relationship like this ... I think they're more common than not honestly." These stories and experiences serve as some evidence of their struggles with gaining respect as licensed teachers.

Barriers to Being Included as a Teacher. During my scheduled classroom observations, in four of the six classrooms, I observed that the special education teachers (Angela, Lindsey, Chris, and Shayla) followed comfortable routines that consisted of them engaging with students one-on-one once the direct instruction portion of class was over, scouring the room for individuals seeking additional help, and ultimately providing verbal prompts when students were off-task or nonproductive. None of the special education teachers were included in the procedures such as the Do-Now tasks at the opening of class or the direct instruction provided by the general education teacher. I observed Angela offering reiteration during direct instruction on a lesson that students seemed to struggle with comprehending; she stepped up and spoke up to offer a different perspective of providing clarifying instructions. These stories and experiences showed

commonalities to the special education teachers at GHS who infrequently feel included in the day-to-day happenings within the classroom.

Student-Resistance to Special Education Teacher. During my observations, I also noticed that each of the six participants worked with a specific group of students. It was difficult for me to determine, just solely based on my observation, if each of the students in these groups were students with disabilities or a heterogeneous group of students with differing needs. Nonetheless, each special education teacher worked diligently with these students. Three of the participants (Angela, Lindsey, Shayla) had students sitting around where they were seated; the other three participants (Chris, Jourdan, Steven) had the same select students desiring their help, but these students did not necessarily sit around them. Even with those select student relationships, those students didn't even account for half of the class. The other students in the class (more than half) still only wanted the help from the general education teachers to the point where each of those general education teachers were visibly frustrated and overwhelmed trying to meet the demand of those students. Never in those instances were the general education teachers observed or heard suggesting that the students seek help from the special education teachers, which could be a factor in their resistance to seek help from them. These stories and experiences display the possible effects of general education teachers not including the special education teachers in the everyday tasks and how this impacts students' resistance towards the special education teachers.

Communication in place of co-planning

When asked questions relating to the time spent co-planning, all of the participants expressed that there is absolutely no time provided for co-planning or

collaborating to take place. They did state that they are scheduled the same planning period as their co-teachers but were required to use their planning times to grade, plan, collect data, progress monitor, complete progress reports, contact parents, hold scheduled IEP meetings, and even attend ETR meetings, leaving no time to co-plan or collaborate. Angela stated, "We don't co-plan or collaborate. At the beginning, there were days I would walk into the classroom and have no idea what we were doing that day which reduced the amount of support I could even provide." Steven affirmed, "Without the time to plan together, we end up on different pages in the classroom and with the students." Lindsey disclosed, "With not being the content teacher, I want to know what you are planning so that I can brainstorm strategies necessary to support my students since it seems like I am only respected when I work with "my" students." Attempting to put forth some sort of effort to plan together, three of the six participants spoke to having open communication with their co-teacher, despite not having time to sit down and really plan with them. Chris revealed, "We text a lot. That seems to be the best form of communication for us as we're both comfortable with it. It doesn't make for a full planning session, but at least I can know a little of what I am walking into every period." Additionally, Jourdan expressed that, "Sometimes our communication is simply to discuss what we will do in the event a lesson doesn't go the way we intend for it to go ... Sometimes our communication between classes is merely a moment of reflection where we briefly state what went well or what didn't go so well so that we know what to do for the following period." These stories and experiences shared by each participant are mostly positive as the participants felt like communication was the next best thing if co-planning time wasn't prioritized by the school.

Positive Communication Between both Teachers Can Compensate Lack of Co-Planning Time. Though communication, be it verbal (conversation, phone call) or written (text, email, note) does not constitute as legitimate planning between teachers, three participants expressed how they felt their co-teaching relationships and classroom experiences would be different without the communication. Lindsey stated, "The communication is there, and it is very helpful especially without real planning time." Angela affirmed, "I would not know what is going even in the slightest without the little communication we do have ... It doesn't replace planning, but it is something." Shayla also spoke to the point of the communication being a necessity, stating that, "even without that, especially in the classroom where students can see it happening, I believe I'd feel even lesser of a teacher ... our communication inside and outside of the classroom supports some type of relationship between us that the students are able to observe ... I use this to my advantage of trying to get them to respect me as another teacher in the classroom." These stories and experiences support the idea that some form of communication is better than none when it comes to sharing information regarding upcoming lessons and what to expect.

Desire to Share Input Beyond Differentiation

As special education teachers, some of the participants expressed the notion that many general education teachers share the belief that special education teachers' only input to lesson plans are areas of differentiation. Though this is something that special education teachers are skilled in, it is not the only expertise that they bring to the table. Angela shared some frustration that she has when it comes to feeling as though she is never presented the opportunity to showcase what she can do and how she can contribute

to the classroom. She stated, “She doesn’t know what I can do ... I feel like sometimes she omits resources or tools from the lesson if it isn’t something she feels skilled in without asking me if I may be skilled in that area ... like technology ... Sometimes I feel like we purposely don’t use some technology platforms because she doesn’t want to learn them but what if I do? Or what if I already know how to navigate them?” In the same sense, Shayla stated, “I’d feel more included if she’d simply asked if I have ever read such and such book or text, or if I have ever provided instruction on such and such topic ... Even if she is still going to provide the direct instruction, at least my experience in said area would be somewhat considered ...” These stories and experiences display special education teachers’ actual desire to show what they know, yet this isn’t welcomed by their co-teachers.

Sharing of Expertise. The participants expressed the frustration they have towards not always having their experiences, knowledge, education, and even credentials considered by their co-teachers. Chris stated, “I am licensed. I have a Master’s degree like my co-teacher. I know this isn’t what it is all about but sometimes I get so frustrated feeling discredited or belittled that I want to remind the co-teachers of this.” Jourdan expressed, “I know what I bring to the classroom. I’ve been in education for 19 years. Sometimes I just listen to the lessons, and my mind can’t help but think of all the things I would say here and there to reinforce a concept or idea. Sometimes I look at the students’ faces and know they’re confused, and I just await the rush of clarifying questions at the end of the instruction. I can’t help but laugh because if I could have been included, we could have tag-teamed the lesson and it would have been great!” Angela stated, “I’ve observed better success in lessons and teaching concepts when she asks for my input

beforehand ... this ensures me she genuinely wants to incorporate my knowledge, or my suggestions into the lesson for better success ... I like that ... I like it for myself but more importantly for our students because two heads of knowledge are better than one head." These stories and experiences express how some participants feel that what they know and what they can do gets unacknowledged by their co-teachers.

Summary of Findings

The six participants all shared the lived experiences of co-teaching in an urban school, including both strengths and areas of weakness as they navigated sharing responsibilities and classroom space. The six interviews, along with the six classroom observations, revealed several barriers that are in the way of strong, positive co-teaching relationships which can also be reflected in the students in the classroom as well. Sanders-Smith et al. (2021) affirmed that building and maintaining a productive co-teaching relationship requires work, flexibility, and an openness to the perspectives on one's partner. Similarly, Pratt (2014) discovered that co-teaching relationships can be effective when collaboration takes place through using personal differences and strengths to become codependent. All participants shared experiences related to feeling as though they are reduced to less than an equal to their co-teacher as well in addition to being observed being excluded from routine classroom procedures. Additionally, all participants also agreed to having the same planning period as their co-teacher but recognize that this is not enough planning time as these periods are used for other demands. All participants shared that they have specific students with whom they work daily in the classroom, but expressed that these are students who simply respect them as equal teachers and seek out their support. Three participants also spoke positively about

the open communication that they share with their co-teacher and how this does help compensate slightly for the lack of co-planning and collaboration time provided to them by the school.

Action Plan

As a result of the data analysis procedures and the overall findings of this study, an action plan has been created to support progression within the area of co-teaching at GHS. Co-teaching is an important relationship that requires work and effort to maintain; it is also becoming more widespread in efforts to merge the strengths of both general education teachers and special education teachers to better meet the needs of all students (Fenty & McDuffie-Landrum, 2011). When co-teaching relationships are harmonious and conflict is limited, both teachers can provide more meaningful instructional collaboration for the success of all the students in the classroom in which they are serving together (Petrick, 2014).

The theme of special education teachers playing the roles of teacher-assistants informs the action plan's need for GHS's administration team to identify one co-teaching model for the partner teachers to implement in their classrooms. This can reduce the confusion between whether there is a "lead teacher" and place the focus on the idea that there are two professional and licensed teachers in the classroom to support all students' needs (Turan & Bayar, 2017). Identifying a specific model to incorporate and implement into the classrooms can positively impact the efficiency of lessons, classroom management, students who fall behind, students who may need more time to learn lessons, the opportunity to support students individually, and the workload of teachers (Turan & Bayar, 2017).

The themes of communication being in place of co-planning and special education teachers' desire to share input beyond differentiation informs the action plan's need for requiring co-teaching, content, and special education professional development opportunities regularly for all partnered teachers. Though the participants expressed they feel communication has been a positive alternative to co-planning, this doesn't negate the need for actual co-planning time. Past literature has found that co-teaching models tend to fail for various reasons, and the lack of co-planning time provided to co-teachers can be one of those factors (Mangope et al., 2018). The lack of intentional, consistent, structured co-planning practices and without centering these practices in collaboration, the constraint as a result will continue to prevent co-teaching from fully thriving (Bauler & Kang, 2020). Co-planning brings about many different collaborative means for both the general education teacher and the special education teachers. Howard & Potts (2009) suggested that the idea of co-teaching and co-planning supports the notion that both teachers have instructional knowledge, expertise, and experience that they can both bring to the table that would ensure success within the shared classroom.

The setting for the action plan to be implemented will be Green High School, and it will be implemented by the school's administration team and co-teacher partners. The resources necessary for successful implementation of the action plan include the following: pre-/post- interview protocols for co-teacher partners, note-taking protocols for classroom observations, Zoom technology with transcription abilities, post-survey protocols for professional developments, relevant professional development opportunities offered in and outside of the district, and any associated costs of professional developments. The plan intends to serve all co-teaching pairs, which is anticipated to

reflect positively on teacher-student relationships and student academic achievement, which is anticipated to serve the whole GHS in terms of its organizational goals, mission, and values. The timeline for the action plan is to begin implementation in September 2022 and end in June 2023 (Appendix D). The included logic model (Appendix E) serves as a visual representation and evaluative measure to ensure that the resources/input and outsides produce the anticipated outcomes of the action plan. The steps of the action plan include collecting data via pre-surveys and interviews for the co-teaching pairs to identify feelings towards co-teaching, current co-teaching strategies, weaknesses, and strengths. Data will also be collected through classroom observations that the administration team will conduct to corroborate survey data. Once pre-data is collected, the administration team at GHS will research relevant professional development opportunities for the co-teaching pairs to attend regularly. In the meantime, regular meetings will take place between co-teaching pairs and administration in the form of a learning community to research and share information about evidence-based co-teaching practices so that one strategy or model can be agreed upon to be implemented schoolwide. Once the learning community agrees upon one that the administration team also agrees with, this can be implemented. As professional development opportunities are recognized, these can also begin to be implemented and teachers can begin attending them.

The action plan has two desired objectives: choose a co-teaching strategy to implement schoolwide and require co-teaching, content, and special education professional development regularly (multiple times throughout the school year. One goal of these objectives is to create and sustain a sense of consistency and direction when it comes to co-teaching models that would be most beneficial for this specific organization

and its population of students. A second goal of these objectives is to ensure that both classroom teachers who provide instruction and support to both student with disabilities and students without disabilities have a great deal of knowledge, research, information and tools that support the variety of student needs within the classroom (i.e. academically, socially, behaviorally).

To assess the first objective, post-survey and semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the co-teaching pairs, individually. The post-survey will be evaluated to determine if there has been changes in the classroom culture and co-teaching relationship as it relates to shared responsibilities and inclusivity since the baseline data collection from the pre-survey. The semi-structured interviews will be conducted to get an in-depth understanding of each teachers' individual experiences since implementing the one identified strategy. To assess the relevance and usefulness of what is being learned through professional development, a post-questionnaire will be administered to each teacher after they have attended each professional development session throughout the year to gauge what they found useful, what they found irrelevant to their own practices, and what they plan to bring back into their classrooms. At the end of the school year, a culminating questionnaire will be administered to determine which, if any, professional development opportunities were the most useful and which strategies from them did they incorporate into their classrooms, and how these opportunities either contributed or detracted from their co-teaching relationships.

Data from each survey, questionnaire, and interview will be analyzed to identify themes or trends to further guide next steps. Data will assess the state of co-teaching relationships, whether selecting one schoolwide co-teaching strategy worked or

negatively impacted the classroom flow, and whether the offered professional development opportunities were valuable in any way for the co-teaching pairs, their classroom procedures, or the students in which they serve. Once this data has been assessed, I would move the focus to target student academic achievement in the inclusive classrooms by looking at co-teaching relationships through a more critical lens as it relates to ensuring all students in the classroom are engaging with instruction and the state standards in a way that will guarantee their success academically. For example, I would look at the students' district scores on a recurring standardized assessment such as the NWEA, a district benchmark assessment. The NWEA is taken at three separate points in the school year so looking at this data at the beginning of the year as a pre-assessment and then again at the end of the year after implementing interventions in the inclusion classroom to determine what, if any, effect the co-teaching relationships have on these scores for students.

Data collected and analyzed will be shared with the co-teaching pairs as well as the administration team. It is anticipated that administration and co-teaching pairs will continue to seek resolutions to issues and concerns through meeting regularly as a learning community for ongoing progression.

CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION OF ACTION PLAN/INTERVENTION

The following sections will further elaborate on Green High School's aforementioned action plan to be implemented in detail, including the timeline and stakeholders to help implement the change to work towards organizational progress and shared vision. Overall, the plan took into consideration not only the previously mentioned themes discovered through the lived experiences of special education teachers at GHS. but existing literature as well as Brook's Critical Theory of Love (2017) and the Collaborative Co-Teaching framework model. The following topics will be discussed in this final chapter: a description of the action plan, an analysis of the implementation of the action plan, an analysis of organizational change and leadership practice, and implications for practice and future research.

Description of Action Plan and Interventions to be Implemented

The implementation of the action plan will take place over the course of 2022-2023 school year at GHS, beginning in September 2022 and ending June 2023. The following two objectives are grounded in the action plan, and therefore, will be used to guide the tasks to be discussed in this section: choose a co-teaching strategy to be implemented schoolwide and require co-teaching, content, and special education related professional development for all co-teaching pairs (both general education teacher and special education teacher). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the culminating goal of the two objectives is to create and maintain consistency and direction across classrooms and co-teaching pairs as it relates to co-teaching models with the organization's vision and population of students in mind. In addition to this goal, these objectives also aim to guarantee that all co-teaching pairs, despite certification, experience, or education, are

equipped with the knowledge, research-based instructional strategies, resources, and a variety of tools to better support the differing needs of both students with disabilities and students without disabilities academically, socially, and behaviorally in their classrooms. The steps of the overall action plan are illustrated below. (Diagram 1).

Objective #1

September through December. With GHS following a year-round school calendar, both staff members and students return to the school for the 2022-2023 school year in July 2022. Due to this factor, the month of August will be used to allow all co-teaching pairs to become acquainted with one another, their colleagues, their students, their classrooms, and their overall teaching practices so as to be able to get into some sort of flow for the school year. Though the administration team will solely be responsible for choosing 1-2 co-teaching strategies that will be implemented schoolwide, it is important for them to receive input from co-teaching pairs in addition to conducting their own research on co-teaching strategies. This act of collecting input from the teachers who will ultimately be responsible for implementing said strategies ensures the processes will yield unprejudiced solutions and create social compromise between the administrative team and the co-teaching pairs (Mikulskiene & Kriksciunaite, 2009).

Therefore, beginning September 2022, the administrative team and the co-teaching pairs will begin meeting regularly, as agreed upon by the group to be at least weekly or biweekly each month for the duration of the action plan implementation. The month of September will be used for the administrative team to distribute pre-surveys to the co-teachers as well as interview them to discover and better understand their personal feelings towards co-teaching as well as identified strengths and weaknesses within their

own co-teaching practices. September will also consist of classroom observations conducted by the school administrators to corroborate the survey and interview data as they relate to the co-teaching practices actively taking place at that time. During the months of October and November, the first thing to take place in the form of a professional learning community will be co-teaching pairs sharing with the administrators their personal opinions and experiences with specific co-teaching models as well as which strategy or strategies they believe will be most beneficial for the organization's overall vision and goals. In this same platform, the sharing of research-based co-teaching practices will also take place, and administrators will use this input as well as their own research to select 1-2 strategies to implement school wide. The month of December will be the beginning of implementation of the selected co-teaching strategy. All co-teaching pairs will begin to follow the techniques of the selected strategy within their shared classrooms for the remainder of the school year.

January through May. Once the co-teaching model(s) are successfully executed, the administrators will begin conducting classroom observations with the goal of evaluating the success of the chosen strategy and comparing the observations to the baseline observations that took place in September 2022. If the observations show that the selected strategy is not successful or should be changed for the co-teachers, the weekly or biweekly meetings will continue for the duration of the school year to discuss wins and losses, strengths and weaknesses, and any other vital information so to ensure that progress and positive change is taking place within co-teaching relationships.

June. At this point in the school year, co-teaching pairs will have been able to implement the chosen strategy within their shared classrooms. The final meetings

amongst the administrative team and co-teachers will be for the sole purpose of collecting data via post-surveys and interviews to determine the effectiveness and success of fulfilling the co-teaching model and the effects this strategy had on the actual co-teaching relationship.

Objective #2

September. During the month of September, the administrative team will begin intentionally seeking professional development opportunities for co-teaching pairs to engage in to strengthen their shared classroom practices. The professional development opportunities will focus on effective co-teaching practice, content-specific topics relevant to each pair (i.e. math-specific PD for the math co-teachers) and special education as it relates to instructing students with disabilities within the general education environment. The administrative team will seek out opportunities within and outside of the district so to utilize a multitude of resources.

October through May. Throughout the course of the school year, as professional development opportunities in the aforementioned areas come about be it provided by the school's district or organization or identified through research, the administration team will work to ensure co-teachers attend, be it in person or virtually. This includes guaranteeing that any associated costs, if applicable, are covered and classroom coverage is established for each teacher attending. The idea is that whatever newly gained knowledge the co-teacher pairs receive by attending the professional developments will then be brought back and implemented into their instructional strategies and overall classroom procedures. Upon attending each professional development opportunity, co-

teachers will complete a post-questionnaire to gauge their opinions and thoughts on factors such as the usefulness and relevance of each professional development.

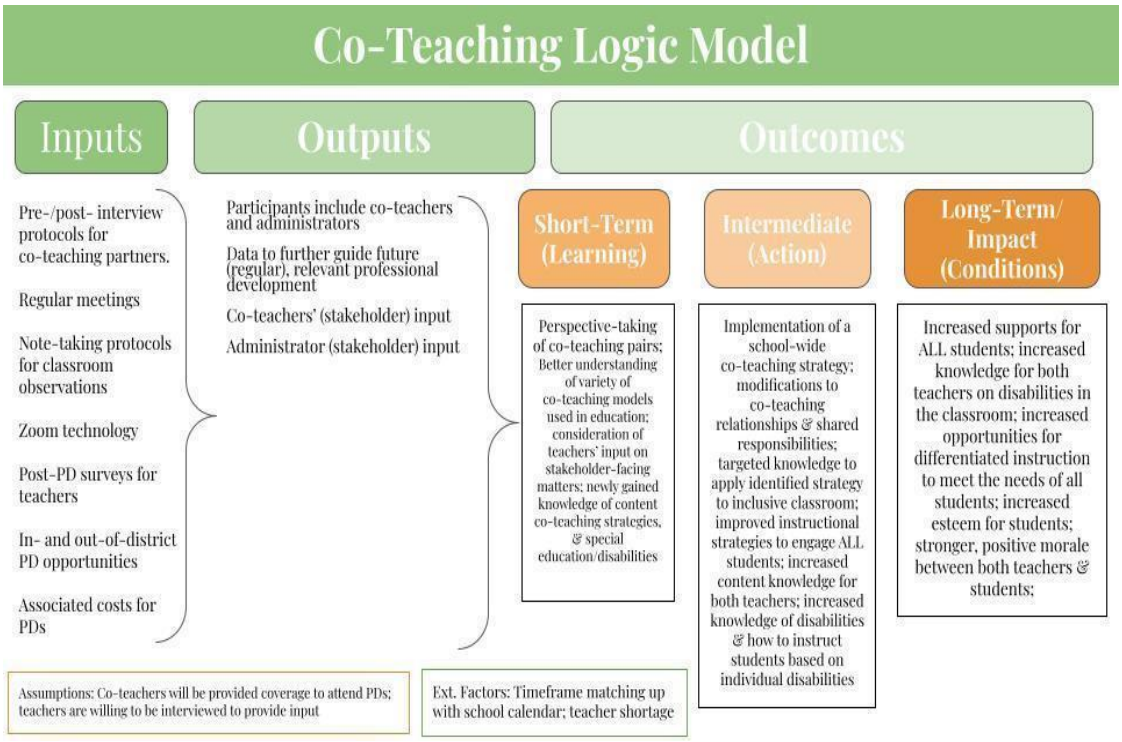
June. Once the school year comes to an end, the co-teachers will complete one final survey about the overall effectiveness of the professional development opportunities. Ultimately, this survey will be used to contribute to answering the initial research question of

how the information presented in the professional development can contribute or detract from the success of their co-teaching relationships.

Intended Outcomes

The inputs and outputs included in the Logic Model below (Figure 1; Appendix E) are vital to yielding the intended outcomes of this action plan.

Figure 1 *Logic Model*



Short-Term (Learning)

One intended outcome of these objectives is for all co-teachers to have a better understanding of not only one co-teaching strategy, but of all of them. With co-teaching having more recently become the most popular approach for providing students with disabilities instruction within a general education classroom, having this understanding of all of the co-teaching models as collaborative approaches can increase skill development for co-teacher pairs (Faraclas, 2018). Having an understanding of the prioritized strategy specifically will also allow the co-teachers to further expand on that single strategy so as to strengthen their instructional practices in that area. With the administrators collecting data via surveys and interviews with the co-teachers individually, they are also engaging in the act of perspective-taking of those teachers. Perspective-taking in this sense allows for the process of seeking and acquiring knowledge to develop, which furthermore creates new insights that can prompt discussion to guide the change process (Woods, 2011). This act of perspective-taking also demonstrates that consideration of teachers' input on stakeholder-facing matters (i.e. classroom instruction, academic achievement) is taking place to also be used to guide decision making as it relates to the selecting of the schoolwide strategy to be implemented as well as the professional development opportunities to be attended. It is also intended that through the implemented interventions, all co-teaching pairs will gain new knowledge of special education and disabilities as a whole. This will ensure that as the number of students with disabilities receiving instruction in the general education classroom environment increases, the ways in which both general education teachers and special education teachers feel adequately prepared to instruct those students with disabilities increases as well (Faraclas, 2018).

Intermediate (Action)

The intended actions to transpire from the implementation of this action plan includes the selection of one to two co-teaching models to implement as a whole school with the hope that this will warrant consistency throughout the school and balance co-teaching relationships. Based on existing literature and the data collected for this study, many co-teaching relationships are strained for several reasons. Choosing an agreed upon strategy or two will force modifications to take place within those co-teaching relationships as they relate to shared responsibilities. With the offered professional development opportunities, GHS should anticipate improved instructional strategies in those shared spaces that will engage all students in their learning practices.

Impact (Conditions)

The overall impact anticipated upon implementation of this action plan include the following: increased supports for all students, increased knowledge for all co-teachers regardless of if they are general education or special education, increase opportunities to better support the needs of all students through tiered interventions and differentiation, increased esteem for students as they begin to feel more empowered in their learning, and positive morale between both teachers and students as classroom culture will be shaped by the newly gained knowledge.

Analysis of Implementation

Diagram 1 *Steps of Action Plan*

Due to the implementation of this action plan not having taken place during the time of this writing, the information presented in the following sections regarding the analysis of implementation is entirely hypothetical. This section discusses a hypothetical analysis of the intervention implementation, potential barriers to the intervention implementation, possible unintended outcomes, and anticipated results of the change processes.

Analysis of Intervention Implementation

Existing literature and the data collected for this study has proven that co-teaching pairs can be successful when provided adequate training to instruct both students with and without disabilities, intentional collaboration amongst one another takes place, and when administrative support is strong (Odongo & Davidson, 2016; Dally et al., 2019, p. 65; Mukhopadhyay, 2013; Gurgur & Uzuner, 2010). Adequate training to better instruct all students in inclusion can take several paths. Proper teacher preparation programs and certifications is one factor that can lead to stronger instruction as well as stronger teacher-student relationships (Zweers et al., 2021).

Implementation of both research, knowledge, and better understanding of research-based co-teaching models as well as professional development on a host of educational topics such as special education, disabilities, and inclusion will yield positive results such as stronger co-teaching relationships, increased teacher self-efficacy (in student engagement, instructional practices, and classroom management), and increased student academic achievement (Colson, Xiang, & Smothers, 2021). Co-teaching practices allow for the continuous exercise of collaborative opportunities amongst teachers, which also serves as a change-driver for positive educational change (Härkki et al., 2021). Therefore, increasing co-teachers' knowledge on co-teaching models and techniques can serve as the driving force for the desired educational change.

The designs to be used to evaluate the success of this action plan is rooted in both the Continuous Improvement Cycle (CIC; Figure 2) and the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA; Figure 3) frameworks that are designed to be the driving forces for the improvement of processes (Cohen-Vogel et al., 2016; Fagnani & Guimarães, 2017). Both cycles will allow for the primary stakeholders to acknowledge the problem of practice, design a plan of action to take to find resolution for the problem, implement action, and assess the interventions set in place so to move forward in planning for continuous improvement (Fagnani & Guimarães, 2017; Ungvarksy, 2022).

Figure 2 Continuous Improvement Cycle

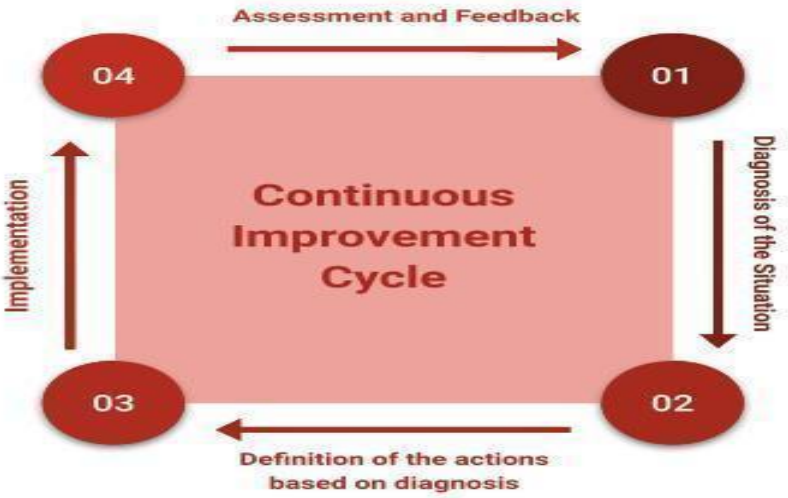
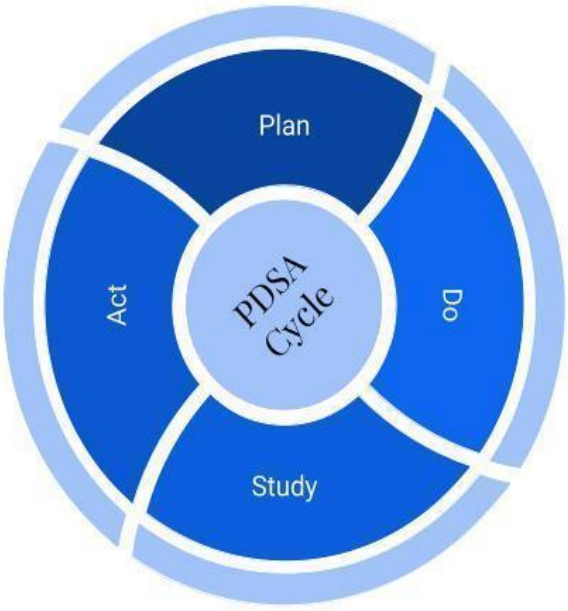


Figure 3 Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle



Response to Implementation

Where the co-teaching pairs are involved, it is anticipated that there will be some pushback to implementing just one or two co-teaching strategies. This will be due in part

to teacher comfortability. Teachers who have been teaching for a larger number of years than others tend to have negative perceptions of co-teaching alone, so forcing this change could produce even more pushback from them to implement said strategy (Cannaday et al., 2021). Because this pushback stems from the root of co-teaching, which is the push for mainstream or inclusive education, there may also be pushback in regard to requiring professional development and further learning opportunities for general education teachers to learn how to better instruct students with disabilities. Teachers may also have a feeling of being overwhelmed as teachers already feel overworked during this current teacher shortage (Bassinger, 2000). Adding the requirement of attending ongoing professional development while also being required to implement new knowledge into the classroom may cause further burnout to co-teachers.

On the administration and district level, it is predicted that implementation of this change process will be received positively. GHS includes collaboration and relationships as some of its core values; its mission includes serving as a bridge to success for its students, community, and overall city. Ensuring that its teachers are better equipped and knowledgeable on how to be that bridge and how to cultivate strong relationships through collaboration will push GHS furthermore towards its organizational mission and vision.

Anticipated Results of Change Processes

Based on the findings of the CIC and PDSA, it is anticipated that with active and ongoing relevant professional development, co-teaching pairs will engage in intrinsically motivated change for the betterment of the overall classroom routines and student success. Gaining expertise and new knowledge on research-based strategies and techniques for co-teaching should drive co-teachers at GHS to implement changes that

will yield positive co-teaching relationships and experiences. It is anticipated that these positive teacher-teacher relationships will fold into classroom procedures and routines as well as instructional practices that are promising for all students in inclusion. The selecting of one or two co-teaching models should yield consistency and alignment schoolwide for the 2022-2023 school year and thereafter. This cohesion is anticipated to demonstrate uniformity within GHS from a district standpoint all the way to a student standpoint.

Unintended Consequences

The implementation of the interventions recommended in the action plan requires co-teachers to spend a decent amount of time away from their classroom and classroom instruction. In addition to needing to be away from their classrooms to attend ongoing professional development opportunities, when they are in their classrooms, they are working diligently to perfect the implementation of the agreed upon co-teaching strategy. Moreover, the co-teaching pairs expect to be observed and evaluated on the implementation of the interventions so their focus may primarily lie on these interventions. The issue with this becomes the lack of focus on ensuring that classroom instruction is still rigorous, engaging, and aligned with the common core standards. Implementing the interventions in the action plan may take away from the expected responsibilities of each co-teacher. This impacts accomplishing the objectives because with the reduction in focus on classroom instruction, there may be a lack in the predicted improvement in instructional strategies, increased supports for all students, and even increased differentiation to instruction for students. In turn, this may also negatively

impact teacher-student and co-teacher morale due to high stress and increased pressure from implementation.

Analysis of Organizational Change & Leadership Practice

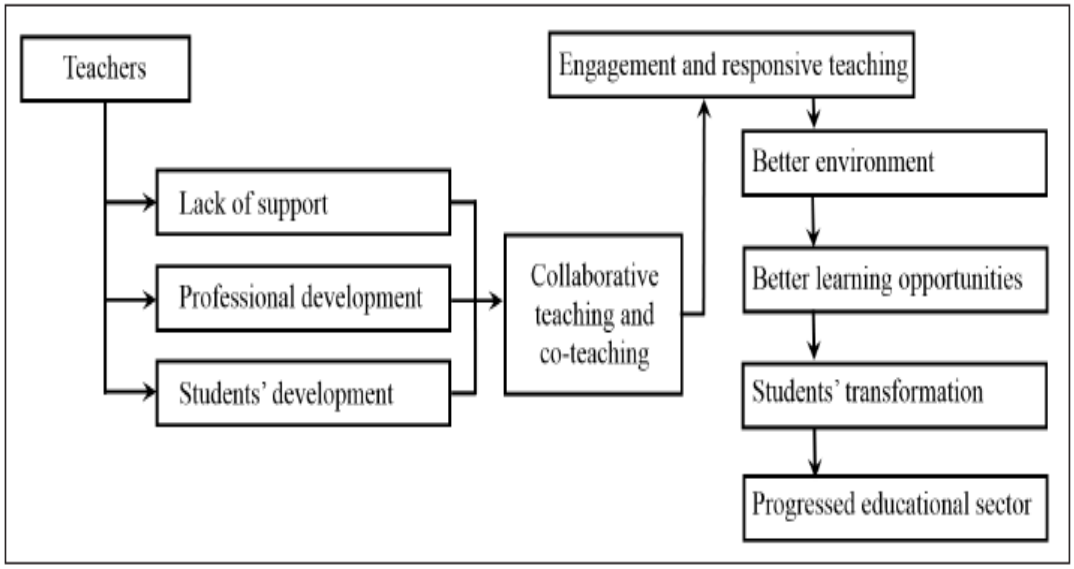
Connection to Theory/Concept

Brook's Critical Theory of Love (2017) is centered around the belief that students can learn better and ultimately grow and thrive when they are taught in learning environments where the adults (i.e. teachers, practitioners) noticeably indulge in more loving and caring practices (Brooks, 2017; hooks, 2003; Lampert, 2003). Due to all the policies and procedures schools and teachers must abide by to adequately and legally service those students with disabilities, special education has become political and a call for social justice. This political and social justice aspect requires a sense of love in its advocacy (Brooks, 2017). Implementing required professional development for co-teaching pairs with the aim of their gaining a better, stronger understanding of disabilities and special education as a whole is just the beginning of this continuous improvement action plan. This new understanding can warrant new caring and more loving classroom environments for those marginalized students (Brooks, 2017).

Collaborative Co-Teaching framework model (Figure 4 below) conceptualizes factors that this study's participants expressed experiencing, which has detracted from not only students' learning experiences but co-teaching practices. With the implementation of this action plan, it is anticipated that outcomes would include those of the framework (i.e. better learning opportunities for both co-teachers and students, students' transformation). The implementation of this action plan can also lead to the following modifications adapted by GHS and furthermore the entire organization: the requirement of one single

co-teaching model to implement in the school(s) so to ensure consistency throughout the schools and district, an intentional schedule of professional development to explore every school year that can ensure positive outcomes for co-teaching pairs, and increased practice in engaging in regular research with the aim of increasing research-based practices school- and districtwide.

Figure 4 *Collaborative Co-Teaching Conceptual Framework*



Leadership Practice Reflection

As a leader who has a role in the implementation process I anticipate exuding characteristics of an authentic leader as well as a transformational leader. Authentic leadership will allow me to demonstrate my interest and goals of working towards GHS' and the district's overall mission and vision; I will be able to guide my colleagues and the action plan's activities with those goals, mission, and vision in mind (Kiliç & Yavuz, 2021). An authentic leader is not only self-aware but also aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the stakeholders, cognizant of the environment in which they serve, and optimistic of their ability to overcome problems (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004). Demonstrating authentic leadership has also been shown to retain school staff as it

has been found to make teachers feel increased organizational support and psychological capital (Aria et al., 2019). Implementing the interventions recommended in the action plan are likely to increase co-teacher stress so it is important for me to ensure teachers are supported.

With the organizational vision and mission in mind, I also aim to be intentional about making a positive impact for the students in which we serve. As a transformational leader, I will instill equitable and just educational practices to increase inclusivity in general education classrooms; I desire for all students, with and without identified disabilities, to feel empowered, valued, and affirmed (Shields & Hesbol, 2019). This need for more equitable practices and transformative ways further guides the interventions in this action plan and my intended leadership role.

Implications for Practice & Future Research

One implication that can be drawn from this study for professional practice as well as future research is that the implementation of K-12 inclusion classrooms should be reimagined in a way where this environment includes cohesiveness. Literature has shown that co-teacher silence, resistance, and confusion can be results of individual teachers feeling as though the risk of voicing disagreement is far too large (Hackett et al., 2021). Furthermore, confusion may continue to rise as it relates to the characteristics of good co-teaching relationships which research also suggests can lead to lack of high quality teaching within the inclusive classrooms (Szumski, Smogorzewska, & Grygiel, 2022). The reimagining of the inclusive classroom may look different for different school districts, schools, and even grade levels; regardless of what this looks like, there are benefits to co-teaching and collaboration that include having two experts in the same

classroom to teach students and support each other, which displays a consistent balanced approach and perspective (Olsen & Williams, 2014). Keeping the different approaches and perspectives in mind when moving forward with co-teaching highlights positive collaboration and relationships while keeping the students in the center of the classroom. Additionally, because organizations should always keep their own mission and values at the core of the decision making processes within the school, it is highly recommended that said organizations are clear and direct on what co-teaching should look like. This should include also providing regular and ongoing opportunities for professional development on matters relevant to the organization such as co-teaching and special education.

This study provided a contribution to the literature as it focused primarily on special education teachers' lived experiences as opposed to general education teachers. It was also conducted in an urban high school in the midwest. The qualitative data served as some advancement to existing research on instructing students with disabilities in the inclusion environment. Future quantitative research should be conducted to compare the results and findings of this qualitative study in areas such as student academic achievement (i.e. state and district assessments, curriculum-based assessments), student attendance, and student self-efficacy and esteem within the inclusion classrooms. Future research could also include the results of the effectiveness of the professional development opportunities suggested in the action plan of this study; those surveys are to be completed by the co-teaching pairs to determine if those opportunities are worthy of being attended.

Conclusion

This study can contribute to this organization and other similar dilemmas first by keeping the teachers involved in the planning and decision making processes when possible. Interviewing teachers, getting their input on dilemmas and problems of practice, and even getting their suggestions on how they may think it would be best to move forward shows that they are valued and bring something to the table. This study can help support organizations in creating well-oiled co-teaching and collaborative relationships amongst instructional staff through the evidence from the participants' lived experiences as well as the implemented action plan that can also be followed by other organizations with similar dilemmas.

Common problems of practice when it comes to instructing students with disabilities oftentimes include the following: assuming that only the special education teachers should instruct students with disabilities, providing teachers with irrelevant professional development opportunities, and co-teaching not having a standard or blueprint to be used as a guide for co-teaching pairs. The results and findings of this study provide actionable interventions that can be implemented within other K-12 educational settings that can serve as a guide to address and resolve these common problems of practice.

As it relates to my organization, this study helped inform co-teaching pairs and the administration team of both known and unspoken about dilemmas and issues relating to co-teaching. The action plan provided steps and a timeline for possible resolution or redirection of the overall problem of practice in co-teaching. This study brought to light the perspective of inclusion and co-teaching from the special education angle; it brought

to light some of the issues that are rarely highlighted, or issues that teachers feel they never have the platform to discuss openly.

REFERENCES

Amr, M., Al-Natour, M., Al-Abdallat, B., & Alkhamra, H. (2016). Primary school teachers' knowledge, attitudes and views on barriers to inclusion in jordan. *International Journal of Special Education, 31*(1), 67–77.

Aria, A., Jafari, P., & Behifar, M. (2019). Authentic leadership and teachers' intention to stay: The mediating role of perceived organizational support and psychological capital. *World Journal of Education*, *9*(3), 67–81.

Ashbee, E., & Guldberg, K. (2018). Using a "collaborative contextual enquiry" methodology for understanding inclusion for autistic pupils in palestine. E*ducational Review, 70*(5), 584–602. https://doiorg.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1080/00131911.2017.1358153

Austin, V. L. (2001). Teachers' beliefs about co-teaching. *Remedial & Special Education, 22*(4), 245–255. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1177/074193250102200408

Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 16*(3), 315-338. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001

Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Walumbwa, F. O., Luthans, F., & May, D. R. (2004). Unlocking the mask: A look at the process by which authentic leaders impact follower attitudes and behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly, 15*(6), 801-823. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2004.09.003

Banks, L. M., Zuurmond, M., Monteath, V. D. A., Gallinetti, J., & Singal, N. (2019). Perspectives of children with disabilities and their guardians on factors affecting

inclusion in education in rural Nepal: “I feel sad that I can’t go to school.” *Oxford Development Studies, 47*(3), 289–303. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1080/13600818.2019.1593341

Bassinger. J. (2000). Colleges widen alternate routes to teacher certification. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 46*(19), A18- A19.

Bauler, C. V., & Kang, E. J. S. (2020). Elementary ESOL and content teachers’ resilient co-teaching practices: A long-term analysis. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, *14*(4), 338–354.

Beare, P., Torgerson, C., Marshall, J., Tracz, S., & Chiero, R. (2012). Examination of alternative programs of teacher preparation on a single campus. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *39*(4), 55–74.

Bemiller, M. (2019). Inclusion for all? An exploration of teacher’s reflections on inclusion in two elementary schools. *Journal of Applied Social Sciences, 13*(1), 74–88.

Bock, A. K., & Erickson, K. A. (2015). The influence of teacher epistemology and practice on student engagement in literacy learning. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, *40*(2), 138–153.

Boggan, M., Pope, M., Jayroe, T., & Wallin, P. (2016). Mentoring of t2t alternate route special education scholars in high-needs schools. *National Forum of Special Education Journal, 27*(1), 1–13.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brooks, D. N. (2017). (Re)conceptualizing love: Moving towards a critical theory of love in education for social justice. *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis, 6*(3), 102-114.

Buell, M. J., Hallam, R., Gamel-Mccormick, M., & Scheer, S. (1999). A survey of general and special education teachers' perceptions and inservice needs concerning inclusion. *International Journal of Disability, Development & Education*, *46*(2), 143–156. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1080/103491299100597

Byrd, D. & Alexander, M. (2020). Investigating special education teachers' knowledge and skills: Preparing general teacher preparation for professional development. *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, *4*(2), 72–82. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.33902/JPR.2020059790

Calam, B., Far, S., & Andrew, R. (2000). Discussions of "code status" on a family practice teaching ward: What barriers do family physicians face? *CMAJ: Canadian Medical Association Journal, 163*(10), 1255–1259.

Cannaday, J., Hennigan Bautista, K., Gomez Najarro, J., Kula, S., & Guta, A. (2021). Faculty perceptions of course attributes, resources, and attitudes for a successful co-teaching experience with preservice teacher educators. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *48*(4), 7–27.

Carver-Thomas, D., Kini, T., Burns, D., & Learning Policy Institute. (2020). Sharpening the divide: How california's teacher shortages expand inequality. Research Brief. In *Learning Policy Institute*. Learning Policy Institute.

Cleveland, D. (2003). Introduction. *High School Journal*, *86*(3), 1–7.

Cohen-Vogel, L., Cannata, M., Rutledge, S. A., & Socol, A. R. (2016). A model of continuous improvement in high schools: A process for research, innovation design, implementation, and scale. *Teachers College Record, 118*(13), 1–26.

Cole, C. M. and McLeskey, J. (1997). Secondary inclusion programs for students with mild disabilities. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 29*(6), 1-15.

Colson, T., Yajuan Xiang, & Smothers, M. (2021). How professional development in co-teaching impacts self-efficacy among rural high school teachers. *Rural Educator*, *42*(1), 20–31. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.35608/ruraled.v42i1.897

Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (6th ed.). Pearson.

Crow, J., & Smith, L. (2005). Co-teaching in higher education: Reflective conversation on shared experience as continued professional development for lecturers and health and social care students. *Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives, 6*(4), 491-506.

Cummings, K. P., Sills-Busio, D., Barker, A. F., & Dobbins, N. (2015). Parent–professional partnerships in early education: Relationships for effective inclusion of students with disabilities. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 36*(4), 309–323. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1080/10901027.2015.1105329

Dally, K. A., Ralston, M. M., Strnadová, I., Dempsey, I., & Chambers, D. (2019). Current issues and future directions in australian special and inclusive

education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *44*(8), 57–73.

de Castro Pitano, S., Elena Noal, R., & Zanini Moretti, C. (2020). Repoliticising participatory/action research: From action research to activism: some considerations on the 7th action research network of americas conference. *International Journal of Action Research*, *16*(3), 267–278.

Dieker, L. A., & Murawski, W. W. (2003). Co-teaching at the secondary level: Unique issues, current trends, and suggestions for success. *High School Journal, 86*(4), 1–13. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1353/hsj.2003.0007

Dillard, N. (2020). Designing research to dismantle oppression: Utilizing critical narrative analysis & critical participatory action research in research on mothering and work and beyond. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, *21*(7), 44–57.

Dimitrellou, E., & Male, D. (2020). Understanding what makes a positive school experience for pupils with send: Can their voices inform inclusive practice? *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 20*(2), 87–96.

Educator licenses. State Department of Education. (n.d.).

Fagnani, E., & Guimarães, J. R. (2017). Waste management plan for higher education institutions in developing countries: The continuous improvement cycle model. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *147*, 108–118. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.01.080

Faraclas, K. L. (2018). A professional development training model for improving co-teaching performance. *International Journal of Special Education*, *33*(3), 524–540.

Feistritzer, E. (2003). Alternative routes to teacher certification: An overview. *National*

Center for Education Information. [On-line]. Available: www.ncei.com/2003/overview.html

Fenty, N., & McDuffie-Landrum, K. (2011). Collaboration through co-teaching. *Kentucky English Bulletin, 60*(2), 21-26.

Ferrante, C. A. (2017). An insight into a whole school experience: The implementation of teaching teams to support learning and teaching. *Athens Journal of Education, 4*(4), 339–349.

Finefter-Rosenbluh, I. (2017). Incorporating perspective-taking in reflexivity: A method to enhance insider qualitative research processes. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, (16)1, 1-11.

Gandolfi, E., Ferdig, R. E., & Kratcoski, A. (2021). A new educational normal an intersectionality-led exploration of education, learning technologies, and diversity during COVID-19. *Technology in Society, 66.* https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1016/j.techsoc.2021.101637

Gee, K. (2020). Why indeed? *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 45*(1), 18–22. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1177/1540796919900951

Ghazzoul, N. (2018). Collaboration and co-teaching: Professional models for promoting authentic engagement and responsive teaching. *Social Sciences & Humanities, 26*(3), 2129-2143.

Ghedin, E., & Aquario, D. (2020). Collaborative teaching in mainstream schools: Research with general education and support teachers. *International Journal of Whole Schooling, 16*(2), 1–34.

Gurgur, H., & Uzuner, Y. (2010). A phenomenological analysis of the views on co-

teaching applications in the inclusion classroom. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, *10*(1), 311–331.

Hackett, J., Kruzich, J., Goulter, A., & Battista, M. (2021). Tearing down the invisible walls: Designing, implementing, and theorizing psychologically safer co-teaching for inclusion. *Journal of Educational Change, 22*(1), 103–130. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1007/s10833-020-09401-3

Hanson, H., & Yoon, S. Y. (2018). Idaho's educator landscape: How is the state's teacher workforce responding to its students' needs? In *Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest*. Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest.

Harkins, B., & Fletcher, T. (2015). Survey of educator attitude regarding inclusive education within a southern arizona school district. *Journal of Multilingual Education Research*, *6*, 61–90.

Härkki, T., Vartiainen, H., Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, P., & Hakkarainen, K. (2021). Co-teaching in non-linear projects: A contextualised model of co-teaching to support educational change. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *97*. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103188

Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2017). The practice of qualitative research (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage Publications.

Hettiaarachi, S., Ranaweera, M., Walisundara, D., Daston-Attanayake, L., & Das, A. K. (2018). Including all? Perceptions of mainstream teachers on inclusive education in the western Province of sri lanka. *International Journal of Special Education*, *33*(2), 427–447.

Heyward, G., Pillow, T., Tuchman, S., & Center on Reinventing Public Education

(CRPE). (2020). What does it take to educate students with mild to moderate disabilities in general education settings? Lessons from washington's public charter schools. In *Center on Reinventing Public Education*. Center on Reinventing Public Education.

hooks, b. (2003). Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope. New York, NY: Routledge.

Howard, L., & Potts, E. A. (2009). Using co-planning time: Strategies for a successful co-teaching marriage. *TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus*, *5*(4).

Howard, T. C. (2003). Who receives the short end of the shortage? Implications of the u.s. teacher shortage on urban schools. *Journal of Curriculum & Supervision, 18*(2), 142.

Hughes, C., & Leekam, S. (2004). What are the links between theory of mind and social relations? Review, reflections and new directions for studies of typical and atypical development. *Social Development*, *13*, 590–619.

Hunter-Johnson, Y., Newton, N. G. L., & Cambridge-Johnson, J. (2014). What does teachers' perception have to do with inclusive education: A Bahamian Context. *International Journal of Special Education*, *29*(1), 143–157.

Hurd, E., & Weilbacher, G. (2018). Developing and using a co-teaching model within a middle level education program. *Current Issues in Middle Level Education*, *23*(1).

Jones, R. (1995). Why do qualitative research? It should begin to close the gap between the sciences of discovery and implementation. *BMJ, 311,* 1-2.

Kaczorowski, T., & Kline, S. M. (2021). Teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach students with disabilities. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*, *33*(1), 36–58.

Kandhari, N., & Chowdhry, R. (2016). A pre-post study: Attitude of teachers' towards

inclusive education. *Indian Journal of Health & Wellbeing*, *7*(1), 161–163.

Keefe, E. B., & Moore, V. (2004). The challenge of co-teaching in inclusive classrooms at the high school level: What the teachers told ss. *American Secondary Education, 32*(3), 77–88.

Kemmis, S. (2007). Action research as a practice-changing practice. In Spanish Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) Conference.

Kiliç, M. Y. & Yavuz, M. (2021). The evaluation of authentic leadership in terms of trust in manager and schools' levels of openness to change. *Cukurova University Faculty of Education Journal*, *50*(2), 1033–1068. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.14812/cuefd.863251

Klingner, J. K., Ahwee, S., Pilonieta, P., & Menendez, R. (2003). Barriers and facilitators in scaling up research-based practices. *Exceptional Children*, *69*(4), 411.

Kugelmass, J., & Ainscow, M. (2004). Leadership for inclusion: A comparison of international practices. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 4*(3), 133–141. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2004.00028.x

Lampert, K. (2003). Compassionate education: A prolegomena for radical schooling. Lanham, Md: University Press of America.

Lindacher, T. (2020). Perceptions of regular and special education teachers of their own and their co-teacher's instructional responsibilities in inclusive education: A case study. *Improving Schools, 23*(2), 140–158. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1177/1365480220906697

Lock, J., Clancy, T., Lisella, R., Rosenau, P., Ferreira, C., & Rainsbury, J. (2016). The lived experiences of instructors co-teaching in higher education. Brock Education:

A Journal of Educational Research and Practice, 26(1), 22–35.

Lowrey, K. A., Hollingshead, A., & Howery, K. (2017). A closer look: Examining teachers' language around udl, inclusive classrooms, and intellectual disability. *Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities, 55*(1), 15–24. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1352/1934-9556-55.1.15

Mangope, B., Otukile-Mongwaketse, M., Dinama, B., & Kuyini, A. B. (2018). Teaching practice experiences in inclusive classrooms: The voices of university of botswana special education student teachers. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, *14*(1), 57–92.

Marin, E. (2014). Are today's general education teachers prepared to face inclusion in the classroom? *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 142*, 702–707. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.601

Márquez, C., & Melero-Aguilar, N. (2021). What are their thoughts about inclusion? Beliefs of faculty members about inclusive education. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education Research*, 1.

Marsh, W., Leamon, J., Robinson, A., & Shawe, J. (2018). LEARNS: A creative approach to analysing and representing narrative data incorporating photo-elicitation techniques. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 23*(4), 334-343.

McGrady, H. J. (1985). Administrative support for mainstreaming learning disabled students. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 18*, 464–466. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1177/002221948501800804

McMiIIan, W. J. (2009). Finding a method to analyze qualitative data: Using a study of conceptual learning. *Journal of Dental Education*, *73*(1), 53–64.

Mihajlovic, C. (2020). Special educators' perceptions of their role in inclusive education: A case study in finland. *Journal of Pedagogical Research, 4*(2), 83-97.

Mikulskiene, B., & Kriksciunaite, A. (2009). Multicriteria decision analysis for social oriented decision making. The compromise for teacher's salaries. *Economics & Management*, 596–602.

Mpu, Y., & Adu, E. O. (2021). The Challenges of inclusive education and its implementation in schools: The south african perspective. *Perspectives in Education*, *39*(2), 225–238.

Mukhopadhyay, S. (2013). Inclusive education for learners with special educational needs in botswana: Voices of special educators. *Journal of the International Association of Special Education, 33*(1), 41-49.

National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER), part of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). (n.d.). *National center for special education Research (NCSER), part of the U.S. Department of EDUCATION (ED)*. Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/definition.asp.

Naeem, M., & Ozuem, W. (2021). The role of social media in internet banking transition during COVID-19 pandemic: Using multiple methods and sources in qualitative research. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *60*.

Odongo, G., & Davidson, R. (2016). Examining the attitudes and concerns of the kenyan teachers toward the inclusion of children with disabilities in the general education classroom: A mixed methods study. *International Journal of Special Education*, *31*(2).

State School Report Cards. (2021).

Olson, R., & Williams, T. (2014). Reimagining the literature survey through team teaching. *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, *14*(2), 199–223. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1215/15314200-2400485

Orr, A. C. (2009). New special educators reflect about inclusion: Preparation and k-12 current practice. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, *3*(4), 228–239.

Patnaik, E. (2013). Reflexivity: Situating the researcher in qualitative research. *Humanities and Social Science Studies, 2*(2), 98-106.

Petrick, D. (2014). Strengthening compatibility in the co-teaching relationship: A four step process. *Global Education Journal, 2014*(1), 15–35.

Pratt, S. (2014). Achieving symbiosis: Working through challenges found in co-teaching to achieve effective co-teaching relationships. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 41*, 1–12. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1016/j.tate.2014.02.006

Raguindin, P., Custodio, Z., & Bulusan, F. (2021). Engaging, affirming, nurturing inclusive environment: A grounded theory study in the philippine context. *Journal of Education: Inclusive Education, 9*(1), 113-131.

Roth, W.M., & Tobin, K. (2010). Solidarity and conflict: Aligned and misaligned prosody as a transactional resource in intra- and intercultural communication involving power differences. *Cultural Studies of Science Education, 5*(4), 807–847.

Sanders-Smith, S. C., Lyons, M. E., Ya-Hsuan Yang, S., & McCarthey, S. J. (2021). Valuing relationships, valuing differences: Co-teaching practices in a hong kong

early childhood center. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 97*. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103230

Sawyer, G., & Gimbert, B. G. (2008). Policies and practices for selecting highly effective teachers for alternative certification programs. *Journal of the National Association for Alternative Certification 3(*1), 9-29.

Shields, C. M., & Hesbol, K. A. (2020). Transformative leadership approaches to inclusion, equity, and social justice. *Journal of School Leadership*, *30*(1), 3–22.

Sims, S., & Allen, R. (2018). Identifying schools with high usage and high loss of newly qualified teachers. *National Institute Economic Review, 243*(1), R27–R36. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1177/002795011824300112

Sun, W., Ashtarieh, B., & Zou, P. (2021). The safety challenges of therapeutic self-care and informal caregiving in home care: A qualitative descriptive study. *Geriatric Nursing*, *42*(2), 491–501.

Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2019). Understanding teacher shortages: An analysis of teacher supply and demand in the united states. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *27*(35).

Szumski, G., Smogorzewska, J., & Grygiel, P. (2022). Academic achievement of students without special educational needs and disabilities in inclusive education: Does the type of inclusion matter? *PLoS ONE*, *17*(7). https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1371/journal.pone.0270124

Tobin, G. A., & Begley, C. M. (2004). Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework. *Journal of Advanced Nursing (Wiley-Blackwell), 48*(4), 388–396.

Turan, M., & Bayar, B. (2017). Examining teachers view on primary teaching practices

based on co-teaching model. *Journal of Education and Training Studies, 5*(11), 82–97.

Vaughn, P., & Turner, C. (2016). Decoding via coding: Analyzing qualitative text data through thematic coding and survey methodologies. *Journal of Library Administration, 56*(1), 41–51. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1080/01930826.2015.1105035

Wamukuru, D. K. (2016). Modeling the effects of teacher demand factors on teacher understaffing in public secondary schools in kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice, 7*(3), 147–153.

Weiss, M. & Lloyd, J. (2002). Congruence between roles and actions of secondary special educators in co-taught and special education settings. *Journal of Special Education 2*(2), 58-68.

Wiggan, G., Smith, D., & Watson-Vandiver, M. J. (2021). The national teacher shortage, urban education and the cognitive sociology of labor. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, *53*(1), 43–75.

Woodcock, S. (2021). Teachers' beliefs in inclusive education and the attributional responses toward students with and without specific learning difficulties. *Dyslexia: An International Journal of Research and Practice*, *27*(1), 110–125.

Woods, C. (2011). Reflections on pedagogy: A journey of collaboration. *Journal of Management Education*, *35*(1), 154–167.

Xue, H. & Desmet, P. (2019). Researcher introspection for experience-driven design research. *Design Studies, 63*, 37–64.

York, J., & Tundidor, M. (1995). Issues raised in the name of inclusion: Perspectives of educators, parents, and students. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 20*(1), 31–44.

Zvoleyko, E. V., Kalashnikova, S. A., & Klimenko, T. K. (2016). Socialization of students with disabilities in an inclusive educational environment. *International Journal of Environmental and Science Education*, *11*(14), 6469–6481.

Zweers, I., van de Schoot, R. A. G. J., Tick, N. T., Depaoli, S., Clifton, J. P., de Castro, B. O., & Bijstra, J. O. (2021). Social–emotional development of students with social–emotional and behavioral difficulties in inclusive regular and exclusive special education. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 45*(1), 59–68. https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1177/0165025420915527

APPENDIX A: IRB Approval

Danita Nelson updated this service request on Mon 11/29/21 10:10 AM Eastern Standard Time.

Comments: Changed Status from **New** to **Approved**.

EXEMPT (d)(2); Approved Wed 11/24/21 10:04 PM Eastern Standard Time

RESEARCHER: Nadja Payton

PROJECT TITLE: Special Education That Isn't So Special: A Phenomenological Study of Urban Special Educators Within General Education Classrooms

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the subject proposal and has found this research protocol is exempt from continuing IRB oversight as described in 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2).* Therefore, you have approval to proceed with the study.

REMINDERS TO RESEARCHERS:
· As long as there are no changes to your methods, and you do not encounter any adverse events during data collection, you need not apply for continuing approval for this study.
· The IRB must approve all changes to the protocol prior to their implementation, unless such a delay would place your participants at an increased risk of harm. In such situations, the IRB is to be informed of the changes as soon as possible.
· The IRB is also to be informed immediately of any ethical issues that arise in your study.
· You must maintain all study records, including consent documents, for three years after the study closes. These records should always be stored securely on campus.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Best of luck in your research!

Best regards,

Danita Nelson
IRB Administrator
Office for Research
University of Dayton
300 College Park
Dayton, OH 45469-7758
937-620-2550
Email: IRB@udayton.edu
Website: go.udayton.edu/irb

FWA00015321, expires 10/14/2025

*Exempt under 45CFR46.104(d)(2): Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

APPENDIX B: Organizational Approval to Collect Data

[redacted]

[redacted]

11/24/21

To whom it may concern,

Nadja Payton has my permission to gain access to voluntary research participants at the [redacted] organization. Ms. Payton is allowed to recruit participants for his/her study, "*Special Education That Isn't So Special*", through email/fliers/or meetings with potential participants.

I understand that there are benefits to the field of Leadership in Organizations and support the work that is being undertaken. I also understand that participants can choose whether or not to participate, will be asked to consent to participate in the study, and can discontinue their participation at any time.

The study protocols have been explained to me and I look forward to working with Ms. Payton on her Dissertation in Practice.

In service of Scholars,

[redacted]

Principal, [redacted]

APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol

Demographic Questions

1. Please state your name. (Pseudonym to be used)
2. What is your highest level of education?
3. How many years of co-teaching experience do you have in urban schools?
4. How many years of self-contained teaching experience do you have in urban schools?
5. What subject(s) do you teach (co-teach and self-contained) currently?
6. In regards to the co-taught course(s), are you both content-certified?
7. Is co-teaching voluntary at your school?

General Questions

8. Describe the collaboration between you and your current co-teacher.
9. Describe past collaboration between you and any co-teacher(s).
10. What role does professional development play in your current co-teaching practices?
11. What are some challenges you've faced when co-teaching at this organization?
    a. In what ways are these challenges comparable to when self-contained teaching?
12. How have you overcome these challenges to continue serving the students?
13. How important is it to "like" your co-teacher?
14. Have you experienced a great collaborative co-teaching relationship?
    a. If yes, explain what made it so great.
15. What role does administration play in your co-teaching practices?
    a. In what ways do you feel supported by your administration?
    b. In what ways do you feel unsupported by your administration?
16. What time is provided for you and your co-teacher to plan together?
17. Describe how you and your co-teaching lesson plan/grade/instruct your course.
    a. Describe more specifically how you and your co-teacher plan to meet the needs of all the students in the classroom.
18. How does the co-teaching practices that you and your co-teacher implement impact your students academically? Social-emotionally?
19. What is something(s) that you and your co-teacher do well within your co-teaching relationship?
20. Describe what a strong, positive co-teaching relationship looks like to you.
21. Anything else you'd like to share about your co-teaching experience?

APPENDIX D: Objectives

Objectives and Outcomes (What)	Tasks (How)	Person(s) (Who)	Time (When)	Location (Where)	Resources	Funds
Objective #1: Choose a co-teaching strategy to implement schoolwide. **Outcome**: Teachers have an understanding of selected strategy and can further expand on that one strategy to strengthen their instructional practices as they relate to co-teaching.	. Teachers discuss best co-teaching strategies for them a. Admin does own research own co-teaching strategies b. Admin decides which 1-2 strategies best suit the direction of the organization	SPED teachers Co-teachers (Gen.Ed) Administrators	**Start**: Sept 2022 **End**: June 2023	School building	Technology (Device, internet)	$0
Objective #2: Required co-teaching, content, and SPED professional development. **Outcome:** ALL teachers will become more knowledgeable on how to better serve ALL students within an inclusive classroom environment.	. Admin identify relevant PDs in- and out-of-district a. Staff find coverage to attend scheduled PDs b. Staff share newly gained knowledge from PDs c. Implementation of new knowledge in shared instructional practices	SPED teachers Co-teachers (Gen.Ed) Administrators PD facilitators	**Start**: Sept 2022 **End**: June 2023	School building Outside locations depending on location of professional development Zoom if applicable	Technology (Device, internet) In-district and out-of-district PD sessions	Costs of PD sessions

APPENDIX E: Logic Model