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Teachers Perspective on Co-Teaching at the Middle School Level

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement

For the

Degree of Master in Education

By

Young Pyo Lee

I thank God for allowing me to do the things that I dared to dream.

I thank God for sending wonderful and marvelous people in my path to share the love with me.

I thank Dr. Thousand for guiding, teaching, encouraging, and showing me genuine kindness and true humanity.

I thank Dr. Hood for reading my thesis.

I thank my dear husband Jin for supporting and believing in me.

I thank my parents and dear sons Eugene and Sean for loving me and praying for me.

Thesis Abstract

Effective collaboration between general and special education teacher is essential for successful inclusion for students with disabilities. The survey was conducted to examine general and special education teachers' and administrators' perspective toward co-teaching at a middle school level. The study examined Shivela Middle School in Murrieta, a suburban sixth through eighth grade middle school in Southern California in the United States. The survey questionnaire was adapted from the co-teaching self-assessment instrument developed by Villa, Thousand, and Nevin (2004). Overall, teachers and administrators rated the questionnaire items highly important. Teachers rated the highest importance on the items in flexibility with teaching partners, identifying student's strengths and weaknesses, personal relationships, and communication. Administrators generally perceived the elements of items higher in importance than the teachers. Teachers' perspective differed according to their current teaching assignments, years of teaching experience, years of co-teaching experience, and kind of credentials held. Sixth grade core teachers and multiple credentialed teachers gave significantly higher importance ratings than the seventh and eighth grade single subject teachers. Special education teachers gave less positive importance ratings than the administrators or multiple subject credentialed core teachers but gave more positive ratings than the single subject math or science teachers.

Keywords

Co-teaching, Teacher, Perspective, Collaboration, Inclusion, Team-teaching

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Chapter One

Introduction

The mission and Vision statements of the California Department of Education

state its guiding principals as:

- *All students* deserve an equitable opportunity to succeed.

- *All students* require a safe, healthy environment for learning.

- *All students* need physical, emotional, and intellectual support from their
  schools, families, and communities to succeed.

All students need to deserve a chance to learn and to be prepared to lead productive

and independent adult lives to maximum extent possible.

In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-

142) federal legislation promulgated the right to a Free Appropriate Public Education

(FAPE) and Least Restricted Environment (LRE) for all students with disabilities. In

1990 reauthorization of this legislation renamed this legislation the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reaffirmed the fundamental education rights of

students with disabilities; namely, opportunity for full participation in all aspects of

public education program. The 1997 reauthorization strengthened the language of the

EDEA, articulating the right to access to the general education curriculum and

clarifying the role of special education to enable students to have access rather than

replace instruction with alternative curriculum. The emphasis was on high standards

for all students, including students with disabilities.

The 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, coined the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) combined with the 2002 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act extended the responsibilities of states to holding all elementary and secondary students to the same challenging academic content and student achievement standards. According to the NCLB requirements, by the 2005-2006 school year, all students must be taught by highly qualified content area teachers assigned to teach core academic subjects. In order for schools to be in compliance with the state requirement, students with disabilities in the secondary level need to be taught by highly qualified subject content area teachers.

Co-teaching meets NCLB and IDEA legal requirements both philosophically and pragmatically. As an instructional practice, co-teaching enables students to access curriculum with the needed supports for support personnel, such as special educators, being provided in the context of the rigorous general education classroom. Researches supporting co-teaching points out the benefits of collaborative teaching (Bruneau-Balerrama, 1997; Cook & Friend, 1995; Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Gately & Gately, 2001; Gerber & Popp, 1999; Tanner, Liscott, & Galis, 1996; Thousand & Villa, 2005; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2004; Walter-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). Ainscow (2000) stated that schools generally know more inclusive resources and strategies than they put into use in teaching pedagogy. Much expertise is within their school teaching staff. Co-teaching allows all students access to the specialized resources previously only available to students qualifying for the specialized service (e.g., Gifted and Talented education, special education). The teacher-student ratio is increased, leading

to better teaching and learning conditions (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Walter-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). Teachers are able to use more instructional options and strategies (Cook & Friend, 1995; Gerber & Popp, 1999). Co-teaching increases improvement of all students' academic performance and increases the proportion of students qualifying as gifted and talented (Thousand, Villa & Nevin, 2005). Gerber and Popp (1999) found that co-teaching increased satisfaction on the part of the students with disabilities and their parents. They also found that achievement levels and grades increased for lower achieving students. They attributed this to individualized and more intense teacher attention. Through co-teaching, a greater sense of community is fostered in classrooms for the students with and without disabilities (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Tanner et al., 1996; Villa & Thousand, 2005). Students with disabilities also can develop better attitudes about themselves and make improvements in social skill development (Gately & Gately, 2001; Gerber & Popp, 1999; Tanner et al., 1996; Thousand et al., 2005; Trent, et al., 2003; Villa & Thousand, 2005).

For special educators and other related services personnel, co-teaching can reduce the amount of special education paperwork, and, resultantly, increase the amount of available time for support personnel to teacher rather than assess and write reports and Individual Education Programs (IEPs) (Thousand et al., 2005; Villa et al., 2004; Walter-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). Co-teaching decreases the needs of initial referrals of students to special education and decrease behavioral referrals, as the needed supports already are being provided in the classroom without the need for referral.

There are benefits to the adults who co-teach. Teachers report greater satisfaction, personal support, enhanced motivation and even having fun teaching together (Bruneau-Balerranma, 1997; Thousand et al., 2005). As it stated in IDEA 1997, it is essential to support the teachers with high quality and intensive professional development opportunities to ensure the knowledge and skills necessary to teach diverse background students as well as students with disabilities. To reinforce the importance of inclusive teaching pedagogies, schools need to encourage teachers' interaction and reflection among their teaching staff (Ainscow, 2000). It has been found that secondary general educators are less supportive of co-teaching than elementary teachers because they don't have the appropriate knowledge and proper training to teach the students with disabilities (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Keefe & Moore, 2004). Co-teaching is a vehicle for professional development to occur through teacher collegiality and modeling and problem solving in real classroom contexts. Teachers can experience professional growth through their ongoing interaction and reflection. Marzano (2003) in his book, *What Works in Schools*: *Translating Research into Action*, identifies the teacher as the central factor in student's learning. It is the interaction between teacher partners that encourages experimentation that, in turn, can improve teacher's pedagogical skills (Marzano, 2003). Of course, administrative role is critical to establishing and sustaining co-teaching. Support includes, appropriate scheduling for common planning time and advocate the practice of co-teaching (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Gately & Gately, 2001; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Tanner et

al., 1996; Thousand & Villa, 2005; Trent, Driver, Wood, Parrott, Martin, & Smith, 2003; Villa et al., 2004).

  With all the benefits of co-teaching described in research and in IDEA requirements, the middle school where the investigator of this paper teaches special education has attempted co-teaching to support students with mild/moderate disabilities in general education. Students with more significant support needs (i.e., 50 of 1605 students in the school) are still taught core content self-contained, segregated language arts, math, social studies, and science classes. It is investigator's experience that general education teachers with students with disabilities in their class do not have an understanding of co-teaching and its many variations. They are not even aware that they have been so-called "co-teaching" at this middle school. One general education teacher wrote on the questionnaire's margin informally, "...special education teachers are doing their 'other work', while I am teaching my students life science." This statement shows that there is lack of understanding and communication of the so-called "co-teaching" partners at this middle school. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine and get a baseline understanding of the perspectives of various teacher constituencies (e.g. general education versus special education, new versus veteran teaches) regarding co-teaching.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Rationale for Collaborative Teaching

The Regular Education Initiative (REI) movement that began over 25 years ago in the U.S. emphasizes the philosophical stance that students with disabilities do not require any pre-requisites to belong in general education placement (Christiansen & Vogel, 1998; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Thousand, et al., 2005). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal legislation that guarantees students with disabilities a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment, interprets the least restrictive environment as the general education environment. The intent is to provide needed supports and services in general education so that students with disabilities are not separated from their non-disabled peers. Both IDEA and the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act underscore the importance of higher expectations and challenging academic curriculum standards for all children. Because of these philosophical and legal movements, general education has taken a leading role in promoting inclusive educational opportunities for students with disabilities (Ainscow, 2000; Christiansen & Vogel, 1998; Child, 2003; Cook & Friend, 1995; Coombs-Richardson & Rivers, 1998; Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Gerber & Popp, 1999; Gately & Gately, 2001; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Logan & Stein, 2001; Rice & Zigmond, 2000; Tanner et al., 1996; Trent et al., 2003; Thousand et al., 2005; Villa et al., 2004; Villa & Thousand, 2005; Walter-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). Students with disabilities, students eligible for Title I services, English language learners, students

considered gifted and talented, as well as the services that might support them (e.g., occupational therapy, speech and language services, counseling services) have increasingly moved into general education mainstreaming classes (Cook & Friend, 1995; Thousand et al., 2005; Walter-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). Co-teaching is becoming a cost effective and efficient means for special education personnel to meet the needs in general education setting (Bruneau-Balderrama, 1997; Cook & Friend, 1995; Thousand et al., 2005; Walter-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). Researches show that philosophically both general and special education teachers feel very positive about teaching all students collaboratively in mainstreaming classes (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Gately & Gately, 2001; Tanner et al., 1996; Villa & Thousand, 2004). A concern regarding inclusive educational practice is that students with disabilities may not benefit if there is not appropriate adaptation of the setting, the curriculum the materials, and the teaching methods (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Tanner et al., 1996; Trent, et al., 2003).

Definition of Co-Teaching

Thousand, Villa, and Nevin (2004) defined co-teaching as two or more people sharing responsibility of teaching some or all of the students assigned to classroom. Fennick and Liddy (2001) defines co-teaching as service delivery model in which co-teachers leave their separate environments to work as teams with colleagues from different disciplines. Gately and Gately (2001) define that the collaboration between general and special education teachers for all of the teaching responsibilities of all students assigned to a classroom. Gerber and Popp (1999) define co-teaching as

collaborative teaching [in which] special education teachers team with general educators to provide direct services in general education classrooms through joint planning and delivery of instruction. Cook and Friend's (1995) definition of co-teaching is two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical place. Co-teaching requires more face to face communication and teacher parity than other inclusion models due to on-going support from the co-teaching colleagues (Bruneau-Balderrama, 1997; Walter-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). The common denominator among those who write about co-teaching is that two or more people jointly plan, teach, and evaluate all students in the same setting in the heterogeneously grouped environment. Co-teaching ideally brings the strengths of the two services providers together, affords all students access to high academic expectations aligned with the state curriculum, and access to the appropriate accommodation/modification from the special education experts, in most normalized education setting (Cook & Friend, 1995; Thousand et al., 2005; Villa et al., 2004).

There are a variety of ways to co-teach. Thousand and Villa (2005) identify four co-teaching approaches – supportive, parallel, complementary, and team teaching. They also note that there are various levels of support that students may need that may not require co-teaching. Consultative services to general education teachers from special educators and support personnel are yet another form of collaboration to support students.

Benefits of Co-Teaching on Students

Many studies on co-teaching have examined the academic and social/emotional benefits on students with disabilities. Researches reported benefits on students with disabilities at all grade level. Aside from improvements in academic achievement, students can experience enhanced self-image, self-advocate, collaboration with peers, as well as fewer referrals to server special education services, and decreased negative behavior referrals (Thousand et al., 2005). Students with disabilities often have difficulties to generalize academic or social/behavioral skills when they learn in separate environment. Co-teaching minimizes this fragmentation (Cook & Friend, 1995; Trent et al., 2003). Also when teachers successfully collaborate, they provide positive role models of interpersonal interaction and social skills that students can emulate (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Gerber & Popp, 1999; Gately & Gately, 2001; Villa et al., 2004).

Research supports a wide range of benefits on students without disabilities. Villa et al. (2004) describe how co-taught classes to fosters a sense of community through the positively shared experiences of students with and without disabilities. Potential benefits for all students are an increased awareness of and comfort with disabilities, social growth, improve self-concepts, understanding in diversity, and friendship development. (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Tanner et al., 1996; Walter-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). According to Tanner and his colleagues study (1996), the behaviors of students with disabilities have no significant negative effect on other students. Students with multiple disabilities have been successfully included in collaborative

settings (Tanner et al., 1996). Non-disabled classmates were sharing the tasks and adapting jobs so that students with disabilities were included as participants and not observers (Tanner et al., 1996). Research supports the academic benefits of co-teaching for low achieving non-disabled students (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Tanner et al., 1996; Thousand, et al., 2005; Walter-Thomas, & Bryant, 1996). Overall teacher grades improvements come from due to more individual attention, resulted in teacher student ratio improvement and diversified teaching strategies (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Villa et al., 2004).

Impact of Co-Teaching on Teaching Partners

Teachers involved in collaborative planning and instructional relationships often report feeling of worth, refreshing in partnership, increased creativity, satisfaction in teaching, program success, and professional growth (Bruneau-Balderrama, 1997; Fennick & Liddy, 2001, Gately & Gately, 2001; Thousand et al., 2005). Co-teaching in the elementary level is better documented than secondary level, especially with regard to the perceptions of the middle school educators (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Tanner et al., 1996). Keefe and Moore (2004) found that secondary level teachers show less positive attitudes toward co-teaching than elementary educators. Challenges experienced by secondary level co-teachers include the vigorous demand in content knowledge on the part of special educators, emphasis on high stake testing scores, resistance to accommodations or modifications in grading, wider academic gaps between the students with and without the disabilities (Gately & Gately, 2001; Keefe & Moore, 2004). Secondary teachers'

resistances are due more to inadequate communication, poor governance and lack of resources rather than the notion of inclusive education (Tanner et al., 1996). Many co-teaching researches note the importance of teachers' perspectives and inter personal communication skills in creating harmony among co-teachers (Bruneau-Balerrama, 1997; Coombs-Richardson & Rivers, 1998; Gately & Gately, 2001; Gerber & Popp, 1999; Tanner et al., 1996; Trent & Bryant, 2003; Villa et al., 2004). Tanner and his colleague research found that newly credentialed administrators and teachers with 13 to 19 years of teaching experience have most positive perceptions in inclusion and collaborative teaching. Principals in general and special education teachers have significantly higher positive perceptions than general education teachers (Tanner et al., 1996).

Chapter Three

Method

Many researches reviewed the importance of on-going communications between co-teachers in collaboration classes. Harmonious partnership is one of the key ingredients in successful collaboration for the students' learning. Research examines the differences of perspectives in different group of teachers at Shivela Middle School in Murrieta regarding communication, and collaborative teaching and planning.

Participants

Shivela Middle School is one of the three 6-8th grade middle schools in Murrieta Valley Unified School District. MVUSD is located in Murrieta, California on the southwestern edge of Riverside County. It consists of upper middle class, predominantly white (58.2%) and Hispanic (20.4%) ethnic groups. Shivela opened in 1990 as the first middle school in Murrieta and became a California Distinguished School in 2001. It has an enrollment of 1605 students, similar ethnic/racial proportions with the district: White (non Hispanic) 63%, Hispanic or Latino 19.5%, African American 6.2% and others (2005 SARC Reports). Forty five percent of the 58 teachers were qualified as NCLB compliance in 2003. In 2004, 98% of teachers were qualified as NCLB compliance through HOUSSE. Shivela's total numbers of teachers are 57 teachers: 56 full credentialed, one Emergency Permits, no Pre-Internship, and no Waivers. All teachers have valid California teaching credentials,

47.4% teachers also have master's degrees, and one teacher has a doctorate degree. Shivela's maximum class size is 33.

Instrumentation

To measure teachers' different disciplines of perceptions of co-teaching a questionnaire was adapted from the "Are We Really Co-Teachers?" assessment instrument developed by Villa, Thousand, and Nevin (2004). Questionnaires were modified from a Yes/No response format to a 5-point Likert scale format, in which 1=Not at all Important, 2=Marginally Important, 3=Somewhat Important, 4=Quite Important, 5=Extremely Important.

The first page of the survey provided a brief rationale for co-teaching, and a definition of the four co-teaching approaches (i.e., supportive, parallel, complementary, team teaching) as described by Villa, Thousand, & Nevin (2004) in the text, *A Guide to Co-Teaching: Practical Tips for Facilitating Student Learning* (2004). The second page asked about each teacher's background: current teaching assignment, years of teaching experience, years of experience in co-teaching, and kind of credential held. The next three pages of the questionnaire included the 34 questions adapted from the Villa et al. text. It took teachers about 10 to 15 minutes to complete the entire five pages of the questionnaire.

Administration Procedures and Response Rate

Questionnaires were given to the five department chairs (language arts, math, social studies, science and special education) to distribute during a department meeting one week before the spring break. Questionnaires were meant to be

anonymous, as no names were requested on the surveys. A day before the questionnaire was due (i.e. March 30th), friendly reminders were sent out to the whole school through school e-mail. As teachers finished their questionnaires, they either returned them to me in my school mail box or brought them to my class.

Limitation of the Study

This study's results only represent the perception of a subset of teachers at Shivela Middle School in Murrieta who choose to complete the survey. A large percentage of the faculty (38%) was not represented in the respondent pool, so responses may be skewed. Some respondents left the co-teaching experience section blank.

Data Analysis

Teachers were divided into seven groups according to their current assignments: language arts, language art & social studies, social studies, math, math & science, science, and special education teachers. Teachers were grouped into four groups as their teaching experiences: one to seven years, eight to 14 years, 15 to 21 years, and 22 or more. Another grouping was divided into four groups according to their years of co-teaching experiences: no years, one to five years, six or more, and a fourth "no response" group. General education teachers were also grouped as single subject teaching: language arts, social studies, math, and science; or core teaching: such as language arts & social studies, math & science, and special education. Teachers grouped into four groups as their credentialing background: multiple

subject, single subject, special education credentials, and dual or other credentials. All data have graphs as well as tables to show different teacher groups' perspectives.

Questionnaires have been clustered into four groups:

1. Instruction and Curriculum Standards

2. Communication and Personal Relationship

3. Parity, Accountability, and Sharing Roles

4. Training and Advocating Co-Teaching

The study examined the mean ratings of items clustered in these categories and compared ratings by the various groupings identified above.

Chapter Four

Result

Respondent Information

Distribution Pool

The study was conducted to determine middle school teachers' perspectives regarding co-teaching. Questionnaires were distributed to three administrators and 47 general and special education teachers who taught English, math, social studies, and science. Of these 47 teachers, 19 were male teachers and 28 were female. Of the 47, six were special education teachers.

Response rate

Out of 50 questionnaires sent, 32 (64 %) were returned. Of these 32, 28 (88 %) were usable. The four that were not usable were either incomplete on teacher information page, questionnaire pages, or both. Twenty of the respondents from the general education teachers represented 80 % of the teacher respondents. The five special education respondents represented 20 % of the teacher response group.

Overall Ratings of Questionnaire Items and Clusters of Items

Questionnaires used a 5-point Likert scale, to which respondents scored each response with one of the five ratings as follows: 1=Not at all Important, 2=Marginally Important, 3=Somewhat Important, 4=Quite Important, 5=Extremely Important.

Overall Ratings Across All Educators

As the result displayed in Table 4.1 show, teachers, on the average, rated the 34 questionnaire items as "Somewhat to Quite Important," with mean scores ranging

from 3.37 to 4.68. The item considered most important was Item #10, "We are flexible and make changes as needed during a lesson."

Other items deemed as very important, in the overall mean was over 4.5 on the 5-point scale were Item #11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, and 28. Item #11 related to identifying student strengths and needs. Item #28 was about parity. The remaining six items related to teachers' personal relationships and communication.

The item receiving the lowest rating was Item #4, "We teach different groups of students at the same time." Eight items received low ratings ($3.40 < M < 4.0$). Of these items (i.e., #5, 6, 8, 26, 29, 31, 32, 34), two of them are related to sharing responsibilities. The others related to training and advocating for co-teaching. Question # 6, "We share responsibility for deciding what to teach," ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.44$) had the most widely deviated responds. Namely, 13 respondents (40 %) responded with the maximum score 5, "Extremely Important." Also, in contrast, four respondents (16%) rated this item with the lowest score of 1, representing that this behavior was considered "not at all important."

Table1

General Survey Results

	Teacher perspective description/points scale	1	2	3	4	5	SD	M
Q1	We decide which co-teaching approach we will use in a lesson, based upon the benefits to the students and the co-teachers.	2	1	3	8	14	1.20	4.11
Q2	We share ideas, information and materials.	0	2	2	10	14	0.90	4.29
Q3	We identify the resources and talents of each of the co-teachers.	1	3	0	9	15	1.13	4.21
Q4	We teach different groups of students at the same time.	3	1	10	9	4	1.15	3.37
Q5	We are aware of what one another is doing even when we are not directly in one another's presence.	1	2	4	14	7	1.01	3.86
Q6	We share responsibility for deciding what to teach.	4	1	1	8	13	1.44	3.93
Q7	We agree on the curriculum standards that will be addressed in a lesson.	1	3	3	6	15	1.20	4.11
Q8	We share responsibility for deciding how to teach.	2	3	6	9	8	1.22	3.64
Q9	We share responsibility for deciding who teaches what part of a lesson.	2	2	0	11	13	1.20	4.11
Q10	We are flexible and make changes as needed during a lesson.	0	0	0	9	19	0.48	4.68
Q11	We identify student strengths and needs.	0	1	0	8	19	0.69	4.61
Q12	We share responsibility for differentiating instruction.	0	2	3	12	11	0.89	4.14
Q13	We include other people when their expertise or experience is needed.	0	1	4	15	8	0.77	4.07
Q14	We share responsibility for how student learning is assessed.	0	1	5	11	10	0.85	4.11
Q15	We can show that students are learning when we co-teaching.	0	1	3	10	13	0.82	4.30
Q16	We agree on discipline procedures and jointly carry them out.	0	0	4	6	16	0.76	4.46
Q17	We give feedback to one another on what goes on in the classroom.	0	0	2	9	16	0.64	4.52

Table 1 (Continued)

General Survey Results

	Teacher perspective description/points scale	1	2	3	4	5	SD	M
Q18	We make improvements in our lessons based on what happens.	0	0	2	7	18	0.64	4.59
Q19	We communicate freely our concerns.	0	0	2	7	18	0.64	4.59
Q20	We have a process for resolving our disagreements and use it when faced with problems and conflicts.	0	0	3	4	19	0.70	4.62
Q21	We celebrate the process of co-teaching and the outcomes and successes.	0	1	4	11	10	0.83	4.15
Q22	We have fun with the students and each other when we co-teach.	0	0	5	12	10	0.74	4.19
Q23	We have regularly scheduled times to meet and discuss our work.	1	1	4	7	14	1.08	4.19
Q24	We use our meeting time productively.	1	0	2	5	18	0.95	4.50
Q25	We can effectively co-teach even when we don't have time to plan.	2	1	1	13	10	1.13	4.04
Q26	We explain the benefits of co-teaching to the students and their families.	0	2	6	10	9	0.94	3.96
Q27	We model collaboration and teamwork for our students.	0	1	5	7	14	0.90	4.26
Q28	We are each viewed by our students as their teacher.	0	0	0	10	17	0.49	4.63
Q29	We include students in the co-teaching role.	0	5	9	9	4	0.97	3.44
Q30	We depend on one another to follow through on tasks and responsibilities.	0	1	1	14	11	0.72	4.30
Q31	We seek and enjoy additional training to make our co-teaching better.	0	2	12	9	5	0.88	3.61
Q32	We are mentors to others who want to co-teach.	1	4	8	10	5	1.07	3.50
Q33	We can use a variety of co-teaching approaches (i.e., supportive, parallel, complementary, team teaching).	1	1	3	14	9	0.96	4.04
Q34	We communicate our need for logistical support and resources to our administrators.	0	2	8	10	8	0.93	3.86

Overall Result by Four Clustered of Items

The author clustered the survey items by similar content and derived four categories of items:

1) Instructional and Curriculum Standards (see Table 2)

2) Communication and Personal Relationship (see Table 3)

3) Parity, Accountability and Sharing Roles (see Table 4)

4) Training and Advocating for Co-Teaching (see Table 5)

Each of the Tables 2 – 5 shows the distribution of responses and the mean and standard deviations for the items in each of the four clusters. Of the four categories, training and advocating received the overall lowest mean rating. The means for the other categories all were over 4.0 on the 5-point scale.

Table 2

Instruction and curriculum standards

Question	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Q1	2	1	3	8	14	4.11	1.20
Q7	1	3	3	6	14	4.18	1.31
Q8	2	3	6	9	8	3.64	1.22
Q11	0	1	0	8	19	4.61	0.69
Q12	0	2	3	12	11	4.14	0.89
Q14	0	1	5	11	10	4.11	0.85
Q15	0	1	3	10	13	4.30	0.82
Overall						4.16	0.24

Table 3

Communication and Personal Relationship

Question	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Q2	0	2	2	10	14	4.29	0.90
Q3	1	3	0	9	15	4.21	1.13
Q10	0	0	0	9	19	4.68	0.48
Q13	0	1	4	15	8	4.07	0.77
Q17	0	0	2	9	16	4.52	0.64
Q18	0	0	2	7	18	4.59	0.64
Q19	0	0	2	7	18	4.59	0.64
Q20	0	0	3	4	19	4.62	0.70
Q21	0	1	4	11	10	4.15	0.83
Q22	0	0	5	12	10	4.19	0.74
Q23	1	1	4	7	14	4.19	1.08
Q24	1	0	2	5	18	4.50	0.95
Q25	2	1	1	13	10	4.04	1.13
Q29	0	5	9	9	4	3.44	0.97
Q33	1	1	4	13	9	4.00	0.98
Overall						4.25	0.92

Table 4

Parity, Accountability and Sharing Roles

Question	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Q4	3	1	10	9	4	3.37	1.06
Q5	1	2	4	14	7	3.86	0.86
Q6	4	1	1	8	13	3.93	1.40
Q9	2	2	0	11	13	4.11	1.18
Q16	0	0	4	6	16	4.46	0.78
Q28	0	0	0	10	17	4.63	0.50
Q30	0	1	1	14	11	4.30	0.58
Overall						4.03	1.09

Table 5

Training and Advocating Co-Teaching

Question	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Q26	0	2	6	10	9	3.96	0.93
Q27	0	1	5	7	14	4.26	0.91
Q31	0	2	12	9	5	3.61	0.89
Q32	1	4	8	10	5	3.50	1.07
Q34	0	2	8	10	8	3.86	0.94
Overall						3.79	0.94

Response Means by Department

Teachers were divided into seven groups according to their current assignments: language arts, language art & social studies, social studies, math, math & science, science, and special education teachers. Math & science core teachers gave the items in the questionnaire the highest ratings (M=4.73, SD=0.45). Single subject science teachers gave the items in the questionnaire the lowest ratings (M=3.59, SD=0.51). Special education teacher responses fell in the middle range (M=4.09, SD=0.45), but lower than language arts, language arts & social studies core, math & science core teachers, and administrators. See Table 6 and Figures 1 and 2 for details of these results by department and by item.

Table 6

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations by Department

Department	Mean	SD
English	4.31	0.75
English/Social Studies	4.33	0.42
Social Studies	4.04	0.60
Math	3.76	0.78
Math/Science	4.73	0.45
Science	3.59	0.51
Special Education	4.09	0.45
Administration	4.50	0.48

Chapter Five

Discussion

General Overview

To ensure the successful education for students with disabilities in a least restricted environment, special and general education teachers' effective and harmonious working relationships are essential ingredients to collaboration (Coombs-Richardson & Rivers, 1998; Gately & Gately, 2001; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Trent et al., 2003; Villa et al., 2004; Walter-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). The purpose of this study was to assess teachers' and administrators' perspectives toward collaboration and co-teaching at a California suburban middle school. The results showed that overall teachers and administrators were supportive of the elements of co-teaching included on a 43 item questionnaire. Administrators (M=4.50, SD=0.48) generally perceived the elements of items more important than teachers (M=4.13, SD=0.99), also see (Table 4.3). Past research has found that the special education teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward collaboration was more positive than general education teachers (Tanner et al., 1996). However, perception of special education teachers at this school (M=4.09) were slightly below the school average (M=4.13).

Teachers' perspectives toward the co-teaching differed based upon the teachers' current teaching assignment, years of teaching experience, and years of co-teaching experience. Teacher's credential background did not show different perspectives as other variables.

Items of co-teaching were clustered into four categories: Instruction and Curriculum; Communication and Personal Relationship; Parity, Accountability and Sharing Roles; and Training and Advocating Co-Teaching. Teachers viewed Communication and Personal Relationship as the most important set of practices and Training and Advocating Co-Teaching as the least important set of practices (Table 2 – 5).

General Education Teachers Perception

General education teachers were grouped in six department categories: English, English & social studies, social studies, math, math & science, and science. Examination of ratings of questionnaire items revealed that elementary teachers have more positive attitudes than the secondary teachers toward collaboration and inclusion with students with disabilities. The core content teachers at this middle school who teach only 6th graders have responded more positively than the upper grade single subject teachers. Namely, core teachers' mean rating was 4.48; where as the mean rating of 7th and 8th grade single subject teachers was 3.85.

On a single question by question basis, core teachers unanimously scored as, "Extremely Important" on question # 11: "We identify student strength and needs." This suggests that these general education teachers' welcome input on students' needs. On the other hand, science (M=2.20) and math (M=2.50) single subject teachers rated # 8, "We share responsibility for deciding how to teach" as the lowest mean points item. This suggests that the general education teachers may be less open to co-teaching. Single subject math teachers also rated the following questionnaire

items as among the lowest: Item # 4, "We teach different groups of students at the same time," item # 6, "We share responsibility for deciding what to teach," item # 8, "We share responsibility for deciding how to teach," and item # 9 "We share responsibility for deciding who teaches what part of a lesson." Together, these results suggested that at this time these middle level single subject math teachers are not open to collaboration. See Figure 2 to illustrate this point.

In contrast, 6th grade math & science core teachers collectedly had the highest mean ratings of items (M=4.75). Of all the single subject teachers, English teachers had the highest mean scores (M=4.31) than any other single subject teachers. See Table 6 to illustrate this point.

Years of Teaching Experience

Teachers' years of teaching experience affected their attitude toward co-teaching. Past research showed that teachers with more teaching experiences tended to show more positive attitudes toward inclusion and collaboration than teachers with less teaching experience (Tanner et al., 1996), however, at this middle school, teachers with least teaching experiences (i.e., one to seven years) had the most positive ratings (M=4.62, SD=0.30) toward co-teaching. Veteran teachers with more teaching experience (i.e., 15 to 21 years) had the least positive ratings (M=3.71, SD=0.60) toward co-teaching. Please see Table 7 and Figure 3. This might be a reflection of recent change in teacher training programs. Namely, university teacher preparation programs are mandated to include more special education and collaboration content.

Years of Co-Teaching Experience

Teachers' co-teaching experiences did not produce significant differences in perceptions. Teachers with more experience (i.e., six or more years) of co-teaching experience had somewhat less positive ratings (M=3.98, SD=0.48) of the co-teaching than teachers with no co-teaching experiences (M=4.26, SD=0.46). This result is contrary to what might be expected and suggested that co-teaching practices at this middle school need a close inspection for improvements.

Teaching Credential

Single subject teachers were the least positive toward co-teaching. Multiple subject credentialed teachers were the most positive. Dual credential, life credential, and special education credential holders showed mixed perspectives. Figure 6 illustrates these findings.

Special Education Teachers' Perception

Unlike findings of past researchers (e.g. Tanners et al., 1996), special education teachers at this middle school were less positive toward co-teaching (M=4.09, SD=0.45) than the general education teachers (M=4.13, SD=0.99). Special education teachers' highest rated item was Item #24, "We use our meeting time productively (M=4.75)." Surprisingly, special education teachers' lowest rated items were in Training and Advocating Co-Teaching clusters. Item #31, "We seek and enjoy additional training to make our co-teaching better," (M=3.20), and Item #32 "We are mentors to others who want to co-teach" (M=2.80). These ratings suggest

that special education teachers are not at the front line of advocating for or seeking

professional development to forward collaboration and inclusion.

Administrators' Perception

Administrators' perceptions were very positive and in alignment with past

researchers (Tanners et al., 1996). Their mean score (M=4.50, SD=0.48) on all items

was above the mean of general education teachers (M=4.13, SD=0.99) and special

education teachers (M=4.09, SD=0.45). Only the math & science core teachers

(M=4.73, SD=0.45) exceeded administrators in their mean rating.

Recommendation

Collaborative efforts on the past general and special education teachers on the

planning for instruction, the development of accommodation and modification in

curriculum, the implementation of teaching methodology, and the assessment and

grading of students are key ingredients to the successful inclusion for students with

disabilities.   Past research suggests that successful collaboration and co-teaching

practice not only benefits students with disabilities, but also a wide range of low

achieving non-disabled students (Gerber & Popp, 1999; Thousand et al., 2005; Trent

et al., 2003). The findings of this study suggest that at the middle school included in

this study, there is a need for: a) teachers with more teaching experiences, b) single

subject teachers, c) special education teachers, d) as well as teachers with more co-

teaching experiences to review their past collaboration practices. Administrative

logistical support is an essential support for new and veteran teachers to create an

effective school culture in which they can use their own experiences and as well as

one another's expertise to develop positive perceptions toward co-teaching through improving interpersonal relationships.

Further Research

This questionnaire research study examined the perspectives of teachers of different disciplines regarding co-teaching and collaboration. Further research requires examining teachers' perceptions of sub-categories regarding co-teaching. Also valuable would be further qualitative examinations of co-teaching and teachers' interpersonal relationships through observations and in-depth individual interviews. Further study also could examine affective factors (e.g., personality traits, interpersonal relationships) that contribute to successful co-teaching.

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Appendix

Ever since President George Bush signed No Child Left Behind Act in the

Congress on January 8, 2002, states must hold ALL public elementary and secondary

students to the same challenging academic content and student achievement

standards. According to the state NCLB requirements, all students will be taught by

highly qualified content area teachers assigned to teach core academic subjects by

2005-06 school year.

In order for schools to be in compliance with the state requirement, students with

disabilities in secondary level need to be taught by highly qualified subject content

area teachers. Co-teaching general and special educators in the same class will give

students with disabilities high content standards from the highly qualified teachers

and necessary supports from access and strategy expert special education teachers.

In a book *A GUIDE TO CO-TEACHING: Practical Tips for Facilitating Student*

Learning, Thousand and Villa classified four different types of co-teaching:

Supportive, Parallel, Complementary, and Team Teaching. Supportive teaching is

that classroom teacher takes the lead instructional role and other teacher supports.

Parallel teaching is that two or more people work with different groups of students in

different sections of the classroom. Complementary teaching is when a co-teacher

does something to enhance the instruction provided by the other co-teachers. Team

teaching is that two or more teachers together plan, teach, assess and assume

responsibility for all the students in the classroom.

Please check or write briefly for below sections.

Teacher Background

Credential :

_____ Multiple Subject   _____ Single Subject

_____ Special Education   subject area

_____

Current teaching assignment:

_____ General education   _____ Special education

Grade level:

Teaching subject(s):

Total teaching experience in years including this year:

Total co-teaching experience in years including this year:

Thank you for taking your time to answer questions.

Young Lee

Co-Teaching Considerations

Using the following scale, please indicate, by circling the response that most closely aligns with your opinion, as to the importance of this consideration in making co-teaching for you, as a co-teacher.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all Important	**Marginally Important**	**Somewhat Important**	**Quite Important**	**Extremely Important**

In my co-teaching partnerships it is important that :

1 2 3 4 5   1. we decide which co-teaching approach we will use in a lesson, based upon the benefits to the students and the co-teachers.

1 2 3 4 5   2. we share ideas, information and materials.

1 2 3 4 5   3. we identify the resources and talents of each of the

co-teachers.

1 2 3 4 5   4. we teach different groups of students at the same time.

1 2 3 4 5   5. we are aware of what one another is doing even when we are not directly in one another's presence.

1 2 3 4 5   6. We share responsibility for deciding what to teach.

1 2 3 4 5   7. We agree on the curriculum standards that will be addressed in a lesson.

1 2 3 4 5   8. We share responsibility for deciding how to teach.

1 2 3 4 5   9. We share responsibility for deciding who teaches what part of a lesson.

1 2 3 4 5   10. We are flexible and make changes as needed during a lesson.

1 2 3 4 5   11. We identify student strengths and needs.

1 2 3 4 5   12. We share responsibility for differentiating instruction.

1 2 3 4 5   13. We include other people when their expertise or experience is needed.

1 2 3 4 5   14. We share responsibility for how student learning is assessed.

1 2 3 4 5   15. We can show that students are learning when we co-teach.

1 2 3 4 5   16. We agree on discipline procedures and jointly carry them out.

1 2 3 4 5   17. We give feedback to one another on what goes on in the classroom.

1 2 3 4 5   18. We make improvements in our lessons based on what happens.

1 2 3 4 5   19. We communicate freely our concerns.

1 2 3 4 5   20. We have a process for resolving our disagreements and use it when faced with problems and conflicts.

1 2 3 4 5   21. We celebrate the process of co-teaching and the outcomes and successes.

1 2 3 4 5   22. We have fun with the students and each other when we co-teach.

1 2 3 4 5   23. We have regularly scheduled times to meet and discuss our work.

1 2 3 4 5   24. We use our meeting time productively.

1 2 3 4 5   25. We can effectively co-teach even when we don't have time to plan.

1 2 3 4 5   26. We explain the benefits of co-teaching to the students and their families.

1 2 3 4 5   27. We model collaboration and teamwork for our students.

1 2 3 4 5   28. We are each viewed by our students as their teacher.

1 2 3 4 5   29. We include students in the co-teaching role.

1 2 3 4 5   30. We depend on one another to follow through on tasks and responsibilities.

1 2 3 4 5   31. We seek and enjoy additional training to make our co-teaching better.

1 2 3 4 5   32. We are mentors to others who want to co-teach.

1 2 3 4 5   33. We can use a variety of co-teaching approaches (i.e., supportive, parallel, complementary, team teaching)

1 2 3 4 5   34. We communicate our need for logistical support and resources to our administrators.