Teacher Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Co-Teaching Practices in Two Suburban School Districts in the Southeast
(Content Session)

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Abstract

This applied dissertation was designed to give teachers an opportunity to think reflectively on their respective co-teaching practices, to engage administrators with knowledge of effective co-teaching practices, and to provide a foundation on which to build effective and sustainable co-teaching practices in elementary and middle schools in the Southeast.
Co-teaching practices in schools today are not living up to their intended purpose, which is to provide students with disabilities the opportunity to receive high quality instruction in the least restrictive environment, using a variety of co-teaching delivery models, accommodations, and specialized instruction to ensure access to rigorous curriculum. Consequently, student achievement is not maximized.
Limited research exists on the effectiveness of co-teaching. Studies that have been conducted yield mixed results, depending on the variables presented. For instance, Simmons and Magiera (2007) found that co-teaching is ineffective at the high school level due to lack of planning time, administrative support, and adequate training. Weiss and Lloyd (2003), in a study of middle and high school special education teachers, found ineffective co-teaching practices due to lack of a shared understanding of the tenets of co-teaching, pressure to co-teach, and limited content knowledge on the part of special education teachers.
Deficiencies in the Evidence

Considering that inclusion practices and co-teaching have been in existence for many years, there is limited research on its effectiveness, especially at the elementary level. Volonino and Zigmond (2007) spoke specifically about the lack of research on this practice, stating, "Only four experimental studies . . . investigated academic effectiveness" (p. 295). Existing studies have focused on the comparison between inclusion and pullout (Rea et al., 2002), co-teaching at the high school level (Simmons & Magiera, 2007), or co-teaching at the middle school level (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005).
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this convergent parallel mixed methods study was threefold: to determine (a) teachers’ experiences of the effectiveness of co-teaching practices, (b) teachers’ level of knowledge regarding processing deficits and use of specialized instruction to meet student needs in order to create an action plan for improving co-teaching practices, and (c) how the quantitative and qualitative data converge to gain a better understanding of how the provision of common planning, implementation of varying co-teaching delivery models, and continuous and ongoing professional development affects teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of co-teaching practices in two suburban school districts in the Southeast. The qualitative strand of data was the teachers’ experiences of their co-teaching practices, which was collected via open-ended questions. The other two areas informed the quantitative data and were collected via Likert-style questions. This convergent parallel mixed methods design merges both quantitative and qualitative data into one meaning. The data had equal emphasis on both the quantitative and qualitative strands. As such, the data was gathered concurrently.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

- Introduction
- Theoretical Framework
- Co-Teaching Delivery Models
- History of Special Education
- Specialized Instruction
- Effective Co-Teaching Practices
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Common Planning
- Professional Development
- Administrator Support
- Chapter Summary
- Research Questions
Theoretical Framework

The problem of ineffective co-teaching practices in the classroom is grounded in the Distributed Leadership theory and Sociocultural theory's More Knowledgeable Other. The Distributed Leadership theory was originally developed by James Spillane in 2004 and was primarily used to study leadership and management within the school. This theory was applied in both elementary and middle school leadership projects "designed to explore and understand leadership as a practice of instructional improvement and to examine the relations between leadership practice and teachers' classroom work" (Northwestern University, 2010, para. 7). The theory of Distributed Leadership indicates that individuals develop a reciprocal interdependence on one another (Spillane, 2005), where situations and activities require input from both individuals, as well as pooled interdependence on one another (Spillane & Sherer, 2004), where individuals work independently, but for a common purpose.
Co-Teaching Delivery Models

- Station teaching
- Alternative teaching
- Parallel teaching
History of Special Education

- Brown v. Board of Education
- Board of Education v. Rowley
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- No Child Left Behind
Specialized instruction is based on the unique needs of the student; therefore, teachers must understand student need, including specific processing deficits, in order to meet this need (Friend, 2015). Examples of appropriate specialized instructional strategies include modeling, chunking, graphic organizers, mnemonic strategies, teaching social skills, and role playing (Kentucky Special Education Cooperatives, 2003; Ross Pike Educational Service District, 2015).
Effective Co-Teaching Practices

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Common Planning
- Professional Development
- Administrator Support
Research Questions

- This study will seek to answer the following research questions regarding teachers’ perceptions and experiences of co-teaching practices in elementary and middle school classrooms in two suburban school districts in the Southeast.
  - Quantitative Question 1. What are teacher perceptions regarding the importance of professional development in co-teaching?
  - Quantitative Question 2. What are teacher perceptions regarding the importance of establishing clearly defined roles and responsibilities in the co-teaching classroom?
  - Quantitative Question 3. What are teacher perceptions regarding the importance of common planning for co-teachers?
  - Quantitative Question 4. What are teachers’ perceptions regarding their level of knowledge of processing deficits and use of specialized instruction to meet unique student needs?
  - Qualitative Question 1. What are teachers’ experiences regarding their specific co-teaching assignment?
  - Qualitative Question 2. What are teachers’ experiences regarding school and administrator support for co-teaching?
  - Mixed method question. How does the qualitative data explain the quantitative data regarding teacher perception of effective co-teaching practices?
Recommendations for Future Research

Future research on co-teaching could include a quasi-experimental pre-training and post-training design to determine the effectiveness of professional development on co-teaching practices (Creswell, 2012). Researchers could compare the effectiveness of co-teaching practices between co-teaching teams who have had previous training in co-teaching (select experimental group) to co-teaching teams who have not had previous training on co-teaching (select control group).

Quantitative data can be obtained through focused walkthrough observations of co-teaching teams and through an analysis of student achievement data (select control group).

Furthermore, in order to determine teacher perception on the effectiveness of co-teaching practices in elementary and middle school classrooms in the Southeast, a phenomenological study could be conducted.

Future research could also be considered for more affluent school districts, as this study was conducted in school districts serving families who are primarily economically disadvantaged.
Thanks for listening and watching. Any questions?